

The Shakespearean Tide

Studies in the Dynamics of Human Time

To Professor Marta Gibińska-Marzec



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Studies in the Dynamics of Human Time

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There is a tide in the affairs of men...

Julius Caesar

Preface

This is my second book on time in Shakespeare. *The Dramatic Potential of Time*, published by the University of Silesia (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego) in 2002, was based on my doctoral dissertation, which I had written under the supervision of Professor Marta Gibińska-Marzec and defended in January 2000. One part of that book offered a copious introduction to the time problem in philosophy and literature, and to dramatic time in particular. This introduction was followed by a detailed analysis of poetic time in the Sonnets and of the transition from poetic to dramatic time in the narrative poem *Lucrece*. The second part, devoted exclusively to drama, offered interpretations of five plays: *Love's Labour's Lost*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and – in the role of a concluding chapter – *The Tempest*. Studies of two more comedies and two more tragedies have since been awaiting publication.

It is not to be thought that the only reason I have decided to prepare another book on time in Shakespeare has been to prevent the unpublished material from accumulating more dust than it already has. On re-examining these analyses I came to the conclusion that a change of approach would be justified, that an interpretive synthesis of Shakespeare's handling of time is both desirable and feasible. The new approach consists in analysing individual plays with an eye upon larger issues and universal themes, with a view to a comprehensive understanding of the way in which the dynamism of man's engagement with time animates Shakespeare's drama, indeed the dramatic genre itself. This is roughly the same as saying that that engagement penetrates – defines even – the dramatic genre as such, regardless of the various inflections of human temporality across the different shapes of drama. Animated by this new purpose, I have not only undertaken an extensive revision of the unpublished material but also written new interpretations of four more plays, two tragedies (*Hamlet* and *King Lear*) and two romances (*The Winter's Tale* and

Pericles). For the reasons just stated, I introduce the category of human time and define it in relation to what in my previous book I termed natural or organic time.

Despite the seemingly complex structure of this book, the sections devoted to particular plays are relatively autonomous and can be read as such. There is no concluding section in the strict sense; the final chapter performs the function of tying up the different time-related themes and the accompanying rhetorical and theatrical strategies that were lifted out of the texture of the four plays analysed earlier. In particular, it traces a redemptive movement in Shakespeare's treatment of natural time, a passage from the tragic sense of cursed temporality in the tragedies to the emphatic affirmations of *Pericles*.

Throughout, the focus is on the Shakespeare texts themselves and critical debate has been relegated to the margin. The broad and sometimes baffling variety of scholarly approaches to the problem of time, to time in literature, and to time in Shakespeare, as well as distinctions of chiefly academic nature (areas covered in some detail in my previous book) have been overviewed in the Introduction and then largely left behind.

There is another reason for publishing these studies and I feel obliged to reveal it, even though it is not of a strictly academic nature. Unlike the previous work, this has been long in preparation and thus may justifiably claim the co-parenthood of time itself. This revisiting of the time problem in Shakespeare has been an opportunity for me to reread and interpret my favourite plays. At the same time, some of the plays close-analysed in this book have become my acquaintances through repeated teaching over the past several years. The united forces of fondness and familiarity exert a pressure for expression in writing which is difficult for the mind to withstand. There are many ways to discover drama, as there are many ways to discover Shakespeare – mine in both cases was, years ago, through the time problem. It is my fond hope that somehow these pages have retained some of the enthusiasm that animates every discoverer.

Though prepared in compliance with the rules of academic publication, this book has not been written with Shakespeare scholars as its only intended readers. A degree of acquaintance with the plays discussed here is required, to be sure; the reader is kindly advised to study the plays on his or her own before reading these “studies,” because there has been no room for the summarising of plots or the introducing of characters. But these interpretations are first and foremost renewed attempts – or “essays” – to come to terms with time as a “factor” (some awkward term of this kind must content us, for none will adequately define time) of supreme significance in both human life and in drama. As creatures endowed – some would prefer to say “burdened” – with consciousness, we

cannot ignore the time factor; similarly, a self-conscious playwright – and Shakespeare certainly was one – cannot afford to do so in his art.

Textual analysis is throughout the preferred method. To read Shakespeare closely, however, is to keep a watchful eye on the stage business as it comes into view, as it transpires, as it were, through the printed and spoken word.¹ In other words, efforts have been made not to lose sight of the “mimetic” or “theatrical” side of the relation between time and drama. After all, live performance is perhaps as close as art can get to lived and living time.

¹ This insight is entirely to professor Gibińska’s credit, as are the interpretive strategies that are its natural consequence. In acknowledging this debt I cannot help recalling the veritable “school of Shakespeare” that I went through as I participated in her seminars in Kraków in the years before completing my PhD.

Introduction

Time – analysis versus synthesis

This book picks up on, but also takes off from, an earlier attempt to confront “the same” subject. Some justification may reasonably be expected of the presumption that yet another book on time in Shakespeare makes sense and its perusal worth the while. The simple distinction that I would like to use is that between analytic and synthetic types of approach. *The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare* was largely an analytic effort in that emphasis was firmly laid upon the many and different ways of understanding “time.” This book offers a change of perspective. Let me explain how this difference works when applied to the matter in hand.

