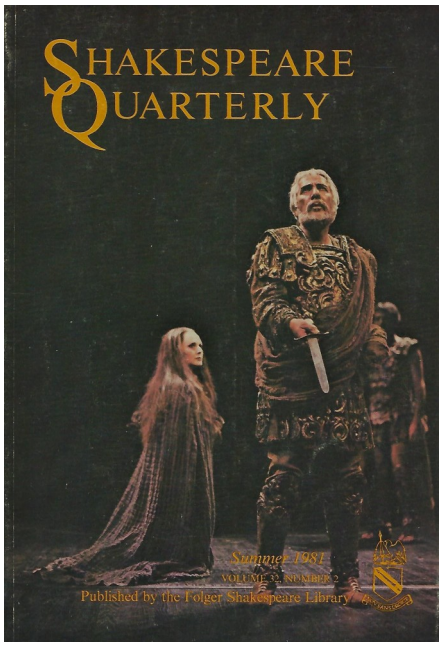

SHAKESPEARE QUARTERLY

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Cover illustration: A scene from *Titus Andronicus*, directed by Brian Bedford, Stratford Festival Canada, 1980. Goldie Semple as Lavinia, William Hutt as Titus, Rod Beattie as Lucius. Photo by Zoë Dominic, courtesy of the Stratford Festival.

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From the Editor

WRITING ON THE EVE of the second world congress of the International Shakespeare Association—in reality the third such gathering, if one begins counting with the 1971 Vancouver congress at which the ISA was formed—I find it tempting to cast aside the prudence that prevented Sam Schoenbaum from delivering a State of Shakespeare Studies address in his recent President's Message to readers of the *Bulletin* of the Shakespeare Association of America. As Sam noted, it would seem that we have arrived at a kind of consensus about the poet we honor, a consensus aptly captured in the theme of this year's meeting: "Shakespeare—Man of the Theatre." It would appear that we have largely completed what John Sisyan has boldly labeled a "revolution" in the way we approach Shakespeare. And many of the fruits of that revolution are to be found in the theatre-oriented articles, reviews, and commentary that comprise this issue of *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

But if we have attained a vantage-point from which we may look back—and, alas, all too often, down—on our immediate predecessors, we would probably do well to remember that the better part of valor is discretion. Because it is still too early to assess just where the Shakespeare revolution has left us, too early to determine whether our present station is a watershed on an ascending terrain or merely a tenuous position on a revolving wheel. Bearing that in mind, I shall endeavor to profit from the example of elder masters of known honor and limit my observations here to a few brief remarks about matters that seem to be part of a larger picture whose full significance will emerge only in the fullness of time.

Let me begin by observing that, whatever its merits and demerits, the current BBC/Time-Life Television series "The Shakespeare Plays" is quietly altering the landscape in the secondary schools of the United States. Responses to educational packages sent out to high schools and junior high schools by TelEd, Inc. indicate that far more Shakespeare is being read and seen and discussed than at any time in the past, and that students are being introduced to Shakespeare at younger and younger ages with each succeeding season. Teachers who once taught only *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* are now finding that they can also avail themselves of *All's Well That Ends Well* and *The Winter's Tale*, and their classes are welcoming the broadened Shakespeare curriculum with insight and enthusiasm. I am gratified, therefore, to open this issue of the *Quarterly* with a Jonathan Miller interview conducted by Tim Hallinan, the man who, more than anyone else, has made "The Shakespeare Plays" accessible to the educational institutions of America.

I'm gratified, too, to publish an interview with a director who appreciates the roles that scholarship and critical interpretation may play in the development of a Shakespearean production. For Jonathan Miller, as for many of today's most gifted directors, it is self-evident that what takes place in the theatre or before the camera should be informed by the kind of contemplation that takes place in the library, or the art gallery, or the study. By the same token, a scholar/critic such as Robert Egan (whose comments about the character of Kent follow the Jonathan Miller interview) is aware that what takes place in the library or the study or the classroom is richest and most pertinent when informed by theatrical experience. Egan's essay illustrates the other half of that dialogue which is really at the heart of the Shakespeare revolution—as do the theatre reviews that make up the bulk of this issue.

Once more we find ourselves confronted with an all-but-overwhelming plethora of productions worthy of at least brief discussion, and this year we have again elected to devote two issues rather than one to Shakespeare in performance. Reviews of 1980 productions in nations other than the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States will appear in the upcoming Autumn 1981 *Quarterly*, along with Ken Rothwell's review of season three of "The Shakespeare Plays."

Having mentioned the dialogue between scholar/critics and theatre professionals that is so salient a characteristic of Shakespeare studies today, I'm now pleased to announce two new Folger-sponsored programs that have been designed to foster such interchange. The first is a symposium, "Shakespeare on the Screen," to

be offered October 29–31 at the University of Southern California under the joint sponsorship of the American Film Institute, the Folger Institute of Renaissance and Eighteenth-Century Studies, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and USC. The second is an NEH-sponsored Humanities Institute focusing on "Shakespeare in Performance" and scheduled to take place at the Folger during July of 1982. These two programs, the second modeled on a similar workshop currently in progress under the guidance of Audrey Stanley and Homer Swander, will seek to consolidate the gains and refine the methodologies developed over the last several years by scholars, critics, directors, and actors sharing and comparing perspectives on Shakespeare's dramatic texts.

