Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare

7 | 1989

La folie - Shakespeare et les arts - Le tragique

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/1324>

DOI: 10.4000/shakespeare.1324

ISSN: 2271-6424

Publisher

Société Française Shakespeare

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 November 1989

Number of pages: 171-200

Electronic reference

Ann Lecercle, « Holbein, Hylliard and the Strategy of the Portrait in Shakespeare: Alimentary, Apotropoic, Anamorphic », *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* [Online], 7 | 1989, Online since 01 January 2007, connection on 01 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/1324> ; DOI : 10.4000/shakespeare.1324

Société Française Shakespeare

Actes des Congrès

1985 - 1986 - 1987

LA FOLIE
SHAKESPEARE ET LES ARTS
LE TRAGIQUE

1989

HOLBEIN, HILLYARD AND THE STRATEGY OF THE PORTRAIT IN SHAKESPEARE : ALIMENTARY, APOTROPAIC, ANAMORPHIC

Ann Lecercle

In both *Hamlet* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, the reference to the portrait is a point of fixation and cristallisation, a manifestation that is an epiphany. My starting point therefore is the portrait at the *creative* end of the process : drawing and being drawn, the *active* face being presented in *All's Well*, the *passive* in *Hamlet*, written shortly before. Just as the artist of the two capitals at Vezelay passed from the capital of Ste. Eugénie to that of the Basilisk, Shakespeare passes from the object to the subject of visual fixation.

The question then began to loom large : what did the portrait imply – both in its materiality and in its modalities – for it to represent the nodal point it incontestably does ? This led to an exploration of both the field and the function of Tudor portraiture from Holbein to Isaac Oliver. Given the fact that the portrait was, to all intents and purposes, the *only* significant *genre*, there is an effect of magnification by the ambient void which enables us to see certain subtle forces at work, as it were, writ large, forces that are exploited and magnified in turn by Shakespeare.

After this I passed to the other end of the process, to the *finished* portrait as scenic object, in *The Merchant of Venice*² and the «*bedroom scene*» in *Hamlet*, where the latent becomes manifest.

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There are few soliloquies in *All's Well*, which renders the few there are all the more pregnant – none more so than Helena's first. It is here that the portrait materializes as the point of transition between contagion and cure, «*plague*» and prophylaxy, wound and weal.

In the first half of the speech, Helena's eye, like Hamlet's ambiguous «flesh», is presented as the locus of a contagion which makes both of them cry out that «*there is no living*», for Helena's eye has been wounded, infected by the very act of portraiture : «*'twas pretty though a plague [...] To sit and draw*». Moreover, the portrait materializes half way through a chain reaction of not one but four reversals into the contrary. It is the pivotal point of a dialectic which goes to the centre of Elizabethan portraiture as I see it.

- I. a) we begin the *sublime acorporeality* of light, associated since the great Medieval English «*opticians*», Grossteste, Roger Bacon and Pecham, with God's grace penetrating man by the eyeball³.

*he is so above me
In his bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in his sphere.*

The first *stasis* is marked by maximum passivity, remoteness and exclusion.

- b) from sublime acorporeality, Helena passes directly to the opposite pole of the *monstrous carnality* of miscegenation, a relation of maximum brutality, proximity and penetration, where the sex, not the eye, receives an «*emission*» that is the grossest perversion imaginable of the substance of God's grace :

*The hind that would be mated by the lion
Must die for love.*

2. The second reversal into the contrary is just as violent : from the brutality of miscegenation back to a second immobility, where the eye once more relays the sex. This immobility, that of the artist drawing the sitter, is exactly half way between the two preceding movements : neither excessive remoteness nor excessive intimacy :

*'Twas pretty, though a plague,
To see him every hour ; to sit and draw
His arched brows, his hawking eye, his curls,
In our heart's table.*

However there is something far more ominous lurking in the background : the two sole features singled out in the portrait are *first* the locks, *second* the

predatory eye, proleptic of her own ravening eye, «*mounting high*». This configuration presents the two paradigmatic constituents of the *gorgoneion*. This explains why her immobility is felt as a violence and a petrification immediately tangible in the context of 1603 of all years, when 36,000, or over 1/6 of the inhabitants of London⁴, were in the very process of being struck by such a violent and horrendous petrification – that of the plague.

3. It is the immanence of the *gorgoneion* in the portrait that is explicitly revealed in the third reversal, when the flesh suddenly falls from the face, and all Helena is left with are the bones beneath, not a «sweet» favour, but «relics»: «*now my idolatrous fancy/Must sanctify his relics*». This portrait is an anamorphosis for the poison she has sucked, not from his «honey vows», (Bertram is no poet) but from his «hawking eye», sends her tumbling down the slippery slope from *videre* to *invidere* to *invidia*.

4. But if this so far is the story of a Fall, the final reversal is that of a *resurrection*, as we suddenly see her rising in the air armed with her triple eye heading for Paris her wonders to perform, the wounded organ having been reversed into the «*most miraculous organ*» with which she will heal the King.

The portrait here is the nodal point in Shakespeare's analysis of the aporia of vision. It is to the Shakespearean corpus what *The Oval Portrait* is to the corpus of Poe: a paradigm of the vortex of visual desire. Both portraits end with a corpse (the sitter's bones) and at the same time a revival from the dead (the narrator in Poe, the artist in Shakespeare), for the essence of the paradigm is *ambivalence*: the ambivalence of the *portrait*, between the «sweet» and the skeletal, pleasure and «*plague*», and the ambivalence of the *eye* that receives and recreates this image:

- a) on the one hand, the «triple» eye as fallen, phallic, insidious and invidious eye, attribute of *Invidus* the devil in his most subtle guise and, at the same time
- b) the upper, ineffable manifestation of the Godhead – the *trinitarian* eye. This double ambivalence – of both object and subject of vision – cristallized in the portrait is the seminal crux which determines the knife-edge of ambivalence on which the entire action of the play is poised.

But the portrait is not only a seminal crux *in the play*: as intersection between the sublime and the monstrous, the acorporeal and the carnal, between the vanishing point of vision and the collision point of coitus, between the principle of light and the looming large of our last end, it is, as we shall see, the central nodus in the field of subtle forces at work in the Tudor portrait as *genre*. This *epiphany* of the portrait in Helena's passion is probably one of the most illuminating texts of the period on the performativity of portraiture, outside of Hilliard's *Treatise*⁵, which

argues, from the outset, and at great length, that painting miniatures is for men of gentle blood alone, for mere men are too close to the beast to be able to withstand the dangers of portraiture for long : «*we are all generally commanded to turn our eyes away from beauty of the human shape, lest it inflame the mind*»⁶. In Hillyard's day, depicting Lady Penelope Rich seems to have been a notorious professional hazard for portraitists. It is this apotropaic quality of beauty, which deterred even Freud, that Jean-Michel Rabaté analyzes in his latest book, *La Beauté Amère*⁷.

So much for Bertram the Basilisk.

Now for Sainte Eugénie : not drawing portraits, but being drawn ; form Helena's bubo to Ophelia as Baubô. Sainte Eugénie is the *object* of scrutiny. A pure young thing forced to hide as a monk, she was desired by a woman who accused her of rape when rebuffed : the saint is portrayed lifting her skirts to prove her point, effacing her visage by her sex, in a comic *dénoûment* harking back to the ploy of Baubô, who, as Vernant points out, is but a grotesque, nether variant on Gorgô⁸ : what Mistress Quickly calls «*the picture [...] that you wot of*» (*Merry Wives*, II, ii.)

Hamlet's perception of Ophelia is likewise that of an ambiguous being whom he banishes to a no less ambiguous «*nunnery*». What he seems to want to paint is her face, but the mingling of disgust and desire, the immanence of the nether beneath the upper visage, has the same effect of definitively separating the sexes as in the annals of Voragine's hagiography.