An analyst will insist on distinctions. He or she will approach time in drama by introducing, fine-tuning, and then interpretatively or otherwise employing a great deal of “aspects” and “terms.” Philosophers, scientists, but also literary scholars have been uniquely prolific when it comes to the time problem. Here is an overview of some of the basic ideas.¹

1. The different philosophies of time; different philosophical ideas (conceptualisations) of time.

A common distinction is that between physical time or, more generally, world time, on the one hand, and mental time or soul time, on the other. While the former is associated with Aristotle and Newton, the latter with Augustine and Bergson. Many will think such bundling off or pairing, of Aristotle with Newton and of Augustine with Bergson, to be a gross simplification, and rightly so. “Nature” in Aristotle and in New-

¹ See Jacek Mydla, *The Dramatic Potential of Time in Shakespeare* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002), Introduction.

ton means different things. Yet in both the respective philosophies, time is approached outwardly rather than introspectively. Similarly, Bergson is as much interested in nature as he is in the operation of the human mind; and still, his preoccupation with memory determines his approach to time as such. Only after exposing the fallacy of spatialised time – time misconceived as “homogenous medium”² – does Bergson return to the outside world to find in it the kind of duration (lived and living rather than empty time) that he has detected in the mind.

Bergson is commonly associated with the discovery of “internal time” as distinct from “physical time,” and therefore not only with some other “new” philosophies (phenomenology, existentialism) but also with the modernist turn in literature and the accompanying invention of new narrative techniques. But the following quotation from *War and Peace* ought to make us realise that the revolt against narrowly scientific ideas of time was not as unprecedented as we might wish to think:

Absolute continuity of motion is not comprehensible to the human mind. Laws of motion of any kind become comprehensible to man only when he examines arbitrarily selected elements of that motion; but at the same time, a large proportion of human error comes from the arbitrary division of continuous motion into discontinuous elements. There is a well-known, so-called sophism of the ancients consisting in this, that Achilles could never catch up with a tortoise he was following, in spite of the fact that he traveled ten times as fast as the tortoise. By the time Achilles has covered the distance that separated him from the tortoise, the tortoise has covered one tenth of that distance ahead of him: when Achilles has covered that tenth, the tortoise has covered another one hundredth, and so on forever. This problem seemed to the ancients insoluble. The absurd answer (that Achilles could never overtake the tortoise) resulted from this: that motion was arbitrarily divided into discontinuous elements, whereas the motion both of Achilles and of the tortoise was continuous.

Here Tolstoy proceeds to answering the Achilles-chasing-tortoise conundrum, itself an indication that the awareness that the intellect may not be capable of apprehending motion has troubled philosophers for hundreds of years. But perhaps – slightly to change the perspective – we need not to overemphasise the dichotomy between intellect and in-

² Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will. An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2001), p. 98. On the other hand, common language does spatialise time; it suffices to consider expressions such as “in the space of so many hours/days.”

tuition and the other one that accompanies it, between mechanistic succession and continuity. Modern thought, no matter whether we side with Newton or Bergson, has been marked by a persistent fascination with change and motion, triumphing thereby over the Platonic partiality for permanence.³

2. The transition from antiquity to modernity; its different expressions, including literary ones.

It is claimed that the Renaissance brought with it a new sense of time, in one way or another connected with the process of the Western civilisation stepping out of the Middle Ages – with the world order regarded *sub specie aeternitatis* (“under the aspect of eternity”) and the accompanying feudal system – and into the modern era. Humanism is understood as an experience-orientated world-view, governed by mercantile values and mundane pursuits,⁴ but at the same time informed by an acute realisation that the now-much-valued life on earth is painfully transient. Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* may be seen as a literary depiction of the drama of this transition: of the “existential” dilemmas accompanying it, of the either-or facing humanity in the process of outgrowing its medieval swaddling clothes. Faustus decides to seize his days, to buy a brief now during which to gratify the appetites and passions and pursue earthly delights rather than think of death and blissful afterlife. Having accepted the bargain, Faustus is troubled with a mounting sense of having dissipated a higher good, of having sold his better self. The penultimate scene of the play, with the clock ticking off Faustus’ remaining minutes on earth and “measuring” his deepening despair, as he in vain prays to Nature to “make perpetual day,” gives a fine theatrical representation of the modern condition as a temporal dilemma.

3. Pictorial and iconographic representations of time and time-related subjects.

In this department we find a wealth of images, many of which inspired the imagery that in the form of rhetoric permeated Renaissance poetry. Among the most common representations of “Time” and his operations are: the Devourer, the Reaper and Leveller, Father, Occasion, Fortune. Personification supplies the obvious vehicle whereby “mate-

³ As in this passage from *Phaedo*, describing the soul’s longing for “that which is pure and always existent and immortal and unvarying [...]” (79a; see Bibliography for details).

⁴ As Francis Bacon puts it in his essay “Of Dispatch”: “For time is the measure of business, as money is of wares; and business is bought at a dear hand where there is small dispatch.” (See Bibliography for details of the edition used.) In Bacon’s use “dispatch” means promptness or alacrity required in the proper management of one’s affairs, especially those economic in nature.

rial” can be transferred between iconography and poetry. Shakespeare’s poems (the Sonnets and the narrative poem *Lucrece*) are evidence of this blending of the pictorial and the poetical. Thus, to name the best-known instance, when in Sonnet 116 we read that “love’s not Time’s fool,” the metaphor is couched in a personification of time as the Reaper; equipped with a “bending sickle” he cuts down “rosy lips and cheeks.”

4. This pictorial (and rhetorical) legacy, when conceptualised, allows us to distinguish the following six meanings of time in Shakespeare’s poetry:⁵
 - physical or abstract time (roughly equivalent to Bergson’s “objective” or “spatialised,” non-durational, time): a line consisting of units such as hours, minutes, etc. (succeeding one another, and themselves divisible into smaller units, and so *ad infinitum*);
 - periodicity in nature (and its reflections in the human world): diurnal and seasonal cycles and rhythms (clock time, calendar time);
 - organic, biological or natural time, either in its augmentative, restorative aspect (growth, renewal) or deteriorative and entropic (decline, death, decomposition);
 - subjective time (“felt time”), manifesting itself in memory and through inner rhythms and fluctuations (psychic “ups and downs,” mental dynamic) which make duration (“objective” lengths of time) seem relative to how we experience things;
 - artistic or ideal time (as in Plato’s dichotomy of changeability and permanence), related to our experience of how beauty transcends the sphere of the corporeal and transient and to our intuitions (“intimations”) of the spiritual and enduring; this experience found such a haunting expression in Keats’ Odes;
 - *kairos*, literally “the opportune moment,” but also a moment of fulfillment (redemptive or eschatological time, though not necessarily in a strictly religious sense); many of the Sonnets owe their rhetorical energy to the opposition between the natural deterioration of things and restorative (almost “salvational”) powers of poetry and beauty.⁶
5. The different ways of representing time in literature.