Taken together with the multifaceted programs and activities that have been stimulated by the tour of the Folger exhibition, "Shakespeare: The Globe and the World"—which is now in New York City and will be in Los Angeles (as the centerpiece of a stunning array of performances, concerts, lectures, courses, symposia, and other events throughout Southern California) from mid-October through the end of January—these new offerings reflect the Library's ongoing quest to make its resources available in ways that go beyond the investigative labors of scholars in the newly-reopened reading room and the explorations of directors and actors working in productions of the Folger Theatre Group. And what is true of the Folger is also true, in different ways, of dozens of other organizations and institutions—libraries, museums, universities, theatres, performing arts groups—throughout the United States, and indeed throughout the world.

Whatever else anyone may wish to say about the present State of Shakespeare Studies, then, one may assert with confidence that it is active. And in an effort to stay abreast of that activity, I have taken a long-overdue step and enlarged the Editorial Board. I am honored and pleased to welcome to the masthead four eminent Shakespeareans, each of them distinguished, among other things, by work that has advanced the current dialogue about Shakespeare as a man of the theatre: Anne Barton, Professor of English at New College, Oxford; Ralph Berry, Professor of English at the University of Ottawa; Stephen Booth, Professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley; and Ann Jennalie Cook, Executive Secretary of the Shakespeare Association of America. These outstanding scholar/critics will add important new dimensions to the deliberations of the Editorial Board, and all of us will be grateful for their counsel as the *Quarterly* comes to terms with a number of major questions in the months and years immediately ahead.

JOHN F. ANDREWS

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Folger Institute of Renaissance and Eighteenth-Century Studies is pleased to announce the presentation of a symposium, "Shakespeare on the Screen," scheduled for October 29–31 at the University of Southern California. The primary purpose of the symposium will be to provide an opportunity for teachers, scholars, actors, directors, and film and television producers to discuss the theory and practice of presenting Shakespeare on film and television. Co-sponsored by the American Film Institute, the Folger Institute, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and the University of Southern California, the program carries a registration fee of $70.00. Persons interested in participating should write:

Shakespeare Symposium
Folger Shakespeare Library
201 East Capitol Street, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20003

Interview

Jonathan Miller on The Shakespeare Plays

TIM HALLINAN

Hallinan. When you're producing Shakespeare for television as opposed to the stage, what does it do to your general approach?

Miller. Well, I think that television offers you the chance of removing large-scale hectoring rhetoric. It means the people haven't got to boom or to sing or to go in for that rather grandiloquent verse-speaking which often puts people off. You can be much more naturalistic. People can speak quietly in their own voice without simply descending into an ordinary modern vernacular. You can't have them doing that because it's very destructive to Shakespeare's verse if you speak as if it was ordinary modern speech.

Hallinan. It seems to me that television is inherently a more naturalistic medium. You're used to seeing the news on television.

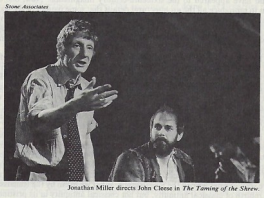
Miller. That's right. I think that as soon as you put Shakespeare on that box where, as you say, people are accustomed to seeing naturalistic events represented, you are more or less obliged to present the thing as naturally as you can. There are, of course, limits upon that because of the sort of language that is being spoken. First of all, it comes from the past, and secondly, it doesn't come from the naturalistic past. It comes from the artistic past, and it's got a style and an idiom of its own which can't be violated. You have to allow these people to speak verse. But you have to get them speaking the verse in such a way that the audience is not aware of the fact that they're in the presence of an art form. They're only in the presence of naked communication. You have to give them the sense that when they hear those sentiments and feelings and ideas expressed in Shakespeare's language it's the only possible way in which those particular characters could have spoken; and that that's the best way to convey the ideas that they are actually trying to express.

Hallinan. What about the visual style?

Miller. Well, you have an awkward situation always, with the television, when you're taking an art form which was not intended for that medium. One has to understand that Shakespeare wrote for an unfurnished, unscenic stage without naturalistic representation of any sort. People didn't even wear colorful costumes. They simply wore modern costume, the costume of the sixteenth century, with perhaps some item which represented the past. Even in doing the Roman plays, it seems very unlikely that people wore archaeologically correct Roman

costumes. Therefore I think it's very unwise to try and represent on the television screen something which Shakespeare did not have in his mind's eye when he wrote those lines. You have to find some counterpart of the unfurnished stage

Stone Associates



Jonathan Miller directs John Cleese in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

that Shakespeare wrote for without, in fact, necessarily reproducing a version of the Globe theatre. Because there's no way in which you can do that. You can't put one stage inside another, but you have to find some visual counterpart of that.

Hallinan. What's been your approach to the sets for the plays that have been done so far?