Ophelia describes the scene of portraiture from the point of view of the object portrayed, and reveals to us what Helena cannot : the *outward* effect of the head beheld on the portraitist :

*He took me by the wrist and held me hard.
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow
He falls to such perusal of my face
As a would draw it. Long stay's he so.*

Just as Helena's portrait session is ushered in by her being *inwardly* tossed back and forth between ontological extremes, here Hamlet is shown as *outwardly* torn apart. «*I am undone*», cries Helena before the portrait looms up : Hamlet is *literally* «undone» :

*My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
Ungarter'd and down-gyved to his ankle, ... comes before me.*

Conversely, the dimension of horror and hell, the petrification which ends

with the rendering of one's last breath and the departure from this world with one's eyes riveted to Medusa is here, from being implicit in *All's Well*, writ large, for the passage continues :

*Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes [...]
[...]*That done, [i.e. the drawing] he lets me go,
*And with his head over his shoulders turn'd
He seem'd to find his way without their helps,
And to the last bended their light on me.*

To conclude, Bertram the Basilisk and Ophelia-Eugénie are as much companion pieces as the two finished portraits Hamlet produces on his mother's bed, to which I shall return at the end.

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For the present, it is time to turn to the portrait proper. There are, here as in literature, three levels to be distinguished : *le réel, l'imaginaire, le symbolique*. Before broaching the latter two, an illuminating introduction is afforded by a short incursion into *le réel du portrait*, that is to say, its materiality. One of the issues raised so far is the reversal from the «sweet favour» to the rotten relic. This is to be seen in relation *also* to St. Augustine's anecdote on *Invidia* as the milk from the mother's breast sucked by the baby boy but transformed by his brother contemplating the Mother and Child, *amare conspectu*, into the poison of Envy. In this connection, there is, in Hilliard's *Treatise concerning the art of Limning*, a submerged syllogism which goes like this :

I. The art of the miniature is defined in terms of *shadowing* : «*For limning is but a shadowing of the same colour your ground is of*». (p. 97)

2. Shadowing is defined in terms of «*sweetness*» : «*Know this also, that to shadow sweetly, as we well call it, and to round well is a far greater cunning than shadowing hard or dark*» . (p. 87)

3. *Sweetness* is to be procured in the first instance by using *sweet colours* : «*All ill smelling colours, all ill-tasting, as orpiment, verdigris, verditer [etc...] or any unsweet colours are nought for limning*» (p. 89) [our italics].

The whole point is that for Hillyard, «sweetness», the prime objective of the *genre*, is far from being a mere metaphor for the mind. Amongst other things, his treatise is a cookbook with the motto «*the sweeter the better*», and if the cake won't bake, all you do is add sugar to make the mixture more unctuous : «*all those black lakes generally must be grinded with some sugar candy among the gum, and some altogether with sugar*» (p. 93), and so on. If it is too greasy, on the other hand, one adds «*ear wax, but even to give it but a taste*» (p. 99). More generally, «sweet» colours are made from fruit kernels, berries, flowers and leaves ; if botched⁹, they are said to be «*poisoned*» or even «*starved*» (p. 118) while «*unsweet colours*» come either from poisons, like orpiment (yellow sulphide of arsenic) or from the rotting of metals, like verdigris. The water used must be of the purest, and most ingredients must be thoroughly washed, like the modern-day lettuce, in several rinses of water. Colours are mixed in nutshells or porringers (p. 119). This insistent and uncanny strain of orality is even subtler than that : for precious metals are to be burnished with «*a pretty little tooth of some ferret or stoat or other little wild beast*» (p. 99)¹⁰. Above all perhaps, the ultimate recipient of these mixings is the finest vellum, that is, something which properly belongs in the belly, the foetal skin of calves untimely ripped from their mother's womb.

Thus, in Hillyard's technique there is a whole substratum composed of the oral, the alimentary, the culinary. For the miniature is a titbit, and cannot afford to be bland – let alone bitter – to the palate, in this case the retina. Ontogenetically, this complicity between the oral and the scopic is founded upon the double domination of early existence by feeding and seeing. Indeed, in 16th century art, regression from the scopic to the oral appetite was, on occasion, overtly indulged : if *paintings* were not eaten, *sculptures* could be. For the celebrations marking the entry of Elisabeth of Austria into Paris in 1571, six sculptures in sugar «*pour la collation de la Roynne*» were designed by no less an artist than Germain Pilon¹¹.

Historically, the earliest pertinent practice I have been able to find is the popular custom attested by hagiographers of the 7th-8th centuries in the early Eastern Church where images of the saints were actually scraped by the faithful and the scrapings prepared in a potion which was then imbibed. A more remarkable coalescence of the alimentary and the apotropaic in the portrait could hardly be conceived. Beyond that this whole crux seems to me to be linked to the Epicurean *phantasmata*, particles absorbed by and emitted from the eye, as to the Kleinian dialectic between introjection and projection.

However, if what happens *in the portrait gallery* is that the eye is fed – and in the boudoir the miniature feeds it on sweetmeats, what happens *in the theatre*, more often than not, is a reversal of the selfsame logic : if you can feed the eye titbits, you can *also* slip it a poison. This happens, before Shakespeare started brewing his «*doubtfull*» but potent pictorial potions, in the very nasty Case of the Poisoned Paint in *Arden of Feversham* (c. 1592, by Kyd ?). The following passage is Hillyard

turned upside down. That is adapted.

*Nosbie. You told me how you could compound by art
A crucifix impoisoned.
That whoso look upon it should wax blind
And with the scent be stifled, that ere long
He should die poison'd that did view it well.
Clarke. [...] I'll tell you straight
How I do work of these impoisoned drugs.
I fasten on my spectacles so close
As nothing can any way offend my sight ;
Then, as I put a leaf within my nose,
So put I rhubarb to avoid the smell,
And softly as another work I paint¹².*

Finally, the *venenum in cauda*, in this case, is, for safety purposes transferred from the icon to the soup.

It is in *The White Devil* that the classic case of the Poisoned Portrait is «successfully» enacted before our very eyes. In preparation for «feeding time at the portrait gallery», the villains of the piece simply add a generous pinch of poison to the *plat de résistance*, the portrait of Brachiano, on which Isabella is wont «to feed her eyes and lips» (Act II, scene iii).

The gallery portrait one literally devours is the inverse and complementary representation to Hamlet's *cherished miniature of the tyrant* – a pictorial *coincidentia oppositorum* which constitutes the perverse price to be paid for the portrait's entry into the theatre. In *Shakespeare*, the perversion of the underlying oral impulse is subsumed into the logic of the anamorphosis, and thus situated not on the frontiers of *le réel* and *l'imaginaire* but on the shadow line between *l'imaginaire* and *le symbolique*, as I propose to show at the end. But this is to anticipate.

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If we now pass from the *materiality* of substance to the *modalities* of style in Elizabethan portraiture, we will find that there too the salient features throw considerable light on the conception and function of the theatrical portrait. The general context here is one of «in-betweenness». When Henry VIII became Supreme Head of the Church of England in 1531, by 1535, religious painting, till then the staple artistic diet of the nation, all but closed down, while under Edward and Elizabeth, much was destroyed, till the latter put a stop to it in 1560. Indeed, «in-betweenness» touches on the very existence of the genre, for the century saw more

destroyed than created. On the other hand, the major currents of the Italian Renaissance made only minor inroads into England, with the exception, *via* the French court at Fontainebleau or the Haarlem School of the 1580's, of *Mannerism*, to which I shall return. Few went to Italy, it was not only morally dubious, as the famous passage in Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*¹³ warned, it was physically dangerous, as Edward Unton's imprisonment by the Inquisition in Milan in 1582 proved. Inversely, few Italian artists came to England for long, with the notable exception of Federico Zuccari, who paid a flying visit in 1574-5, while the rare Italian artists employed as Sergeant Painters at court *before* Holbein's advent, seem to have left no permanent mark on English art¹⁴.