In my previous book I advanced the proposition that the poem *Lucrece* could be seen as a “transitional” work, i.e. as one that makes palpable a shift from poetry to drama, from time represented rhetori-

⁵ See Mydla, *The Dramatic Potential*, p. 60.

⁶ In some of the Sonnets (see Sonnets 59, 106) the addressee is represented as an Adonis, a semi-Christian “messiah,” a divinity capable of endowing things (and time itself) with meaning. The poet admits to his sense of living in a time hallowed by the presence of the admired object.

cally (as in the Sonnets) to time represented mimetically, from time spoken of to time imitated, from time described to time experienced. *Lucrece* was for Shakespeare an opportunity to convey to his readers an acute sense of time's passing, to make time's passage felt. This is evident at a moment when, after the rape, the heroine realises that her speaking about time is a way of passing the time, *her* time. She comes to see, in other words, that her elaborate apostrophes and lamentations are means of eluding the pressing present moment, a moment that demands resolve. Seen from this angle, the heroine's predicament is not unlike Hamlet's, and Shakespeare was drawn to the notion that speech can be a means of procrastination.⁷ *Lucrece*, despite Shakespeare's heavy reliance on the tradition of iconographic and poetic representations of time, is a *dramatic* poem in that it depicts the tragedy of a life winding down to the self-inflicted death of the heroine. In other words, it makes us alert to the distinction between spoken and real time, especially thanks to the disturbing realisation of *Lucrece* that speaking about time ("smoke of words") may be a means of dodging the pressures of real time.

Telling and showing, narration and imitation, diegesis and mimesis – this crude distinction found in Plato's *Republic* may still be a viable method of approaching time in drama.⁸ Time represented verbally needs to be distinguished from shown time and yet, if a given play is to work (in the sense explained below), the playwright has to attain an agreement between the two "times," to bring them into a state of synchronisation. This means in particular that the dramatic poet needs to harmonise a play's concrete time (with the troubling "realistic" double time⁹) with that play's (or, rather, the characters') ideas about and attitudes to time. In Shakespeare as a rule we find both; namely, we have a web or rather a track of realistically represented time by means of deixis (i.e. through references to the clock and the calendar) and we also have characters verbalising their time-related ideas and expressing their feelings about the past, the present, and the future. Harmonisation is pursued so as to give the play (that is to say, us, the spectators or readers) an experience of an imaginative unity.¹⁰

⁷ Compare the self-intimidating line in *Hamlet*: "That I [...] / Must like a whore unpack my heart with words [...]" (II.ii. 581).

⁸ Plato, *The Republic*, Book 3, pp. 393 ff; see Bibliography for details of the edition used.

⁹ See my discussion in "The Idea of Time in *Othello*," *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny* 44 (1997), pp. 231–243.

¹⁰ In support of this proposition we can claim the authority of Samuel Johnson. In his famous preface to his edition of the plays, Johnson emphatically argues that dramatic illu-

Plato's distinction is not only crude; it may be misleading. As the epic is not pure narration, so drama is not pure imitation. However, although we need to forego dreams of conceptual purism, it still makes sense, in my opinion, to distinguish between time-language used for purposes of representation (mundane references to the clock and the calendar) and time-language used for strictly dramatic purposes, i.e. as a mode of behaviour. "Today is Thursday." is different from "I'll meet you tomorrow morning and we'll fight." Both utterances, despite the obvious difference between mere informing and actual doing (in the latter utterance the character of the speaker "shines through," and therefore we have here an instance of imitation and action rather than mere speaking), are mundane both because they refer to concrete time and because we do not detect in either an element of "poetry." When Claudio, a young man in *Much Ado About Nothing* impatient to be married, says: "Time goes on crutches till love have all its rites" (II.i. 334) – the utterance strikes us as poetical (due to the personification) besides the fact that it may (and does) fulfil a "mundane" function. Shakespeare's plays are spoken plays; in them, speaking always accompanies action (the written text can be compared to a musical score; a performance has been encoded in it), but, moreover, there is in them a surplus of the poetical element. We shall be referring to this element as "rhetoric"; and so Claudio's line just quoted can be called an example of Shakespeare's rhetoric of time. We shall return briefly to this towards the end of this introduction.

6. Time of the characters and time of the audience.

The distinction between telling and showing leads us beyond represented time and into the sphere of experience. We can speak about experiencing time in a double sense: Time dramatically (verbally and mimetically) represented is time lived by the characters; a Macbeth or an Ophelia may decide to "seize" an opportunity that presents itself or to give up on a proverbially fleeting occasion, to run away mentally from the current situation if they have found it burdensome into either the past or the future, etc. While thus characters experience or live their "dramatic" situations (critical moments in their individual lives), spectators, on the necessary condition of their empathetic involvement in what is shown (what is being experienced on the stage), imaginatively live through the thus represented experiences. This statement calls for another distinction; for while characters – even though they have no actual existence – actively participate in the portrayed events

sion can overcome our sense of clock time: "There is no reason why a mind [...] wandering in ecstasy should count the clock [...]." See Bibliography for details of the edition used.