JONATHAN MILLER is the current Producer of *The Shakespeare Plays*, having succeeded Cedric Messina, who launched the series and served as Producer for seasons one and two. A six-year, 37-play project of the British Broadcasting Corporation in association with Time-Life Television, *The Shakespeare Plays* are underwritten in the United States by Exxon Corporation, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and Morgan Guaranty Trust Company of New York, and presented on the Public Broadcasting Service by WNET/Thirteen in New York City. The offerings for season three of the series are *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *The Winter's Tale*—all developed under Dr. Miller's guiding hand. A medical doctor and a prolific author as well as a director of drama and opera, Jonathan Miller first made his mark in the theatre with the hilarious revue "Beyond the Fringe." More recently, he has hosted the highly-acclaimed series "The Body in Question," aired on PBS in the United States in the autumn of 1980.

TIM HALLINAN, who recorded the interview that has been edited for presentation here, is an executive officer of Stone Associates, which handles public relations for *The Shakespeare Plays*, and the person principally responsible for a wide range of educational support materials designed for distribution to schools in this country by TelEd Inc. and funded equally by the three underwriters and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Mr. Hallinan holds degrees in both English and theatre from the California State University System, and he has been on location for the taping of most of the productions included in *The Shakespeare Plays*.

Miller. Well, let's take *Antony and Cleopatra* first. It's quite clear that Shakespeare is not actually writing about a historically realistic Egypt nor about a historically realistic Rome. He's talking about a Rome and an Egypt as they would have appeared to the sixteenth-century imagination. Now, one doesn't want to reproduce all the architectural details that some painter of the sixteenth century would have imagined. But what details you do introduce must remind the audience of the sixteenth-century imagination, not of the archaeologically accurate Egypt and Rome to which the play nominally, and only nominally, refers.

That's the important point, you see. As our archaeology has improved in the 400 years that have passed since Shakespeare, we have come to know an Egypt and a Rome which Shakespeare knew nothing about. The uncovering of Roman antiquities, particularly, say, in Pompeii, has shown us details of a Roman life that Shakespeare knew nothing about at all. And in any case, when writing about these ancient scenes and about these particular historical locations, he was using them as metaphors for talking about the problems of his own time and his own England. There is a sense in which you could say that *Antony and Cleopatra* is really about Queen Elizabeth and Leicester, and that it really is a disguised satire on the politics of Elizabethan England plus an overt treatment of certain classical themes as seen through the eyes of a late-sixteenth-century Englishman. It's also a mask on the subject of Mars and Venus. But it's Mars and Venus, not as the Greeks or the Romans would have seen them, but as they were seen in what we call the Renaissance. What we mean by the Renaissance is the rebirth of classical antiquity, but not classical antiquity in its pristine form. In being reborn, it was actually transformed into something entirely new.

In the case of *Antony and Cleopatra*, I went therefore to painters of the late sixteenth century, particularly the Venetian painter Veronese, who, in fact, represented a lot of scenes from classical antiquity. There's a very famous painting in the National Gallery in London of the Darius family at the feet of Alexander. Now, when you look at that picture you can see quite clearly that Veronese has made a wonderful mixture of costumes. Alexander stands there in something which looks rather like Roman costume, but it's also Roman costume as seen through the eyes of a sixteenth-century imagination. It's almost a sixteenth-century stage-costume version of Rome. And anyway it's Romans rather than Macedonian, so that already there's an anachronism there.

And then the courtiers who kneel at his feet, the Persian monarch and his family who kneel at his feet, are not ancient Persians. They are dressed in the costume of sixteenth-century Venetian courtiers, and the officers who stand beside Alexander are dressed in armor which is quite clearly the armor of the sixteenth-century Holy Roman Empire. So what you get, in fact, is a wonderful hodgepodge. That hodgepodge was the only available costume rail from which Veronese could draw in order to dress his idea of what that classical past was like. I used those images in order to recreate a sixteenth-century version of Roman antiquity.

Hallinan. And what about the sets?

Miller. As far as the sets were concerned, I had two considerations in mind. One was that I wanted to avoid literal scenery, because once you start having literal scenery it won't look good in the studio anyway. You're committed to going to Egypt. I didn't want to do that because it was too expensive, and because it actually, paradoxically, would have been inconsistent with the lines that were being spoken. The lines are couched in the verse and sentiments of the late

sixteenth century. It would have looked ludicrous to place that verse against a realistic Rome or Egypt of the first century A.D.

Hallinan. Is it not true that many people who watch Shakespeare on television haven't really seen Shakespeare at all before?

Miller. Yes, and for those the mere "fait accompli" of doing it at all carries its own justification. The problem, really, comes much more with people who have seen Shakespeare before. They have learned to visualize Shakespeare in what they think of as an authentic way, and they experience a shock when they see it done in a new way. Now, what they think of as an authentic way is by no means authentic. It is simply the one that they've grown familiar with. It acquires the reputation of authenticity merely because it's familiar. When you actually ask people what they mean by authentic proper Shakespeare, what they usually come up with is simply a description of the Shakespeare they saw twenty years ago, which is no more authentic than the one that was done twenty years prior to that. In fact, each twenty years sees its own characteristic departure from tradition, and that necessarily must take place. That's the way in which classics stay alive—by being able to undergo the transformations which each generation naturally and quite unavoidably inflicts upon them.