This historical «in-betweenness», however, is at the root of what I see to be three fundamental iconographical ambivalences. It is as if the ambient void at this period provoked a sedimentation out of and a cristallization into the basic tensions and tendencies inherent in the portrait as *genre*. It is the interplay between these ambivalences, and the way it parallels that analysed above – between the scopic and the oral which I propose to concentrate on henceforth, in general outline first, then in specific works.

I. The first of these is that between the *sacred* and the *desacralized*, even sacrilegious. With the Reformation, Holbein switched overnight from painting saints to aristocrats, even *parvenu* bourgeois. The pearls and gems on paraded icons were transferred to images of «diva Elisabetta» on her progresses, as lesser lights of the English empyrean. Like the Marian/Venerian Desdemona, the grace of art, if not of heaven «*enwheels her round*» – in the ruff if not the halo. Institutionally, the Anglican Church (Bishops Jewel and Bilson) sat uncomfortably on the theological fence, duly sniped at by Jesuits and Cardinals (Sanders and Harding) : the cult of sacred religious icons was deemed impious, the cult of the sacred royal icon was not. This situation is encapsulated in the excisions and emendations which the Oxford scholar Richard Haydocke felt incumbent upon himself to introduce when he translated Gianpaolo Lomazzo's bible of *Manierismo*, the *Trattato dell'arte della pittura scultura ed architettura* (Milan 1584), into *A Tract containing the Artes of curious Paintings Carvings and Buildings*¹⁶. These modifications centre on the transposition of references to CULTO DIVINO into the Elizabethan CIVILE DICIPLINE, where the Virgin Queen sits in for the Virgin Mary¹⁷.

2. The *second* ambivalence stems from what I would define as the polarity between *impresa* and Medusa. In the *impresa* (the emblematic device), the image is not so much representation as symbol ; outline is less a question of volume than of pattern, as much a question of sign as of substance, while plasticity generally is filtered through the lexicons of Valeriano's *Hieroglyphica*, Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* or Ruscelli's *Imprese Illustre* : in a word, painting is closer to *Logos* than to *scopos*.

The opposite pole is the image which exerts a *quasi physical impact*. As I

see it, this impact itself operates in two inverse and complementary directions. The first of these is the *seduction* exerted by the portrait «*in small*», the confidential miniature, *l'objet petit a* in all its splendour ; for this *genre* comes closest to the definition of a fetish in painting, being intended, in the privacy of the boudoir, as a support for the ecstatic, not to say erotic reverie which Lord Herbert of Cherbury surprised his wife indulging in, in his absence, over his adored likeness. The jewelled case, like the conceit in the sonnet, was intended to *conceal* from public gaze a message between two lovers. To this I shall return.

After the erotic face of Medusa, the agonistic¹⁸. For the *opposite* direction is the «*verbaastheid*», the astonishment bordering on petrification, that the 17th century art critic van Mander experienced on seeing Holbein's most important official commission, the Privy Council commemoration of Henry VIII's marriage to Jane Seymour¹⁹.

This pole corresponds predominantly to the first of the two principal types of portrait favoured by the epoch, the full length study, intended for that peculiarly English institution, the long gallery. And it is worth noting that whereas Elizabethan England was notoriously slow in taking up continental innovation, the full length portrait, with its cowering effect on the beholder, «*caught on*» with unwonted rapidity and durability. Now this was an originally Germanic *genre* which had hit the limelight in 1532 with Seisenegger's much copied portrait of the Emperor Charles V²⁰. Seisenegger's portrait was itself a revival of the Germanic heraldic mode of Cranach's portraits of Heinrich der Fromme. In this connection it is worth recalling that in Elizabethan literature, the heraldic portrait Spenser paints of his central character, the ideal knight, Prince Arthur, *can* only be painted in words because the paramount item of his furniture, the source of his indomitable power, *cannot* be exposed to mortal eye. Whatever he is allegorically, iconically he is point by point Medusa in Medieval trappings. For this belated flower of Elizabethan chivalry kills monsters less by the sword than by the shield. Only Arthur's goes one better than Pallas Athene's with its Gorgon's head : a forerunner of the science fiction laser gun, it not only petrifies, it pulverizes :

*His warlike shield all closely cover'd was,
 Ne might of mortall eye be ever seene ;
 [...] But all that was not such as seemd in sight,
 Before that shield did fade, and suddeine fall : [...]
 Men into stones therewith he could transmew,
 And stones to dust, and dust to nought at all ;
 (I, vii, 33-35) (Our italics.)*

Indeed the shield is but the deadly concentration of the entire diamantine armour emitting a withering ray at which even the sun and moon blench and quail (I, vii, 35). Medusan too are the rutilant Dragon on the helmet and the serpentine

pearls dancing on hairs above the monster's maw. The heraldic portrait of Arthur is *gorgoneion* from *cap* to *pié*, not least in its dialectic of the blind spot which is a blinding spot, and in its strategic deployment of pearl and precious stone, which plays such a prominent part in the iconic vocabulary of Elizabethan portraiture. After all, if the portrait can poison, as Leontes says in *the Winter's Tale*, ornaments can bite (I, ii, 157-8).

Thus, just as, on the continent, at the *beginning* of the century, the immanence of the armorial in the pictorial was largely the result of the imperial revival under Charles V, so at the *end* of the 16th century, in England, it was largely due to the ideological resurrection of feudal chivalry from the 1580's on, with the Imperial cult of Astraea and the Accession Day Tilts. The «Ditchley» portrait of Elizabeth, for instance, is very probably connected with these, since Ditchley was the residence of Sir Henry Lee, till 1590, the Queen's champion at the events.

To conclude this second tension, between *impresa* and Medusa, the *impresa* may be said to be the locus of a violence *done to* the image, of an extraneous dimension being imposed on it, catapulted into it (emblem, *emballein* : to throw in). *Conversely*, the second category, that presided over by Medusa, is the locus of a violence *done by* the image, whether it is of the passionately desired species provoked by the private miniature, or of the mortally feared species provoked by the iconography of tyranny, «*in great*»; I would suggest that Hamlet's recourse to his «*tables*» is remarkable in that not only do we have regression from *Logos* – that is, from laws, saws, precepts and proverbs – to copos «*I'll wipe away all... saws of books*» but also the representation which effaces the *Logos* is itself a kind of monstrous hybrid of the «*table in great*» and the «*table in small*», the face of seduction and the face of tyranny, Holbeinesque hieratism and Hillyardian «*sweetness*» : «*That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain*». The proverb has become portrait.

3. The *third* type of ambivalence is that between the Medieval and the Mannerist. The points of contact between the two domains, in painting and in art in general, is too vast a subject to be treated here. So I will confine myself to indicating a few salient points which strike me as significant, or at least food for thought.

I shall deal with Holbein and Hillyard in more detail shortly, but I would suggest here that both artists seem to me to be poised, *unheimlicherweis* on the brink between the two modes. In his monumental work *Der Manierismus*, Arnold Hauser concludes that Holbein was «*der erste und grösste deutsche Manierist*»²¹ (the first and greatest German Mannerist), and yet, by the time Holbein composed his last work – the London Barbers and Surgeons Charter Commemoration – he had reverted to an almost *Egyptian* mode, where King Henry, though *not* in the foreground, nevertheless looms far larger than the figures who are. This work, if ever there was one, epitomizes what was anathema to the Mannerists as belonging to the *età rozza* (the coarse age).