(to use the word “act” would be fatally ambiguous), spectators, who are real persons, remain passive despite their acute involvement. If this sounds paradoxical then paradoxical is the nature of the theatre.

Now, to return to the analytic-synthetic distinction mentioned earlier, it is obvious that time in drama can be approached and examined in a great variety of ways, as the ideas and distinctions just presented illustrate. An analytically minded interpreter is welcome to pursue a chosen “aspect” and use sharpened tools to attain his or her goals. Sharp-focusing and fine-tuning inevitably militate against the comprehensiveness of the results attained, which – I take it – is the desideratum of all self-conscious interpretation; even if we feel compelled to limit our perspective (as we perforce do, for no interpretation can be valid without engaging the text), we still wish to be able to say something substantial about the work in its entirety. To juggle the terms, all interpretation is analytic in the “Kantian” sense: the interpreter does not go beyond the meanings contained in the text, for no matter how seemingly loose and vagrant those word-strings may be they have a common unifying core and source, which is the text itself. The interpretations in the studies presented here are fuelled, as we might put it, by this dialectic tension between the synthetic and the analytic, or centripetal and centrifugal, energies.

Human time

Time in drama is thus experienced or lived in a double sense. To refer to Bergson’s critique of spatialisation, time in drama cannot be “objective” or “abstract,” and the so-called double clock in Shakespeare shows that it never is. References to the clock and the calendar matter little in live reception and no wonder that Shakespeare did not care to be precise in using them. We tend to forget about the clock (thus also about *our* watches) while watching a play and our intellect fails or simply refuses to cut time up into discrete lengths, even if we know that we move between scenes and acts.¹¹ Our involvement in the unfolding action makes us unable to

¹¹ Shakespeare’s plays were designed for continuous performance, and so a well-crafted, smoothly-montaged film adaptation of a play may bring us closer to the original experience than a typical contemporary staging with intervals for changes of setting and dress.

“bracket off” lived (durative) time, which may be or may become computable and measurable only when that involvement is switched off, as is the case when our involvement has petered off and boredom causes us to keep glancing at our watches to see how long “we have to go.”

Such is the principal contention of philosophies which represent the “subjectivist” approach to the time problem (Bergsonism, phenomenology, existentialism). Inasmuch as being-in-the-world logically precedes turning that world into an object of scientific inquiry, time is (“always already,” to use the favourite phrase) filled and meaningful before it can become “objective,” i.e. empty and measurable. And vice versa, it can only be measured because – prior to intellectual anatomising – it is filled with meaning. Both in Shakespeare and in everyday life, “biology” comes before “physics,” and this before “mathematics.” Perhaps now, in our digital age, this is truer than ever; we want a fast processor (that is to say, a superfast *computing* machine) simply because our modern humanism has made us so conscious of the value of our time. The possessive pronoun now permanently affixed to “time,” we wish to save our (human: lived, filled) time when we sit down to our PCs, which is possible on the condition that we forget about *its* time. Similarly, we want a new, superefficient washing machine because its digital display will tell us exactly how much time (*our* time) we have saved – while waiting for the program to run its course – in comparison with the old one. And we may still remember that we bought our first washing machine because we are hypermodern and hence unshaken in our belief that hand-washing is a gross waste of time.

All this is about human time, which is time filled with meaning. Human time is lived time rather than an abstract and pure duration, which perhaps does not exist unless as t in a mathematical equation. Time is thus so much experienced duration also when “nothing happens”; as Martin Heidegger has shown, “moments” drawn out *in infinitum* by tedium (the example of a useless wait, as for a train that we have been just informed is delayed by an hour and fifteen minutes, has always served its purpose) confront us, if in a rather unpleasant manner, with the raw nature of our time which, absurdly, has ceased to be felt as ours.¹² But then,

¹² The following passage from *Madame Bovary* springs to mind: “[...] and the succession of identical days began again. So now they’d go on and on like this, numberless, always the same, bringing nothing! [...] The future was a dark corridor, with a firmly closed door at the end.” (Part I, Chapter IX; see Bibliography for details of the edition used). Don’t let us miss Flaubert’s challenge: to take up boredom as a viable literary subject. In our analyses of the plays we shall examine Shakespeare’s attempts to represent tedium; those, however, must pale in comparison with, say, Beckett’s determination to “dramatise” waiting. See also my article “The Displeasure of Reading; Brief Prolegomena to Tediology,” in:

what is entertainment there for? In our obsessive pursuit of the idea of the conservation of time, we remain untiring in finding ways to “beguile the time,” to “kill it” even. Here is what *Hamlet* and the four-hundred-and-fifty-seventh episode of a TV series have in common: both can help us to pass the time (hence the useful word “pastime”), both serve as means to experience how other people live their “drama” and thus perhaps ward off imminent boredom, “to while away the time,” as another phrase helps us to express it.¹³

The phrase “human time” sounds as though it had been borrowed from Georges Poulet, whose *Etudes sur le temps humain*, or *Studies in Human Time*, first appeared in 1949. But while Poulet in his approach owes a great deal to the phenomenological “revolution,” my understanding of human time is oriented towards the Shakespearean material: the ways the characters express their “personalities,” “moods,” and “goals,” thus inevitably also their attitudes to time and its three dimensions and how these ideas and attitudes determine their actions. As we shall see, of special importance in Shakespeare is the so-called natural or organic time. This idea – which is not to be confused with a scientific abstraction, but is rather to be perceived through the images and rhetorical figures used to convey it – occurs repeatedly to express personal attitudes. One of the most striking instances is a line spoken in *Othello* by a villain: “There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered” (I.iii. 369). This is certainly an example of Shakespeare’s attempt to make time present and felt with the help of a “strong,” visceral metaphor. In its actual placement this line is spoken by Iago, the inveterate and ever-busy wrongdoer. This may mean that Iago enters here into a kind of comradeship with time itself, that he has appropriated an essential property of time. Realisations of this kind certainly add to the ominous nature of this quaint prediction. Regarded in abstraction from its immediate context (that is, besides its being a way in which the villain expresses his sense of control over the play’s “action” by scripting the main figures’ particular decisions and actions), it seems to define Shakespeare’s idea of dramatic action as such. (We naturally tend to regard any protagonist who drives the action forward as the playwright’s alter ego.) Furthermore, it is meaningful that here the villain appropriates the procreative properties of time and puts himself in the role of a woman conceiving a child and then delivering it in the shape of a ca-

(Aesth)etics of Interpretation. Essays in Cultural Practice, eds. Wojciech Kalaga and Tadeusz Rachwał (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2000), pp. 40–49.