Hallinan. Let's get back to what you were saying earlier about the kind of sixteenth-century archaeology (as contrasted with classical archaeology) you've been doing in producing the plays for Season Three.

Miller. Well, if you're going to recreate a play from the remote past, you have to have some sort of documentary source in order to supply you with images. Pictures of the period are the best documentary sources to go by in order to come up with something which convincingly recreates the world that Shakespeare or any writer of his period is actually referring to. As a director, then, one has to spend as much time moving around art galleries and collecting picture postcards as one does in reading texts. It's simply one of the sources of inspiration. It's the director's job, quite apart from working with actors and getting subtle and energetic performances out of them, to act as the chairman of a history faculty and of an art-history faculty. To assume that you can unlock Shakespeare's imagination merely by intuition is to bring him down to the level of a television hack writer. Here was a writer who was immersed in the themes and notions of his time. The only way you can unlock that imagination is to immerse yourself in the themes in which he was immersed. And the only way you can do that is by looking at the pictures which reflect the visual world of which he was a part and to acquaint yourself with the political and social issues with which he was preoccupied—trying, in some way, to identify yourself with the world which was his.

With *Antony and Cleopatra,* I worked from the Venetian painters of the late sixteenth century, primarily Veronese. First, because it provided me with a source of costume designs. But it also gave me a way of staging the plays. There is something about the way in which Veronese organizes his physical space. I mean the Baroque style of his paintings is comparable to the Baroque style of the play. The ornamental exoticism of the verse requires something corresponding to it in the ornamental style of the way the production looks, and the Baroque imagination of Veronese supplied that very well.

With *The Taming of the Shrew,* I don't think that I've used any one particular painter. What I wanted to get was something which gave us a picture of domestic life at the start of the seventeenth century. Now, unfortunately, there are very few art historical sources which give us a view of life in the Italian

interior. The Italians did not, in fact, go in for domestic genre paintings in the seventeenth century. Almost all of their pictures were either mythological or religious. There is nothing which corresponds to the painting of the Dutch of thirty years later. The Dutch were endlessly painting scenes of domestic interiors. So I, as it were, plundered the Dutch painters and transformed them in order to create an Italian interior using Dutch sources, modifying them in order to give the appearance of what an Italian interior might have been like.

In the paintings of such Dutch artists as Vermeer you have people who celebrated, almost in a religious way, the sanctity of the sober domestic life, which is, in fact, what these plays are about. *The Taming of the Shrew* is about the setting up of a sober household and the necessity for marital obedience in order to maintain it. I felt that the Dutch Puritan interior would be a good point from which to take off. I don't think you can do it literally. You can't simply reproduce a Vermeer because it would create a world which, again, Shakespeare knew nothing about, the world of late-seventeenth-century Amsterdam. What I wanted was something of the calm, evenly-lit domestic interior that you can extract from Vermeer without actually reproducing Vermeer.

Hallinan. When you go to a painting as a source, do you think about duplicating its sense of perspective?

Miller. Now, this is a very important question. You can abuse art historical sources by simply going to them as inventories of prop details and costume details, and extracting from them simply the way chairs looked, or the sort of glasses that people might have used. One of the main uses of pictures is the way in which the space is organized at any given period. Looking at Baroque pictures tells you what the Baroque imagination believed was attractive about the organization of space. There's something about the twist and the turn and the dramatic fall of light, and about the spirals and the mobility of space, which can give you a way of expressing the turmoil of a play.

There is something that one would call almost manneristic about the style of *Hamlet* which would make one look for some kind of counterpart in pictorial mannerism in the staging of the play: the way in which one organized the physical spaces. In a less turbulent play, one might have a much more orderly perspective. In *The Taming of the Shrew,* for example, I used ordinary rectangular rooms where the space is quite readily "readable." There is a readily intelligible perspective, a vanishing point which is quite clearly visible, and all is clearly lit.

But in the case of *Hamlet* you have a dark, obscure, not readily intelligible play in which you wish to find something visually which repeats the ambiguity of the text. And indeed, there is in the history of paintings something which exactly reproduces that. In the manneristic paintings of the late sixteenth century, you have rather unintelligible perspections. A space which is not readily "readable." It is not evenly lit. It does not proceed toward a readily visible vanishing point. Drapes are seen falling in unintelligible ways. There are curious corridors through which the eye is drawn, not in straight lines, but in curious and perplexing spirals. The perplexing spiral of the plot of *Hamlet* can be reproduced visually by staging the thing in something which corresponds to that.

Hallinan. Your production of *The Taming of the Shrew* has been described as understated, even somber. How did you approach that play?