Something similar seems to me to hold true for Hillyard. The very term

«*miniature*» comes from «*minium*», the original substance used for illumination, while the Elizabethan term «*limning*» is a doublet of the Latin *lumen*, and we know that Hilliard's avowed master in the art, Holbein himself, was trained by the Flemish Horenbout family, illuminators to the court of Henry VIII. Nothing indeed could be more alien to Hilliard than Leonardo's recommendation of choosing rainy days, twilit hours or blacked out rooms for painting portraits. For Hilliard, shadow is a mere postlapsarian *defect* of light : consequently his injunction for portraiture, harking back to Genesis, is almost Biblical in tone : «One only light : great and fair let it be, and without impeachment (p. 73). On the other hand, when one reads Hilliard's Treatise, Lomazzo, the great, blind theoretician of Mannerism, is invoked on an average of every other page in the main section, and consequently towers over Hilliard's text as the Divine light must have been felt to dim the lesser lights of the illuminators ; while in the final section on colour, Pope Hennessey has shown, in a well-known study, how the Mannerist cannon influenced his technique²².

If we come to lesser Tudor artists, like Hans Eworth, in works like his *Eliza and the Goddesses* (1565) at Hampton Court, the two modes do not even coalesce but exist in grotesque juxtaposition, with a hieratic, Medieval Elizabeth in the *left* half and in the *right*, the three rival goddesses disporting themselves on the grass in what appears to be a feeble attempt at Mannerist arabesque.

But it is not only a question of artists. There is a deeper consonance of vision at stake. The first aspect of this is what Panofsky terms «*Flächenhaftigkeit*», (usually rendered as «*superficiality*», but in fact, the importance attached to surfaces in Mannerist painting), which he associates with «*a quasi Medieval manner of composition, gathering forms into a single, excessive often overwhelming mass*»²³. This reversion is openly assumed and asserted by Zuccari in 1607 in his *L'Idea de' pittori, scoltori ed architetti*: «*La Pittura non e figlia dei Matematici, ma della Natura e del Disegno*». The whole point being that *disegno* (design), far from referring to the mathematic theory of perspective of Alberti, Leonardo and the High Renaissance generally is decomposed by Zucarri, in the manner of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, into *segno di dio (in noi)*²⁴. Design is a sign, and a divine one at that. In Elizabethan portraiture, at the crossroads between «*Flächenhaftigkeit*» and *disegno* we find the role of *pattern*, to which I shall return.

The second and last of the aspects I would want to mention here is the development of *the detail at the expense of the whole*. It is no coincidence if the emblematic Mannerist *genre* on the continental scene was the *intermezzo*, of which Il Lasca²⁵, lamenting the turn of things at the Florentine court of the Medici in the 1580's, wrote : «*Once we used to make the intermezzo the servant of the commedia, but now it is the commedia that serves the intermezzi*»²⁶. Thus, in the portraiture of the period, one may discern what I would call an *atomization of anatomy* and an accompanying *magnifying of minutiae*. In Medieval illumination, it had taken the form of the *Logos*, the script, the sign, veering towards the icon ; in Mannerist art, the movement is reversed, the image veering towards the emblem, the

symbol, the sign.

The most striking instance of this tendency in the portrait is the ruff, on which Lévi-Strauss has written some memorable pages²⁷, but with a different thrust. In Hillyard's miniature of Sir Walter Raleigh, the ruff not only, as the expression goes, «sets off» the head. It is a work in itself and produces a specific effect. In the face, we supposedly read all the desirable virtues of a gentleman. In the ruff, which is as large, the black and white of the tracery, the holes and loops of the lacery, fascinate the eye in the same way as the Bemboist tropes of the Jesuit martyr Robert Southwel in his *St Peter's Complaint* 1595), fascinate the ear :

*I feared with life to die – by death to live ;
I left my guide, now left, and leaving God ;To breathe in bliss
I fear'd my breath to give ;
I fear'd for heavenly reign, and earthly rod.
These fears I fear'd, fears feeling no mishaps,
O fond, O faint, O false, O faulty lapse !*

In the last line, the alternation between the *O* and the *f*, the open and the closed phoneme, is almost a term for term equivalent of the hole and the point in the ruff. Both are eminent instances of *sprezzatura* virtuosity, the whole point being to dazzle, both in the literal and the figurative sense, to create an impact both in *le symbolique* and *l'imaginaire*. For it is a magical, hypnotic use of sound, in a real beyond that of meaning, just as the eye is hypnotized by Hillyard's use of colour in the ruff. Light and dark, open and closed, here the sign returns to the primary pulsation of Freud's *Fort und Da*, Lacan's *battement*. In both cases the composition works as *fascinum*.

What is essential is that this fascination is at the antipodes from the magic of perspective illusion. And I would conclude this third tension by suggesting that there is much in the Elizabethan portrait that constitutes the revenge of Zeuxis, the champion of the *lure*, over Parrhasios, the champion of *trompe-l'œil*. In this Plinian paradigm from the Classics, much commented on in the 16th century, Parrhasios originally won the contest because his painting led to the spectator's wanting to know what was behind the painted veil, while Zeuxis had only succeeded in luring birds to peck his rutilant *simulacra* of grapes – a feat considered much inferior.

Zeuxis's art is not organized in function of a *vanishing point within* but what I would call a *materialization out of*, not so much «depth shapes» as «projective shapes», what Federico Zeri, in his recent book, *Rinascimento e Pseudo-Rinascimento*²⁸, calls the *extraversions* of pre- and pseudo-Renaissance art, that is to say – and it seems to me a highly productive distinction in the context of Elizabethan portraiture – the minute rendering of external surfaces, often, as in *Miniature*, with the tip of the brush, in the absence of any strict analytic hierarchy, an absence compensated for, as it were, by the intrusion form without of social codes and

modes : this he opposes to *introversione*, by which he means a scientific knowledge of both anatomy and optics, together with an ascetic aesthetic ethic which imposes a rigorous subordination of the part to the whole. The one is the triumph of the object of desire, Lacan's *objet petit a*, Zeuxis's *grape* ; the other is the triumph of what Lacan calls *le grand A*, the constraint of castration, Parrhasios's *curtain* cutting off the object of desire.

In other words, the art of *trompe-l'œil* is an art of occultation, that of the *fascinum* one of ostentation, the scintillating figures of Tasso or Serafino dell' Aquila, or of Euphuistic or Arcadian prose, the fireplaces of Hatfield House or Palazzo Thiene, the staircases of Chambord or the Bibliotheca Laurenziana, eclipsing the whole of which they are part. The revenge of Zeuxis is, in a word, the revenge of *monstration* – and when we say *monstration*, the monstrous is not far away : as in Parmigianino's self portrait in a convex mirror, where the hand of the artist is squarely in the foreground and fairly hits the viewer in the eye, or in Holbein's anamorphosis, leaping out from the canvas in pursuit of the spectator's receding gaze. These two works are, as it were, the twin pillars of *monstration* in the portrait of the period.

And if we come down to details, there is a final point to be made here : *tropes* are to the arts of language what *trophies* are to the arts of vision : ornaments admittedly *dans le symbolique*, but ones informed by a common strategy *dans l'imaginaire* : that of the (*apo-*)*tropeion*, the object that produces a turning, an about-turn (etymologically), one that can take either the form of a laying down of arms in total surrender or inversely, a putting to flight. At the intersection of the two, of *trope* and *trophy*, we significantly find a specific *genre* which is by definition the blowing up of the part into the whole, a *genre* revived into renewed splendour in the 16th century, after being one of the representational cornerstones of Medieval feudalism : the *blason* (from ? the German *blasen*, to blow up)²⁹, the epitome, if ever there was one, of the phallic in the figural.