¹³ We can no more than hint at the problems to do with modern commodification of time. Like so many other commodities time has the double nature of being both – though not necessarily at once – highly desirable and burdensome.

tastrophe: "I have't. It is engender'd; Hell and night / Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light" (I.iii. 401). Othello has all the reasons to cry out in terror when he intuits the monstrous foetus in Iago's brain. A parallel between the villain and the playwright suggests itself very strongly indeed, but it will not be until Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (the 1831 Introduction, to be precise) that an author should openly confess pride and motherly warmth towards another "hideous progeny," and publicly acknowledge her "thing of darkness," to use Prospero's words about Caliban. Demonic or not, biology is evidently needed to humanise literary representations of time.

Nature and the soul

Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Essays* have been a fresh inspiration for this attempt to visit anew the supposedly time-worn subject. In his "transcendentalism" Emerson gives us a sense of the unity of thought and its object, of the mind and Nature. There is no Emerson essay on time and we may indulge in speculations about its possible contents, had Emerson written it. His thoughts on time are little more than occasional remarks, and yet we feel that, very much like Shakespeare, time is there at the back of his mind.

For one thing, Emerson stresses the links between biological and human time and observes that they naturally strive for expression; biology undergoes a humanising transformation as it passes into signification. "The Universe is the externisation of the soul," he writes in "The Poet," and thus natural time "naturally" assumes a human dimension; it has to pass through the lens of a soul and be filled by experience. This mutual interpenetration of man and Nature makes obvious the desire to express our sense of time through such images as "womb," "pregnancy," and "labour," even if the speaker is not a woman. In the same essay, Emerson speaks of the "passage of the world into the soul of man," and describes the process in phrasing reminiscent of Shakespeare: "All the facts of the animal economy, sex, nutriment, gestation, birth, growth, are symbols of the passage of the world into the soul of man, to suffer there a change, and reappear a new and higher fact."¹⁴ It seems to me that this is the best

¹⁴ Compare the famous phrase in Ariel's song: "suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange" (*The Tempest*, I.ii. 401). Emerson, an admirer of Shakespeare, wouldn't be the first writer to express his ideas with Shakespeare's language in his inkhorn. But this

in nuce description of what happens when Shakespeare makes his characters experience and debate time. Symptomatically, Emerson does not speak directly of “time” and indeed he may have wished not to impede the flight of his thought with this cumbersome word. His discourse conveys the idea of human time clearly nonetheless, inasmuch as time is any of its human externisations but is not exhausted in any single one of them. To paraphrase Emerson once more, if “Nature is the incarnation of a thought” (“Nature”), then Shakespeare’s plays could be described as so many depictions of these incarnations caught as it were in the process of becoming.

Shakespeare may not have shared the optimism that informs Emerson’s views (as well as Bergson’s, for that matter). Emerson expresses his affirmative notion of nature in statements such as this: “Nature is loved by what is best in us.” In Shakespeare, so often in the tragedies, the opposite is true. Edmund, the bastard (“natural”) son of Gloucester in *King Lear* (Scene I.ii), flaunts his Nature-given endowments and brazenly airs beliefs that could be summed up by reversing Emerson’s dictum: “Nature is loved by what is *worst* in us.” But as we leave the murky underworld of the tragedies and pass on to the romances (as we do in the final chapter) the vision brightens.

Attempts have been made to reconstruct Shakespeare’s philosophy and scholars interested in the problem of time have been especially fond of this, as we shall see in the course of our analyses. Yet, rather than being another philosopher-poet, Shakespeare will not turn out characters who are slaves to any pre-established system, unless it be a system of their own making. Consequently, the views on man and Nature in the plays are multicoloured and thereby represent the idea that to traditionalists would sound oxymoronic, that of personal philosophy. With the arrival of Charles S. Peirce and William James this idea lost its ludicrousness and received the philosophical justification known as pragmatism.

Time is a daunting abstraction. It has long enjoyed the reputation of being able to turn philosophers speechless. “*Si quaerenti explicare velim nescio*” (if anyone asks me to explain what I mean by time, I seem not to know what time is) – a favourite quotation from Augustine with those who embark on yet another attempt to capture time’s nature. Shakespeare’s characters, however, have never had a reputation for being lost for words. In *As You Like It* a discourse on time goes on for two pages of the printed text and in *Richard II* the dethroned king tries to while away the

covert allusion to *The Tempest* has a special significance; in the sea “nothing fades” – sings Ariel – and so even dead things acquire a new life.

time with poetical reflections on the clock. To be sure, more common are brief remarks, figurative *ad hoc* expressions, such as Claudio's and Iago's lines quoted above. These indeed are frequent enough to call for detailed, context-oriented analysis, both textual and dramaturgical. Let us briefly explain this distinction. Drawing on Emrys Jones's idea of the "movement" as "a compelling dramatic sequence,"¹⁵ in the first two chapters, we analyse in detail the representation of time in four plays, two comedies and two tragedies, examining their opening and closing "movements." According to Jones, in a Shakespeare play we can distinguish two major units or "movements," the first one corresponding to Acts I through III and the second to Acts IV through V.¹⁶ Jones points out that the idea of a "larger imaginative movement" of the action as a whole does not preclude the existence of "lesser unities" with their internal temporal devices (most importantly, references to concrete time). Taking these ideas as a valuable cue, in that the somewhat rough division into movements allows us to sharpen the focus of analysis (especially when concrete time is kept in view), we have to bear in mind that a study of any "lesser unit" should remain tuned to larger imaginative unities or, in our case, a play's dominant time-related rhetoric. Still, the synthetic interpretive energy needs to be kept in check by its analytic opponent.