Miller. I think that *The Taming of the Shrew* has been bedevilled in the past by a lot of horseplay, a lot of rough-house and also a tremendously flamboyant, twinkle-eyed cavalier image of Petruchio, the gay, dashing cavalier that, "By

God, come kiss me, Kate," tames the young lass and brings her to heel. As with almost all of Shakespeare's comedies, it really is a more serious play than people have taken it for. The image of the dashing, moustachio-twirling cavalier is really a nineteenth-century version which has been imposed on the sixteenth-century English version portraying the character of the Puritan squire. The most important line in the play, I think, is where Petruchio says "To me, she's married, not unto my clothes." That is the great line which expressed Calvinism. The idea that you are, in fact, naked before the eye of God, and that that is the way you come before the eye of your partner. And that is the way you present yourself. The outward form, the decoration of your life, doesn't matter.

As for Kate, I've always wanted to get away from this game, this twinkling, bridling, high-spirited young colt image of her. These things give the audience the impression that there's going to be a great deal more humor than, in fact, there is in the play. What we want to do is to creep up quietly with comedy.

There are two plots. They're absolutely complementary, and each is just as important as the other. There are no subplots in Shakespeare; all the "subplots" are, in fact, the other side of a very carefully cantilevered structure. Shakespeare's plays are written like the domes of Renaissance cathedrals in which if you disregard one side and think of it as minor, you upset the structure. The relationship of Bianca to her suitors is there in order to give you a sense of the relationship between Petruchio and Kate. Who is the shrew, in fact, is the question that Shakespeare would have us ask ourselves. It isn't cut and dried that Kate's the shrew; she's the shrew that's mentioned, but it turns out by the time you get to the end of the play that the one who, in fact, is least obedient—the one who is shrillest and most disobedient—is actually Bianca.

Hallinan. The plot of Bianca and her suitors is, it seems to me, a little bit more difficult to handle.

Miller. Well, yes, I mean it's a conventional piece of sixteenth-century artificial comedy. It's not realistic. And the great mastery of Shakespeare is his ability to show what seemed to be perfectly realistic human temperaments at work, inside the framework of a brightly-colored, simplified jack-in-the-box, old-fashioned plot. You have to come head-on into that plot and be as straightforward and as intense as you possibly can. Make each character go hell-for-leather for his or her own intention; play it with deadly intensity and seriousness, and farce will emerge from that. The conflict among all these people, each working against the others, will automatically produce comedy.

I like to work with the comedy in such a way that accessory and unexpected things are brought in on the floor, not merely in rehearsal, but right up here in the studio. There were lots and lots of things which I didn't know were going to happen until I started to see the extras, and then I began to paint with the extras. Isaac, for example, the little busybody who happened to be hanging around the edge. I saw him there. There was an inquisitive, twinkling look to him, and I said, "Why don't we have him always hanging around the edges of the plot to try and overhear it?" And then there was a policeman at the end, and I decided to use him. There was something wonderfully inviting about his tin helmet and his fat face, and I thought, "It'd be nice to sort of strike him over the head." Well, when that happened, that led on to other things and they led on to other things.

Hallinan. What would you say are the major themes of this play?

Miller. Well, I think there are several themes. One is the enduring theme of marriage and the duty of a wife to a husband and, indeed, a husband to a wife. And, of course, also, of a father to his children and of children to their father and

of children to one another. Shakespeare is the great playwright of the family. He had a very clear understanding of the political theology of the family and of the relationship of the family to the state. Shakespeare was very interested in the notion of authority—authority within the family and authority within the state—and I believe that he underwrote the idea that the state, whether it was the small state of the family or the larger state of the country, required and needed the unquestioned authority of some sort of sovereign to whom everyone could defer. This was particularly important to someone like Shakespeare who had lived through, or had just emerged from, the period of the greatest turbulence in English political life. He and his contemporaries realized the absolute, vital importance of a peace imposed by someone who held within his hands the preemptive power and could inflict punishments and maintain control.

Well, in *The Taming of the Shrew* we have something very similar in that Shakespeare is extolling the virtues of the obedient wife—not the subordinate, cowed and simply docile, crushed wife—in accordance with the sixteenth-century belief that for the orderly running of society, some sort of sacrifice of personal freedom is necessary. Now, that's not something which we acknowledge or accept, but the fact that we don't acknowledge or accept it doesn't mean that we have to portray it in terms we find satisfactory. If we wish to make all plays from the past conform to our ideals and what we think the state or the family ought to be like, then we're simply rewriting all plays and turning them into modern ones. That, I think, is a species of historical suburbanism. It's we who live in the suburbs of history. The main part of human life has already occurred, and we live on a very thin rim just on the outside of the great metropolis of history. If we insist on making the past in our own image, we show that we have a very provincial and Philistine view of human history.

What we also have here is the situation of a daughter who behaves in a shrewish, spiteful, malignant, discontented, and unpleasant way. But Shakespeare sees her as behaving like this precisely because she has lost the love of her father. Shakespeare is interested in fathers who don't distribute their love fairly. In this particular case, Baptista unfairly adores the younger daughter, and I think what happens with Kate is that she says that "you've always loved her best." In this situation of feeling unloved, she behaves unloved. This is a very common psychological consequence of the withdrawal of love from a parent. The child says, "All right, if I am unloved, I'll behave as unlovably as you think I am." When Petruchio arrives, he shrewdly sees the true person underneath the shrewishness and realizes that the best way to tame her is to demonstrate to her by behaving badly himself just what bad behavior looks like to others. He holds a mirror up to her. It's a technique child therapists sometimes use today, and this is where Shakespeare is so shrewd. Far from the taming of a shrew, then, this play is, in fact, about the teaching of a shrew, or the treatment of a shrew by allowing her to see her own image through someone who, quite clearly, adores her from the beginning.