One should remember that when, in Aeschylus's *Seven against Thebes*, Eteocles is confronted with the seven shields and their seven blasons, and declares that blasons never hurt a fly, the whole point of the tragedy is to prove him wrong³⁰. With the art of the lure, death, be it sexual or cynegetic, is just around the corner.

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Such then are the tensions and tendencies – respectively, ideological, psychological and historical – which, as I see it, structure the field of English portraiture at its inception, and endow it with a complex but specific *Unheimlichkeit*. The latter may be spelt out in *résumé* as follows :

- beneath the desacralized lies the sacred,
- beneath the limning glimmers the *lumen*.

- beneath the *impresa* lurks Medusa
- beneath the *trope* and the *trophy* lies the *tropeion*.

Likewise, when we considered the materiality of limning, we saw that beneath the scopic lay the oral,— beneath the oval (portrait) lies the oral (portrait).

I say «oval» since after 1580, Mannerist influence from Fontainebleau ousted all other forms of miniatures, so much so indeed that previous Holbeinesque miniatures in the round were even shaved into conformity (like that of Thomas Wriothesley in the Metropolitan Museum)³¹.

Before coming to a few individual portraits, I would add one final item to the list. There is one phenomenon which to my mind admirably brings out the way this manifold ambivalence meshes, notably the power play behind the pictorial : this is the evolution undergone, in 16th century England, by the notion of *pattern*, something which has not, to my knowledge, been pinpointed as it merits. Art historians generally agree that it was Holbein who decisively introduced the pattern characteristic of the «costume-piece» into the genre, notably for his royal patron. And that is precisely the crux of the matter. For «*pattern*» and «*patron*» are doublets which only begin to separate out into their divided selves during the 16th century, when the metathetic «*r*» migrates to its present position³². Linguistically, the «*pattern*» is the sign of the *patronus*, *padrone*. Iconically, it becomes the hallmark of the master, *a fortiori* of the tyrant³³. This explains why the dominant 16th century usage of the term is semantically exactly half way between the original Romance and the present day English, that is, the unique master design or mould which commands all reproduction (as in Othello's «*pattern of excelling Nature*»).

The inferences to be drawn for the portrait are capital : the lordly mien of the physiognomy in the *upper* half, and the labyrinthine reticulation of the apparel in the lower, seen in this light, are in fact *repetitions* of one another, iconic doubles paralleling the linguistic doublets³⁴.

One might even go so far as to say that, in 16th century portraiture, «*sweetness*» is to the miniature what pattern is to the study «*in great*» : the very paradigm of ambivalence. Thus one might round off this introduction to the field by adding a corollary to the previous : beneath the pattern the patron, or, better still, beneath the gorgeous the Gorgon.

That this ambivalence is no mere theoretical abstraction but palpable pictorial reality is proven by the existence of a type of portrait which is *by definition* the materialization of this ambivalence, a *genre* which attained its acme in the 16th century. For this materialization, this epiphany, of the Gorgon in the gorgeous, of the real master in the reticulated marvel, is no other than the basic rationale behind the *anamorphosis*. And it is no coincidence either if the most celebrated portrait of the father of English portraiture, Holbein, that of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve known as *The Ambassadors*³⁵, is precisely that : a sudden blinding materialization of Gorgon out of the gorgeous, that is to say a double death's head, the one perceptible by natural perspective, the second, *en abyme*, by application of a cylindrical glass tube³⁶. More and more, the anamorphosis *after* Holbein produced

cosmos out of chaos, becoming reassuring, salvatory, even jubilatory, and ending up as a parlour game. Never again was to be recaptured the paradigmatic fulguration of *The Ambassadors* on the threshold of English portraiture. For what it does is to lay bare what is latent in the *genre* : the death's head beneath the mask, the lack beneath the excess, the spectre of mutability beneath the façade of marble³⁷.

In the last analysis, the double anamorphosis in *the Ambassadors* is to English portraiture what Hamlet's «interpretation» is to his theatrically obscene «Mousetrap» : the *inter-pres*, the *go-between*, the phallus in Hamlet's peep-show, the phallic anamorphosis in the portrait, designating in both cases the essential dialectic between absence and presence, cosmos and chaos, which unites the *theatre of the origins* (the «puppets» dallying in the play, II, ii, 241, and the tumescent white «bone» in the portrait) to the *theatre of the end* (the death's head *en abyme* in the portrait and *The Murder of Gonzago en abyme* in the play). Both paradigms pinpoint the immanence of non-being just beyond the horizon of representation.

Nor is this representational crux confined to the «*table in great*», where the death's head goes back to the death mask, which was the impetus behind the Renaissance portrait, a commemorative *eidolon* for when the physical model would be no longer present.

In the «*table in small*», the immanence of death manifests itself in *inverse mode*, when the physical *presence* of the lover will banish the iconic fetish to the draperies which punctuate its veillings and unveilings. For, as Hillyard insists more than once in his *Treatise*, «*small pictures [...] are to be viewed in hand*» :

We must think of Elizabethan miniatures being looked at by candle-light in a curtained bed, or held in the hand in the window of a room, where they could be hidden again in bodice or doublet. This is what they were for, not for exhibition»³⁸.

As in Poe's textual miniature, *The Oval Portrait*, the fascinating head is enshrined in a veritable *abyme* of openings and closings, of curtains and windows, of toings and froings of candelabra. For this is the quintessential *Fort/Da* of Hamlet's peep-show, of «*dalliaunce*» in or around the «*Mousetrap*», the female sex, of which the jewel – and the miniature is a jewel (as Viola explains in *Twelfth Night*) – is but a classic displacement upwards.

In the portrait «*in great*», the *Fort/Da*, the *battement*, the primary pulsation of scopic desire, is there too, but concerns the part not the whole. Therein lies the strategy behind Holbeinesque reticulation, which, in its most striking form – striking also in the literal sense – as in the Palazzo Barberini Henry VIII or in Zuccherò's portrait of Elizabeth at Buckland Abbey or Hillyard's miniature, consists in a hallucinating alternation of inside and outside, background and foreground, material and motif. Just as Poe's oval portrait is set amongst trophies *on* walls and

fetishes *in* walls (in niches), so Holbeinesque reticulated pattern alternates *slashings in* apparel and *flashins on* apparel (gems or gold and silver thread). Thus we have the *ensnaring* by Eros «*in small*», the *enslaving* by tyrannos «*in great*».

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It is now time to turn from this triple structural ambivalence to consider briefly the three major types of portrait where it may be seen at work :

1. The portraits Holbein painted in his genuine English period³⁹ from 1532 to his death in 1543, because it is patent that this is the primordial influence on Elizabethan portraiture long after his death, for a period which Roy Strong puts at as much as 60 years after⁴⁰.

2. Certain of the more outstanding portraits of the Queen herself,

3. the miniature of Hillyard and his French pupil, Isaac Oliver, as representing the high point of aesthetic achievement at the turn of the century.

I have organized this analysis around two poles, not, this time, general but two figures. It seems to me that this effect of immanence – of the patron in the pattern, of Gorgô in the gorgeous – and the deformation it entails, can ultimately be analyzed out into two basic pictorial forms which entertain a relation of inverse symmetry to each other.