The word "rhetoric" has become disorientating in its ambiguity, but because it is going to assist us in our analyses some preliminary explanation and – alas – distinctions are necessary. Ordinarily "rhetoric" refers to either or both of these two things: 1) the use of figures of speech, such as apostrophes, metaphors, similes, etc.; 2) the use of language as a means of persuasion. "Rhetoric" can also be used for the study of rhetoric in either sense 1) or sense 2) or of the cooperation between the two species of rhetoric. A work by Shakespeare, be it a sonnet or a play, is made up of rhetoric in both these senses; a Shakespeare text is usually both figurative and persuasive. But figurative language, especially this or that type of imagery, besides its persuasive function, forms a significant representational layer in a poem or a play. For example, "beauty's rose" in Sonnet 1 is an element in the "field" of the poem's vegetative imagery, to which "bud" and "gaudy spring" also belong. Obviously, the situation is much more complex in a play than in a single poem, but the point is that in a play we

¹⁵ Jones argues that a unit of action in Shakespeare "makes a compelling dramatic sequence, with its own internal system of anticipation, long-drawn-out suspense, and finally a sustained climactic movement [...]." Emrys Jones, *Scenic Form in Shakespeare* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 45.

¹⁶ Jones, *Scenic Form*, p. 68. Jones refers to A.C. Bradley's description of the Shakespearean pattern; the first part of an action is characterised by a rising movement and the second a falling one.

also detect rhetorical fields, nets of imagery, as we might call them, and time-related language may be tightly woven into a play's verbal texture. When in *Macbeth* the witches are described as being able to "look into the seeds of time," the question for an interpreter is this: What textual field does the metaphor of "seeds" open? And because imagery usually evolves with the developing action we must not lose sight of the dynamic that the imagery possesses; this alone explains the frequent occurrence of "dynamic" words like "seed" and "womb." In conclusion, *textual* analysis must go hand in hand with its *dramaturgical* counterpart. In fact, as we shall see, imagery effectively assists in pushing the action forward,¹⁷ and to this function of time-related imagery in a given play we shall be referring as the rhetoric of time.

A note on referencing

References to Shakespeare's plays are by Act/Scene/line number, e.g. *Measure for Measure*, (I.iii. 39). The edition used for direct quotations of Shakespeare's text is described in a footnote to the first citation from the play referred to. References to editorial matter (such as alternative readings of the text) are given as follows: *Measure*, ed. Gibbons, p. 26, where reference is to bottom-of-page editor's notes on page 26 of Brian Gibbons's edition of *Measure for Measure*. In many cases more than one edition of a play has been consulted. In some cases the Reader is referred to the Bibliography for full description of the edition of a work used.

All emphasis in quotations, unless specified otherwise, is mine.

¹⁷ It does so as much as it assists in constituting the fictive world of a play. The two functions ought not to be regarded as separate ones; worlds that drama represents are human worlds, worlds made of human actions and interactions, and so a "social" dynamic is intrinsic to them.

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Jacek Mydla

Szekspirowski przyptyw **Rozważania nad dynamiką ludzkiego czasu**

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Książka *Szekspirowski przyptyw. Rozważania nad dynamiką ludzkiego czasu* jest w znacznej mierze kontynuacją studiów nad czasem dramatycznym u Szekspira przedstawionych we wcześniejszej publikacji autora, *The Dramatic Potential of Shakespeare* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002). Książka *Szekspirowski przyptyw* składa się z trzech rozdziałów, podzielonych na sekcje poświęcone poszczególnym sztukom. I tak, w rozdziale pierwszym, gdzie omawiany jest czas „komediowy”, analizowane są *Miarka za miarkę* oraz *Jak wam się podoba*. W rozdziale drugim, poświęconym czasowi „tragicznemu”, analizowane są *Antoniusz i Kleopatra* oraz *Ryszard II*. Rozdział trzeci podejmuje wątek „przekleństwa narodzin” i przynosi analizę: *Hamleta*, *Króla Lira*, *Zimowej opowieści* i *Peryklesa*. W rozdziałach pierwszym i drugim zwraca się uwagę na to, w jaki sposób Szekspir konstruuje czas literacko przedstawiony, czyli głównie tzw. czas konkretny (wyznaczany odniesieniami do dni, godzin itd.). Szczególny nacisk położony został na czas przeżywany: na to, jakie znaczenie ma czas i jego różne wymiary we wzajemnych relacjach postaci i jak rozumienie oraz przeżywanie czasu przez postaci wpływają na dynamikę owych relacji. Czas konkretny jest dla Szekspira elementem niezbędnym w tkance dramatu, ale nie centralnym, jest zaledwie tłem, na którym rozgrywają się ludzkie dramaty. Znacznie ważniejsza od czasu konkretnego jest retoryka czasu, która towarzyszy podejmowanym przez postaci działaniom, podpowiada ich intelektualne uzasadnienie oraz pomaga czytelnikowi/widzowi wczuć się w toczącą się akcję. Czas językowo przedstawiony w dramacie (wypowiedzi o czasie) pełni zatem bardzo istotną funkcję w racjonalizacji motywacji bohatera, co ma z kolei znaczący wpływ na empatię jako niezbędny czynnik umożliwiający „nasz” żywy odbiór treści utworu wraz z całą jego ludzką dramaturgią. Cechą wyróżniającą sztuki Szekspira jest właśnie wyekspozowanie w nich czasu, lub raczej świadomości czasu, jako elementu w sposób istotny określającego ludzkie bytowanie w świecie.