Hallinan. Tell us about the Psalm that you're running over the end credits.

Miller. We've taken one of the Psalms which talks about the orderliness and grace and beauty of the family. It's one of the Psalms that would have been sung in the household after a meal in a Puritan household, and it somehow reconciles all the conflicts of the previous two hours. All these characters have been working at odds with one another, working against one another, trying to get their own ends. Now they are suddenly brought together in what the sixteenth century regarded as *communitas,* which is the bringing together, the unifying and harmonizing of

all individual desires so that they actually work together rather than against one another. This is expressed beautifully when they all jointly sing a part song, which in itself is an expression of bringing different voices together in one harmonious performance.

It is in the medium of comedy that Shakespeare achieves his highest and most serious purposes. In *Twelfth Night,* in *As You Like It,* in *The Taming of the Shrew,* in *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure,* in plays which are labeled comedies, Shakespeare brings together the higher and more exalted themes of reconciliation, harmony, and peace on earth—as far as is possible, the idea of heaven.

At the end of the play, Petruchio invites Katherine to tell these foolish froward wives what their duty is to their husbands. He's not asking, as is so often thought, a broken woman to tell her colleagues or her sisters to button their lips and be obedient. He is asking a woman who has been through a complicated experience of self-discovery what is involved in submitting your will to others in the name of some larger satisfaction, such as the beauty and harmony of a family.

Throughout these comic plays, Shakespeare's heroines are teachers. Rosalind in *As You Like It,* Viola in *Twelfth Night,* Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well,* Portia in *The Merchant of Venice.* Less, of course, in the case of Katherine: she becomes a teacher only as a result of being taught. Nevertheless, they all have this didactic function.

The mysterious thing is that in many of Shakespeare's plays the woman only becomes a teacher when she is in some sort of disguise. She can only exert her didactic function when she's masquerading as a man. Portia can perform her really didactic function only when she is dressed as the doctor. In the same way, Rosalind can only teach Orlando how to love properly and how not to be a sentimental fool when she's disguised as Ganymede. Viola can only teach the foolish, lovelorn Orsino and the silly, melancholy Olivia how to pull themselves together when she is disguised as Cesario. I think that it's done for two reasons: first of all, because Elizabethan audiences might have found it hard to accept the idea that a woman could be the source of moral wisdom; second, because there's a much more magical idea that, not in the guise of a woman or of a man, but in the intermediate guise of a hermaphrodite, where you are neither one thing nor the other and therefore outside the society, you're in a position to broadcast moral wisdom because you're not a participant. You're a visitor from on high who can come and bring these moral messages to society and teach the foolish how to acquire wisdom. Portia has to teach Shylock how to soften justice with mercy. But immediately afterwards she also has to teach her own husband how to reconcile love and obligation and duty to his betrothed with the possibility of gratitude; she forces him to give her the ring, although she has told him that he must never give up the ring. Shakespeare deliberately gives Bassanio an impossible situation, a dilemma from which it's impossible to escape, in order to teach him something.

Hallinan. Perhaps you could say more about your production of *The Merchant of Venice.*

Miller. Well, yes. The play's central theme is the conflict between the world of the Old Testament and the world of the New Testament. It's not about Jews versus Christians in the racial sense. It's about the world of Jewish law versus the world of Christian grace, the world of legislation versus the world of mercy. And Shakespeare, as he always does with a complicated issue, instead of just present-

ing a cut-and-dried case of mercy being better than law, shows us that those who are the exponents of mercy act unmercifully when given the opportunity to use the law against the Jew. And likewise, someone who lives by the law is willing to bend it in order to make it work for him. The play has wonderful, interesting, contradictory ambiguities in it, as always is the case when Shakespeare's imagination is working at full pressure.

The play, again, is about the conflict between two worlds under which Europe has always lived. It's the world represented on the fronts of the great cathedrals in France, where on the great west doors of Chartres or of Amiens you will see on the left-hand side the prophets of the Old Testament, and on the right side the apostles and the disciples of the New Testament. And surmounting the door stands the figure of Christ in majesty, or the Last Judgment, or the figure of Jesus crowning the Virgin. The play represents this strain and the conflict which arises in a Europe which has inherited many of its theories of public duty from the Jewish world of law, but its theological ideas of redemption and salvation from the Christianity which sprang out of the Jewish world of law. I think the play is about the conflicts which arise as a result of this dual origin of European morality.