The first corresponds to what Ludovico Dole, in his contemporary classification of portraits, terms the *volto in maestà* (the face in majesty), as opposed to the *volto in profilo* and the amusingly named *occhio e mezzo* (eye and a half, that is, the three-quarter study with the more distant eye sectioned by the profile). The *volto in maestà* is the full or almost full frontal face informed by an iconology which can be traced ultimately to the early Christian representations of Christ Pantocrator or the Virgin Hodigithria, the latter attributed to the brush of St. Luke himself, with the Elizabethan ruff coming near to the effect created by the erstwhile halo – that of inscribing the head in the perfect form of the circle – of radiant white, if not of radiant light. This figure is the keystone of a mode of portraiture, to quote Roy Strong, «*more akin to the aesthetic of Byzantine art, itself the result of iconoclast movements, than the art of the Renaissance in Italy*»⁴¹. Indeed, going beyond the Byzantine to the Greek, one might also recall the point made by Vernant at the very beginning of *La Mort dans les Yeux* : Gorgô is *never* portrayed in any other guise than the frontal mask⁴².

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In the letter he gave Holbein for Thomas More, Erasmus describes the atmosphere in England as one where «*the arts [are] freezing*». And they did indeed go some considerable way to «*freezing*» Holbein's conception of the portrait. For his work there falls into two periods⁴³ between which there is a subtle shift in emphasis: the inner force and massive physical presence of Thomas More, Alice Middleton, and Archbishop Warham⁴⁴ were destined to be transmuted by the trammels of Medieval-minded masters into the stony aloofness and flat patterning typical of the second period. The later figures, Jane Seymour⁴⁵ for instance, no longer displace a certain tangible volume, but, as Sir Joshua Reynolds said, «*have the appearance of being inlaid*»⁴⁶. There is little amicable and less that is gracious about such an image: as Pope-Hennessy memorably put it, «*it was an icon, proud, hieratic, menacing*»⁴⁷. Any movement, play of feature, shadow of sentiment, was ironed out: in a word, it «*froze*»⁴⁸.

Such «*refrigeration*» concerns moreover not only the creative but also the consuming end of the process: van Mander's «*verbaastheid*» before the portrait commemorating a marriage *performed the very day after* Ann Boleyn's execution, to be suspended apotropaically over the heads of the Privy Council. The Palazzo Barberini copy⁴⁹ exemplifies, if ever portrait did, the strategy of iconic representation as «*dompte-regard*», as does the anonymous portrait of Henry's frail son, Edward VI, at Windsor, which is an almost exact replica of the stance and apparel of the former: the better to quell the querulous at the change of reign, as it had been at a change of *reine*.

This being so, it is radically insufficient to limit the effect of this mode to what Arnold Hauser calls «*die ostentative Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber dem Beschauer*»⁵⁰ (the indifference flaunted towards the spectator). What this type of portrait ultimately entails is an abdication, an abolition, of the contemplating subject before the painting. The same thing occurs in a *pre*-Reformation context, paradigmatically, in Antonello's *Saint Sebastian* (at Dresden), protector against the plague. In this work, the eye of a wrathful God contemplates the anxious spectator-sinner, in fear of being smitten by the plague, from out of the saint's navel – it is an example of *oculus umbilicus* – inciting him to renounce the works of Satan and lay down the bow and arrow with which, given his position facing the martyr, he is symbolically in league – whence the plague. So, in this *post*-Reformation, *political* version of the same underlying logic, the Supreme Ruler – the King – is not so much the *object* as the *source* of vision, one who dispossesses the subject (in the political sense of the term) of his *regard* (the French word). *Regard* in the socio-moral sense, in the context, being the negation of *regard*.

In other words, the only difference between the Saint as depicted by Antonello and the King as painted by Holbein (who began as a deeply religious artist) is the transmutation of the theological into the ideological framework: the logic informing the representation is the same, namely the laying down of arms, the allaying of harms.

Du regard, ça s'étale au pinceau sur la toile, pour vous faire mettre bas le vôtre devant l'œil du peintre.^{51a}

Il donne quelque chose en pâture à l'œil, mais il invite celui auquel le tableau est présenté à déposer là son regard, comme on dépose les armes.^{51b}

Did not, after all, Sir Francis Bacon evoke what he called the «*emission*» of the eye in terms of a «*percussion*», capable of grievously smiting the receiver, who has to «*meet the blow*»⁵²?

If Holbein was to leave his mark on the portrait for sixty years after his death, it was because he had created the *apotropaic paraphernalia of tyranny* by converting the *volto in maestà* from icon to Gorgon. At the expense of his art he had become armourer, reverting, that is, to the *armorial* full length study of his Germanic origins. It was because it served as an ideological bulwark – an Athena's shield – against social mutability, simply freezing movement out of the body natural and the body politic (in the first place, the Privy Council), that it was, as stated above, the one exception to the rule: initially greeted by the English as an «*outlandish*» – *ausländisch* (foreign) – mode, it became enduringly adopted.

Fifty years or so hence, in the portraits of Henry's daughter, with the ambiguous cult of the Virgin Queen, this representational strategy becomes transparent: thus, the liberal sprinkling of eyes, and ears, on Elizabeth's gown in the «*Rainbow Portrait*» is, amongst other things, a *secularisation* of the trinitarian eye that stares at us from St. Sebastian's navel or is suspended in a void in Pontormo's *Last Supper at Emmaus*. The Rainbow Portrait is a remarkable instance of a representational reversal into the contrary: the *lack* of transcendence (the trinitarian eye) into an *excess* of immanence (disembodied eyes, bereft of symbolic triangle or saintly torso). These eyes are *not*, however, merely to be evacuated as an allegory of the omniscience of a providential ruler, as there is a tendency to do.

As in Helena's soliloquy, there is much more to it than that – a more pristine, not to say primitive force at work, as appears if we compare it to the «*Ermine Portrait*». In the latter, usually explained as an Imperial version of a Petrarchan *trionfo della castità*⁵³, the even more liberal sprinkling of jewels on the royal robes serves the same purpose. Like the carbuncles which Shakespeare often uses as metaphors for glowing, demonic eyes, the jewels in the Ermine Portrait are not so much gems as eyes, and not so much eyes as what, in French, goes by the name of *ocelles*, from *oculus*, the stylized eyes the function of which is not to see – they are blind but *to be seen as if seeing*, their effect, on the wings of insects or on the surface of shields, being, if not to petrify, at least to subdue, so as more easily to master. Indeed, the symmetrical deployment of gems on a gown which is visibly of *velvet*, narrowing at the wasp's waist, only to continue in attenuated mode below, is reminiscent of another beast, complementary *dans l'imaginaire*, to the ermine *dans*

le symbolique, that is, the butterfly, wings deployed in display or defence. Even more important is the fact that, the gems being possibly topazes and diamonds – symbols of chastity –, the emblem itself becomes *ocelle*, *oculus*, eye : so that we are not so far removed from Arthur's pearls and diamantine shield, or the «triple eye» of Shakespeare's virginal Britomart, Helena²⁴.

The «*Rainbow Portrait*» too contains something very close to the deployment of the butterfly's wings. The lower right-hand section, the darker side, is in *contrapposto* to the upper left hand section, which is of dazzling pallor, diaphanous gauze or rich gold. In depth, the effect is strangely sunken. In colour, strangely subdued. Both features suggest the presence of a representation *en abyme*. This painting within a painting is ever framed, as it were, by the gently falling, quasi symmetrical drapery, with its apex at the shoulder, whence emerges the arm. In this painting *en abyme*, the eye does not travel up to rest on the head and headdress of the queen : it makes the inverse journey from the shoulder down to the tip of the hand. This representation is the darker, the night side, of this otherwise bright coin : for it represents an *inversion* of the *gorgoneïon*. Vernant singles out two constants in a score of variants : an intense, piercing look, and, surrounding it, a knotted mass of serpents. What we have here is a *single* knotted serpent set amongst a *plethora* of eyes which encircle it in a near perfect double arc, just as the lids contain the eye. Of course, as everyone knows, *dans le symbolique*, the serpent is a symbol of wisdom, here nourished by watchfulness. But if this cerebral reduction charms the *mind*, it does *not* ensnare and charm the *eye*, wherein lie a submission and adhesion far more potent (as Elizabeth well knew, who baptized Leicester «*her eyes*», Hatton «*her ears*»). Thus, what we have here *dans l'imaginaire* is a reworking of the *gorgoneïon*, shorn of its noxiousness by the reversal of its constituent components, so that a *mythème* is transformed into a *motif*.