Każda sztuka posługuje się własną retoryką czasu, co wymusza na zaangażowanym czytelniku (odbiorcy) wniknięcie w tkankę językową utworu. Szekspir częstokroć zapożycza się u różnorodnych tradycji intelektualnych Zachodu, konstruując ową retorykę, toteż stosunkowo szybko i łatwo rozpoznajemy poetyckie

wątki i filozoficzne koncepcje, takie jak: Fortuna (niestałość spraw ziemskich), Okazja (ulotność chwili), ziarna czasu (czas organiczny), nieskończona podzielność odcinka czasu (czas zmatematyzowany), względność czasu subiektywnie przeżywanego (czas fenomenologiczny, przeżywany), wszechobecność i nieuchronność śmierci i rozkładu (entropia). W poszczególnych sztukach Szekspir nadaje tym i innym koncepcjom ludzki wymiar przez uwikłanie ich w konteksty międzyludzkich relacji: zobowiązań, konfliktów, rywalizacji, występku.

Wyjątkową rolę odgrywają u Szekspira wątki związane z organicznym pojmowaniem czasu, czyli retoryka ujmująca człowieka i jego postępowanie oraz – ogólnie – przebieg życia (czas ludzki) w kategoriach „biologicznych”: ciąży, narodzin i rozwoju, śmierci i rozkładu. Dramaturgiczna nośność figury – „łona czasu”, zostaje w niektórych sztukach wzmocniona rzeczywistą obecnością ciężarnej kobiety, jak dzieje się to w *Miarce za miarkę*, *Zimowej opowieści* i *Peryklesie* – w kontraście do retoryki „sterylizacji” obecnej np. w *Makbecie* i *Hamlecie*. Szekspirowska poetyka czasu organicznego nie jest jednak ani konceptualnie jednolita, ani moralnie jednoznaczna, np. niktzemnik w *Otelli* mówi o skutkach swojej podłości jako o dziecięciu, które czas powije.

Wartość retoryki czasu organicznego polega na tym, iż nadaje czasowi literacko przedstawionemu rozpoznawalnie ludzki wymiar. Kierując się tym przekonaniem, podjęto w ostatnim rozdziale książki próbę prześledzenia wątku nazwanego „przekleństwem narodzin”, który niemal nierozzerwalnie wiąże się z tragiczną wizją rzeczywistości i ludzkiego bytowania. W sekcji otwierającej rozdział szkicowo przedstawiono kulturowe dzieje owego motywu, wskazując jego obecność w *Księżdzie Hioba*, *Królu Edypie*, *Raju utraconym* i we *Frankensteinie*. Biorąc pod uwagę ten szerszy kontekst, można powiedzieć, że przekleństwo narodzin to jeden ze sposobów konceptualizacji czasu ludzkiego: tego, jak człowiek pojmuje swoje bytowanie w świecie. Przeklinając swoje narodziny, człowiek wyobrażeniowo powraca do matczynej łona, czyli innymi słowy wyrzeka się czy sprzeciwia zorientowanej na przyszłość „strzałce” czasu. Taką pesymistyczną wizję losu ludzkiego znajdujemy w *Hamlecie* i *Królu Lirze* – w sekcjach poświęconych tym sztukom ukazane zostały różne odmiany owego przekleństwa (np. Lir przeklinający swoje córki, rzucający klątwy na ich łona). W późnych sztukach Szekspira, tzw. romansach, widzimy próbę przewyciężenia – wyrażonego w formie przekleństwa – tragicznego pesymizmu. Dlatego możemy mówić o swoistej ewolucji, którą określono w książce jako przejście od narodzin przeklętych do błogosławieństwa narodzin. Bodaj najwyraźniej jest to widoczne w sztuce *Perykles*, gdzie trumna staje się płodnym łonem, a w kulminacyjnym punkcie bohaterowi przywrócone zostają „zmarłe” i bezsilnie opłakiwane – w czasie „pustym,” bo niejako pozbawionym przez śmierć swego naturalnego biegu – żona i córka.