But the play is also about more subtle and more interesting things. It's also about kinship and the notion of kindred. Shakespeare plays an endless series of puns on kin, kinship, and kind. One must realize, of course, that the word *kind* and the word *kin* and the word *kinship* come from the same root as the words *generation* and *gentile*; they come from *gens* (people). And *kin* means breeding and *kinder* means children. *Kin, kinder, kinship, generation, gens,* and so forth are all part of a series of knotted ideas that have to do with descent and kinship. To whom do you show kindness? You show kindness to people of your kind, people of your own kin, which means people of your own family, people of your own generation. The play is about the whole topic of loyalty toward people of your kind, people of your own family.

But all through the play one gets a series of subtle puns which ask questions about the affinities that people ought to feel and do feel as a result of coming from the same people, coming from the same family. Jessica asks the question, "What heinous sin is it that makes me ashamed to be my father's child?" Here is a Jewish girl who wishes to become a Christian and feels ashamed of not honoring her father when she feels that there is, in fact, a duty to honor those from whom you descend, people of your own kind, people of your own kin. She is unkind to her father although he is of her kind. The play rings changes on these notions in the dictionary.

Hallinan. How do you see the two plots as relating and reinforcing these concepts?

Miller. Well, I think that there are counterparts in that in Portia we see an enslavement to the will of a dead father. In the case of Jessica we see an enslavement to the will of a living father. In both cases they escape by marriage. Shakespeare then asks the question, does happiness arise from these escapes? And if in both cases we are seeing the wills of daughters thwarted by the wills of fathers, we also see the wills of fathers thwarted by the wills of their daughters.

Hallinan. Perhaps we could switch now to *Antony and Cleopatra.* What do you see as the proper approach to this complex play?

Miller. I think the views of the characters have changed very much with the times. There was a time when they were seen as this noble couple who spoke great verse and whose love dwarfed all other loves. That was the romantic heroism of the nineteenth-century view and, indeed, even the eighteenth-century view of

Shakespeare. But since the Romantic era, we've come to see Shakespeare's characters in a different way, perhaps less heroic. We are more interested in the foibles and the failings and the human, non-heroic characteristics of these people. Now, instead of seeing Antony and Cleopatra as this couple extolling and expounding noble love, we see them, really, much more as a pair of psychological failures. We see Antony as someone deluded and foolish, who lets himself rot and decay under the influence of this exotic Egyptian queen; and we see her not as a wonderful model of erotic splendor, but as a treacherous slut. And in fact what's interesting about her is that someone quite as clearly unprincipled, treacherous, selfish, and egocentric can exert such influence over someone who is apparently so strong, so potent, and so powerful in the world of politics. I think these probably are the things that Shakespeare was genuinely interested in: beneath the reputation of power and prestige lies an ordinary person with susceptibilities, failings, and a tendency to lose energy.

As regards Antony, the play is about the fact that energy can suddenly give out. Someone who has been a powerhouse of political strength throughout his life can fall to bits—may, for reasons which are entirely internal, begin to fail, begin to indulge in hours of lassitude. Not merely hours of love-making, but hours of lassitude. We tend to think that lust is the vice that Shakespeare is writing about in *Antony and Cleopatra,* but I think that what the medieval scholars called "accidia" is just as important. By "accidia" what they meant was sloth: advanced laziness. Antony sees himself pulled down, not merely by this woman, but by the life she represents, the life of languidness, and of too much food, and too much drinking, and getting up too late, and going to bed too late.

It's very often thought that what keeps Antony in Egypt is some superlative sexual skill on the part of Cleopatra, that she can do things which no Roman matron would ever dream of doing, that she can do things which Octavia can't and won't. This vulgarizes the play because it overplays certain rather commercial interests that we have today in sexual allure. If you look at the text carefully, you can see that few references are made to sexual love. It's not that this is simply a man who has found an interesting conversationalist and nothing else. It's quite clearly sexual in its foundation. But that's not the main interest. That's not what keeps Antony in Egypt. I think it's something to do with the temperament of the woman.

When Enobarbus talks about Cleopatra in that famous speech in which he describes her in the barge, he actually doesn't describe her physical appearance at all. Admittedly he says that it beggars all description, but he spends most of his time describing how wonderfully exotic the barge was. Nine-tenths of the physical description is about the cupids and the sails and the perfume and the silver oars; very little about the size of Cleopatra's bust or what her cleavage looked like. And there is no mention on Antony's part of Cleopatra's sexual allure. She's obviously not a repulsive woman. But what is really attractive about her is the thing that Enobarbus marvels at in the speech, which is her changeability, her volatility, her versatility. The fact that she is never the same thing from moment to moment, that her mood changes and that you can't predict her. Enobarbus says that "the priests bless her when she's rigish," so that even unexpected and immoral things in her acquire attractiveness merely because they are part of a pattern of changeability.

I think that what is interesting about the play is that it shows what happens when a man who has lived all his life by duty and by public office suddenly comes across a life which is lived by impulse and for appetite. At the beginning

of the play, he keeps on saying "Oh, what should we do tonight?" The main attraction is not something that happens in bed, but the fact that she says "Let's go through the streets disguised and just observe people." In other words, he's being allowed to do things in this part of the world which he couldn't possibly have done in Rome. Although a queen, Cleopatra allows herself the luxury of something never allowed to monarchs on the other side of the Mediterranean: privacy, and following the private impulse as opposed to the public duty. Something more interesting than glamour is at work in this play: it's a subtle conflict between notions of duty and appetite, between public life and private satisfaction.