It is precisely in their *double* working, *dans le symbolique* and *dans l'imaginaire*, that portraits such as these are to be conceived as what Henry Peacham calls «*heroical devices*», by which he means that they feed «*both the mind and the eye, by expressing mystically and doubtfully our supposition*». The «*doubt*», that is to say ambiguity, *lies not only in the decoding of signs, but in the very functioning of the iconography*.

In Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, one recalls that if Queen Elizabeth of the village pageant awes the audience, it is not because of any expression, verbal or facial, but because she is all a-glint and a-glare, not with precious stones, but with penny substitutes. The following is a remarkable *vignette*, by a connoisseur of connoisseurs, of Elizabethan portraiture – the Ermine Portrait Under Milk Wood, as it were :

Eliza Clark, licensed to sell tobacco. Could she be Mrs. Clark of the village shop ? She was splendidly made-up. Her head, pearl-hung, rose from a vast ruff. Shiny satins draped her. Sixpenny brooches glared like cat's eyes and tigers' eyes ; pearls looked down ;

her cape was made of cloth of silver – in fact swabs used to scour saucepans. She looked the age in person»^{55a}.

«*She looked the age*»: for anyone intimately acquainted with Virginia Woolf's writing, there is not the shadow of a doubt that the meaning is double, both passive *and active*, and that it brilliantly encapsulates the function of the Elizabethan *imago* as *dompte-regard*. That is to say, Eliza Clark does indeed incarnate the Elizabethan age, but that incarnation is in the «*look*», in the *active* sense of the word, cast upon the beholder not by any portion of the visage but by the apotropaic trappings in which she is arrayed. It is not surprising therefore that when her exquisite empathy with the epoch leads Virginia Woolf to evoke the sensuality of insects sucking the sweetness of colour on the costumes, the reference is positively Hillyardian :

There were pools of red and purple in the shade ; flashes of silver in the sun. The dresses attracted the butterflies. Red admirals gluttonously absorbed richness from dish cloths, cabbage whites drank icy coolness from silver paper. Flitting, tasting, returning, they sampled the colours^{55b}.

This is not a comment on costume : it is a comment on costume represented in art. They brilliantly encapsulate the double strategy of the Elizabethan portrait : alimentary and apotropaic.

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The first figure I mentioned is the *volto in maestà*. The other figure is the quintessence of *maniera*, the supposed soul of grace : not the *look* of Medusa, but the *snakes* on her head. I am thinking of the one uncontested iconic figure specific to Mannerism : the *figura serpentinata*, aimed not at freezing us into immobility but ensnaring us in the toils – or should I say coils – of torsion. I have already spoken of Hillyard's ruffs. These I would say are half way between Holbeinesque pattern and Isaac Oliver's pure serpentine volutes of veil which wreath the wraith-like face in a writhing mass. In the celebrated portrait supposedly of Frances Howard, Countess of Essex⁵⁶, these volutes even suggest the uncanny image of the hood of the cobra with the dark jewel poised at the edge of the veil overshadowing the strangely shrunken face. In its own way, Oliver's serpentine *sprezzatura* holds one as

spellbound as any brutal frontal freeze.

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Before coming finally to the portrait in *The Merchant of Venice*, I will simply confine myself to a work by Hilliard which conveniently binds together the various threads I have traced up to now. This is the Armada Jewel in the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is orchestrated by a dialectic of two representational logics, articulated around the outer metal locket and the inner limned portrait, and as such it is an illuminating intermediary variant of the casketed miniatures in that play.

The outer locket introduces us to a new type of portrait, the classics *numismatic* profile of the Imperial ruler (Dolce's *volto in profilo*), of which the great Renaissance master was Pisanello. The imperial profile is *rarer* in England than on the continent, for reasons that go back to what I said about the revenge of Zeuxis, as we shall see. But if there was a moment in the 16th century when Englishmen may be pardoned for resurrecting this hubristic mode of portraiture, it was *after* the defeat of the Armada. Not before it, be it noted. *Before* the Armada, one would have expected the full or near full frontal, the agonistic mask or *ocelle* of *atoute-puissance* claimed but yet to be proven on the field of battle.

The representational logic of the profile, as I see it in this context, is that it transcends the structures of fascination as defined both by Vernant and Lacan. For the scissor cut-out is a visage bearing the mark of castration, the portrait in profile is thus excised from the logic of *agôn* and Eros, set apart from it, set *above* it. For the simple reason that the profile introduces the dimension of *the third person*. It looks, not at the subject, but at the latter. These are no longer *rappports de capture* but *rappports de coupure*. That this is no «modernist» distortion is proved by the *cinquecento* distinction that operates between many portraits of members of the same family, some three quarters, some profile. The difference between *capture* and *coupure* could hardly be better exemplified for the three quarter or full face ones were painted from *live* sitters : the sitters for the ones in profile were *dead* at the time of composition, and the portraits were painted from death masks, masquerading as portraits from life. This happens in Piero di Cosimo's portraits of the Sangallo family in Amsterdam or Signorelli's of the Vitelli family in the Uffizzi. Significantly, as with the Greek frontal Gorgô, there is no known instance of the phenomenon occurring in reverse order.

The profile portrait translates therefore *either* the ontological *coupure* between life and death or, as in the Armada Jewel, the accession to a plane of being where strategies of *capture* are suspended, the eye no longer being the locus of an appetite, the seat of *Invidia*, instilling or ingesting petrifying poison.

On the reverse side of the locket we have the image of an Ark, which is objectively the same object as Shakespeare's caskets, both being coffers, sea-going

or not, and in both cases symbols of the Law of the Father – Yaweh or Belmont – disposing for the well-being of his offspring. Hence the compatibility with the *profile* portrait, bearing, in the *coupure* which constitutes it, the mark of castration. And finally, to cap it all, the motto «SAEVAS TRANQUILLA PER UNDAS» is written in capitals. The outside of the miniature is the universe of *le symbolique*, a model of everything Lacan meant by *le grand A*.

And when we now open the jewel we have an equally admirable incarnation of everything he meant by *l'objet petit a*, the object of desire, and the text around the image is duly calligraphied in small letters. For *inside* we revert to the almost full frontal (it is nowhere near the «*eye and a half*»). Here the skin tints melt towards the encircling ruff and headdress, which make an almost complete haloing effect, while the dark sparkling eyes are refracted and repeated in the sprinkling of jewels. The disposition is not convex but concave, the lines not hard but soft. This is not the immutable law but the alluring intimacy of the desired object. Here is not cold silver bossing as on the outer case, nor the virginal white of the eglantine which Hillyard uses, probably as an emblem of the Virgin Queen⁵⁷, in the famous *Unknown Youth Leaning Against a Tree*. Here we have the sensual red rose with double corolla – both metaphor and synecdoche of the beauty opposite, the same «*heraldry*» of colour Shakespeare expounds in *The Rape of Lucrece* (white for virginal virtue – here silver for virile *virtus* – and red for beauty). Finally the twining if not twisted tendrils whose gentle violence binds the lovesick youth to the tree in the former work here embody in their Mannerist toils the mutability enshrined in the motto⁵⁸. The whole miniature is an exquisite dialogue between outside and inside, public and private permanence and passion, Law and Desire, *symbolique* and *imaginaire*, *Fort und da*. Which brings me to *The Merchant of Venice*.