Jacek Mydla

Shakespeares Zustrom Die Überlegungen über die Dynamik der menschlichen Zeit

Z u s a m m e n f a s s u n g

Das Buch ist in hohem Maße eine Fortsetzung der Studien über die dramatische Zeit Shakespeares, die der Verfasser in seiner früheren Publikation, *The Dramatic Potential of Shakespeare* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002) betrieb. Es besteht aus drei Kapiteln, welche in die den einzelnen Dramen gewidmeten Unterkapiteln geteilt worden sind. In dem ersten, der „Komödienzeit“ gewidmeten Kapitel werden *Maß für Maß* und *Wie es euch gefällt?* besprochen. Der Untersuchungsgegenstand des zweiten Kapitels wird die in den Dramen *Antonius und Cleopatra* und *Richard II.* dargestellte „Tragödienzeit“. Das dritte Kapitel berührt das Motiv „Geburtsverfluchung“ anhand der Dramen *Hamlet*, *König Lear*, *Ein Wintermärchen* und *Perikles, Prinz von Tyrus*. In den zwei ersten Kapiteln wird es darauf Acht gegeben, auf welche Weise die literarisch geschilderte Zeit, also vor allem die so genannte konkrete Zeit (die in Bezug auf Tage, Stunden, usw. angesetzte Zeit) von William Shakespeare konstruiert wird. Das Schwergewicht wurde dabei auf die erlebte Zeit gelegt: welche Bedeutung hat Zeit und deren verschiedene Dimensionen in gegenseitigen Relationen zwischen den Figuren und wie die Dynamik der Relationen durch Beurteilung und Erlebnis der Zeit von den einzelnen Figuren bedingt ist. Die konkrete Zeit ist für Shakespeare ein für das Drama unentbehrliches Element, aber doch kein Hauptelement, sondern kaum ein Hintergrund, in dem sich menschliche Tragödien abspielen. Viel wichtiger von der konkreten Zeit ist die Zeitrhetorik, die die von den Figuren unternommenen Schritte begleitet, deren intellektuelle Begründung nahelegt und einem Leser/Zuschauer hilft, sich in die spielende Handlung hinein zu fühlen. Die in dem Drama mittels Sprache zum Ausdruck kommende Zeit (Äußerungen über die Zeit) spielt also eine sehr wichtige Rolle bei Rationalisierung der Beweggründe des Helden, was wiederum zur Empathie beiträgt; die Empathie ist nämlich ein Faktor, der eine lebendige Rezeption des Werkes mit dessen ganzen menschlichen Dramatik möglich macht. Shakespeares Theaterstücke tun sich gerade durch Hervorhebung der Zeit, oder eher des für die Existenz des Menschen in der Welt ausschlaggebenden Zeitbewusstseins hervor.

Jedes Theaterstück bedient sich seiner eigenen Zeitrhetorik, was von einem engagierten Leser/Rezipienten das Eindringen ins Sprachnetz des Werkes erzwingt.

Shakespeare verschuldet sich oftmals bei verschiedenen intellektuellen Traditionen des Westens, indem er jene Rhetorik bildet, so dass wir relativ schnell und leicht solche poetischen Motive und philosophischen Ideen erkennen können, wie: Fortuna (Unbeständigkeit der irdischen Sachen), Gelegenheit (Vergänglichkeit der Zeit), Zeitkörnchen (organische Zeit), unendliche Teilbarkeit der Zeitspanne (mathematisierte Zeit), Relativität der subjektiv erlebten Zeit (phänomenologische, erlebte Zeit), Allgegenwärtigkeit und Unabwendbarkeit des Todes und des Zerfalls (Entropie). In den einzelnen Dramen gibt Shakespeare den und anderen Konzepten den menschlichen Ausmaß, indem er sie in Zusammenhänge der zwischenmenschlichen Relationen: Verpflichtungen, Konflikten, Rivalität, Verfehlungen verstrickt.

Eine besondere Rolle spielen bei Shakespeare die mit dem organischen Zeitverständnis verbundenen Motive, d.h. die den Menschen, dessen Handlungsweise und – allgemein genommen – den Werdegang (menschliche Zeit) in „biologischen“ Kategorien: Schwangerschaft, Geburt und Entwicklung, Tod und Zerfall auffassende Rhetorik. Dramaturgische Tragfähigkeit der Figur „Zeitschoß“ wird in manchen Stücken mit wirklicher Präsenz einer Schwangeren verstärkt, wie es in *Maß für Maß*, *Wintermärchen* und *Perikles* der Fall ist – im Kontrast zu der in *Macbeth* und *Hamlet* erscheinenden Rhetorik der „Sterilisation“. Shakespeares Poetik der organischen Zeit ist jedoch weder konzeptuell gesehen einheitlich, noch moralisch gesehen eindeutig, z.B.: der Schuft in *Othello* spricht von den Folgen seiner Gemeinheit als von einem Kind, das von der Zeit entbunden wird.

Der Vorzug von der Rhetorik der organischen Zeit beruht darauf, dass sie der literarisch dargestellten Zeit einen deutlich menschlichen Ausmaß gibt. Sich der Überzeugung leiten lassend versucht der Verfasser, im letzten Kapitel seines Buches das als „Geburtsverfluchung“ bezeichnete und mit tragischer Vorstellung von der Wirklichkeit und vom menschlichen Leben beinahe untrennbar verbundene Motiv zu erforschen. In dem das Kapitel eröffnenden Teil schildert der Verfasser die Kulturgeschichte des Motivs, indem er dessen Vorhandensein in den Werken: *Das Buch Hiob*, *König Ödipus*, *Verlorenes Paradies* und *Frankenstein* aufzeigt. Den weiteren Kontext in Betracht ziehend kann man sagen, dass die Verfluchung der Geburt eine von den Methoden der Konzeptualisierung der menschlichen Zeit ist: sie zeigt, wie sich ein Mensch seine Existenz in der Welt vorstellt. Seine Geburt verfluchend kehrt der Mensch in seiner Phantasie in den Mutterleib zurück oder anders gesagt verzichtet er auf eine zukunftsorientierte „Zeitnadel“ oder widerspricht ihr. Solch eine pessimistische Vorstellung von dem menschlichen Schicksal findet man in *Hamlet* und *König Lear* – in den genannten Dramen gewidmeten Unterkapiteln wurden verschiedene Arten der Verfluchung geschildert (z.B.: der seine Töchter oder deren Schöße verfluchende Lear, usw.). In späteren Shakespeares Dramen, sog. Romanzen sieht man den Versuch, den mit einer Verfluchung ausgedrückten, tragischen Pessimismus zu überwinden. Man hat also mit einer eigenartigen Entwicklung zu tun: von verfluchter Geburt zum Segen der Geburt. Am deutlichsten kommt es in dem Drama *Perikles, Prinz von Tyrus* zum Vorschein, wo ein Sarg zu einem fruchtbaren Mutterleib wird und wo im Höhepunkt des Dramas die „verstorbenen“ und ratlos beweinten Gattin und Tochter des Helden – in der „leeren“, denn sozusagen infolge des Todes ihres natürlichen Laufes beraubten Zeit – wiederbelebt wurden.

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