Hallinan. What was the attraction of the Roman world, do you think? What was the appeal of that setting for Shakespeare?

Miller. Well, I think there are many reasons why Rome was attractive to the men of the sixteenth century, as indeed it had been for the men of the previous century. It was, first of all, a past into which it was possible to project an awful lot of wishful thinking and say "this was a golden age in which men lived more nobly, with greater grandeur, with more sophistication, with more civilization as well."

I think there was also an idea about the Roman Empire which had always been a source of political nostalgia, not just artistic and aesthetic nostalgia, from as early as the ninth century. When Charlemagne instituted the notion of the Holy Roman Empire, he wished to reconvene the great metropolitan, peacemaking, political form of the Roman Empire but under the aegis of Christianity. The idea that Charlemagne had when he set up the Holy Roman Empire and had himself crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day, 800, was to reconvene the "pax Romana" under the shield, or rather under the cross, of God.

A lot of the attraction of Rome, then, was the notion of the imperial peace under the shield of the Christian religion. When Dante wrote his great essays on monarchy versus the Pope, he was seeing, in the dignity of the Roman Empire combined with the piety of Christianity, some huge world of civilized pious peace which could only be recovered by going back to the glories of Christian Rome.

Then, of course, one has to remember that Europe had lived through what the men of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw as a world of monastic darkness and superstition in the 600 years when science and art had languished and the civilized, sophisticated world of Rome had vanished. Petrarch talks about it in the fourteenth century when he says that we will only advance into the future by walking backwards into the brilliant radiance of the past. I think that this was what was meant at that time by Humanism, that the nobility of human potential would only be realized by retrieving all the values of this lost, ruined world of Roman antiquity.

Hallinan. To what extent do you see the Roman plays as plays concerned with political questions?

Miller. In all of Shakespeare's political plays, the plays which deal with kings and queens and with emperors, he is asking questions which preoccupied anyone who lived in late-sixteenth-century England. After all, Queen Elizabeth was beginning to age; the Tudor Dynasty was coming to an end, and they knew that they would have to make a switch to another dynasty. What do we want of our new monarch? What do we want of monarchs in general? Do we want them at all? What is the nature of sovereignty in the state? Can the officer ever live up to the duties of the office?

In *King Lear* we have a man who occupies the throne but is quite clearly, in his own personal character, unsuited to fill it. He's an incompetent, selfish old man. In *Richard the Second* we have a foolish, vacillating, selfish, unstable king. Nevertheless he is the crowned and anointed monarch. Is it right for young Bolingbroke to claim his right and usurp the throne just because he is better qualified to occupy it? Isn't it blasphemy to overthrow the crowned and anointed king? Is it better to have an illegitimate sovereign who is qualified than to have a legitimate sovereign who is unqualified?

Shakespeare puts these problems in front of us all the time. Do we want a likable, convivial person like Antony to rule the world, a man who will be constantly descending into lassitude and debauchery but nevertheless is a very amiable character? Or do we want the unlikable efficient world of Octavius Caesar, who later, after all, becomes the Emperor Augustus? Shakespeare never solved this problem for us. He simply sets it in front of our eyes and asks us to consider what we expect of our rulers. It's a question we are still asking. Is it right to kick out a president, our elected president, when he turns out to be personally an unsuitable occupant of his office? We may have our own answers to such a question, as I'm sure Shakespeare privately did. But Shakespeare never committed himself to what the answer was. He simply set the problem before us by presenting two protagonists representing alternative extremes of these two states.

Hallinan. And since he was drawing his sources from history he wasn't responsible for the people who came out the winners. It's always the cold fish who's the winner.

Miller. Yes, and with the cold fish as the winner, he then says to you, "Is that what you wanted?" And one suspects that Shakespeare comes down on the side of the cold fish, not because he finds him likable, not because he prefers him, but because Shakespeare, as a man of the sixteenth century looking backwards over the chaos of the previous century during the Wars of the Roses, saw the dangers to society of not having a strong monarch. And he comes down on the side of an orderly society ruled by an efficient sovereign simply because the chaos that prevails in the presence of a weak sovereign is so deplorable that it's worth putting your vote on the man who is a cold fish but an efficient one. Like Octavius.

I think that Shakespeare sees Octavius in very much the same light as he sees Prince Hal, except that in Octavius' case we have not seen a debauched youth transforming himself into a dutiful monarch. We start off with an energetic, puritanical young man in a hurry who is out to conquer the world and to be ruler of it and to live by duty. He represents the puritan virtues of work and diligence and duty. I think that Shakespeare, when writing about him, had in mind the sort of people that later became the officers of Cromwell's army in mid-seventeenth-century England. The puritans were intellectuals who set store by their direct and immediate relationship with God, who believed in the ethic of work and of duty and of unremitting energy, and who believed that through the virtues of thrift and hard work you would pile up not merely rewards on earth, but endless rewards in heaven.