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To end, I propose, only too rapidly, to apply these findings to illuminate the engendering of the portrait in *The Merchant of Venice*, the play where it is given greatest exposure. Most of the other components of the marriage trial motif are to be found in one or other of the various known sources. The portraits however are, as far as one knows, Shakespeare's own.

This «*invention*» can, it seems to me, be situated at the confluence of the two fields of force I have attempted to outline.

a) the *materiality* of the limned portrait

b) the *modal* ambivalence implicit in portraiture at the time.

The *material* element hails from *Il Pecorone*⁵⁹: the crucial, concealed component of the marriage trial is *oral* – the all-powerful potion that quells even the most ardent desires. That is to say, the drink thrice offered by the Circa figure: «*one*

of the lady's maids, ... sorry for Gianetto, put her mouth to his ear and whispered, "Pretend to drink, but do not drink tonight..."⁶⁰. In transforming his source, what Shakespeare does is simply to reverse the process set in motion in *Arden of Feversham* : there, from icon to soup, here from potion to portrait. The concomitant result is that what in *Il Pecorone* was the whispering of the effect of the drink, in *The Merchant* becomes the musical whispering of the acrostic solution to Bassanio.

So much for the oral behind the oval.

The modal element of the marriage trial is the hidden content of the caskets, which comes from the *Gesta Romanorum*. Here we have a logic analogous to that of anamorphosis : respectively, two reversals from cosmos to chaos, from gold and silver to a couple of variants on the death's head, followed, as they were historically, by the salvatory, jubilatory reversal from chaos to cosmos – from lead coffin to golden head in lieu of a death's head. In this respect, the operative word in the portrait of the intermediary silver casket with its idiot is *blinking* («*blinking idiot*»). For it designates not only the palpebral pulsation of open/close but the blinding of the Saxon root *blenk*, as in «*ice-blink*» or the German *blankes Metall*, the white gleaming of Arthur's shield, or, in the seminal passage of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the white blank at the heart of Africa which dazzles the young Marlow and sends him off, like a second Perseus, shielded by the various deflecting mirrors of text to confront the mystery – and the horror – of the snake :

a blank space [...] – a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. [It had become a place of darkness. But] there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, [...] And as I looked at the map of it in a shop window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird»⁶¹ (silly is not only stupid, or rather stupified, but also selig, blissful).

Kurt's famous last words «*The horror ! The horror !*» are simply an indirect rendering of the petrification by Medusa in 19th century Africa : hence the text's immense fascination. And just as Kurtz's quest for the ivory trophies of Africa is accompanied by their sinister variants, the dead men's heads *on pickets*, so Bassanio's quest for the fleecy trophy of Venezia is accompanied by its variants, the dead men's heads *in caskets*.

This nodus affects the whole play. If the marriage trial uses a series of three portraits, in the fabric of the play there is another, particularly subversive metonymic chain of three female *têtes coupées* that constitute the inverse and complementary representation to the male «*chair à couper*» in the other type of trial, the courtroom species the outcome of which is not marriage but death.

The first of these three is par excellence that other trophy of all times, the Golden Fleece, Portia being reduced to a double, by now familiar, synecdoche : her

looks and her locks : the looks strike dumb, the locks blaze in the sun : «*sometimes from her eyes / I did fair speechless messages [...] receive [...] her sunny locks / Hang on her temples like a golden fleece*». In a word, Medusa gilded o'er. In Greek mythology, the two trophies were complementary, the Fleece being guarded by a serpent of a thousand coils with ever open eye. The *second* link in the chain reveals Medusa with the gilt off : this time the text could hardly be more explicit : «*So are those crisped snaky golden locks / Which make such wanton gambols in the wind / Upon supposed fairness, often known / To be the dowry of a second head, / The skull that bred them in the sepulchre*». Note that in the expression «*snaky locks*», three of the original four phonemes of «*sunny locks*» resurface. The *third and last* chapter in the tale of ambivalent little Goldilocks takes the form of the old predatory parable of the spider and the fly, locked by the locks in a prison of immobility, prior to being gobbled up. Here, she who was the Golden Fleece, the *object* of the quest, becomes she *of* the «*golden mesh*» with which she doomed her husband Jason, after helping him ravish the golden trophy. Thus the ambivalence is not only semantic, it is also syntactic, both object and subject of the same action : the very hallmark of the *fantasme* at the heart of the fiction : «*here in her hairs / The painter plays the spider, and hath woven / A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men / Faster than gnats in cobwebs, – but her eyes ! How could he see to do them ? / having made one, / Methinks it should have power to steal both his / And leave itself unfurnish'd*». Here we have Medusa in the guise of Medea : behind Portia Medea ; behind Medea the magician, Medusa the mortician, or preying mantis. It is not surprising that Medea alone could close the eye of the serpent guarding the Fleece.

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The finished portrait as scenic object is thus part of a quintessentially split and reversible representation. The paradigm of this in its manifest form of duality is the pair of «*counterfeits*» which, in the «*bedroom scene*», Hamlet brandishes over the ruins of the whole edifice of marriage vows, the «*body of contraction*», religion itself, repeating the scene with the «*tables*» where laws and saws had become portrait. This new pair of portraits conforms, even in quirks of Hamlet's description, to the anamorphic logic of Holbein's seminal *Ambassadors*. It should be noted that the pair are not, incidentally, produced in casual sequence but *simultaneously*, like the twin representations on Holbein's canvas, to be anatomized only in sequence. Ambassador Dinteville, like Hamlet Senior, is a fine figure of a man, if not of a demi-god, Hamlet begins his anatomy by the curls, then comes «*the front of Jove himself*», «*An eye to threaten and command*», «*A station like the herald Mercury*». Ambassador Dinteville has no reason to envy herald Mercury on any of these counts. Then what, O horror ! «*A mildew'd ear*». Now this «*mildew'd ear*» turns out to be not at all a bad description of the enigmatic, twisted whitish object with its dark inner

recesses and anfractuosités in the anamorphosis. «*Blasting his wholesome brother*»: «*blasting*» is remarkably apposite, in both senses of the word «*blast*», — that is, the sudden explosive epiphany *and* the immediate withering of Mercury Dinteville, or, to use Parolles' favorite pun, the «*blowing up*» of the phallus which is a «*blowing down*» of the cardboard courtiers. For therein lies the deepest consonance: just as the phallic anamorphosis is also the death's head, so, in *Hamlet*, the «*mildew'd ear*» is itself the ithyphallic satyr («*Hyperion to a satyr*»).

Lastly, because this ear in its counterfeit is such a perversely pregnant organ, there seemed to me to be a good chance that the accompanying detail, the mildew, participated in the anamorphic logic. And, in its own peculiarly Hilliardian way, so it does. For this signifier really does send us back from the oval to the oral portrait, for mildew is originally *mel-dew*⁶², the nectar of honey. In other words, just as the poison is a perversion of the Logos of Genesis, so mildew turns out to be the postlapsarian perversion of the precious, primal, Hilliardian «*sweetness*» of honey, *mel*.

In the last analysis, the mildew on the ear of the regicide *in the portrait* is the complementary representation to the poison drunk by the ear of the rightful king *in the dumb show* (half way between play and portrait incidentally). Thus, the agricultural and the anatomical ear, the active and the passive poisoning, the good and the bad oral object (honey and hebona), the alimentary and the anamorphic portrait, coalesce in an extraordinarily powerful *coincidentia oppositorum* which is only fitting for the central *fantasme* behind the fiction of the play.

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In exploring the origins of Western drama⁶³, Vernant distinguishes two fundamental representations which determine the transformation of myth or history into drama: that of Gorgô on the one hand, that of Dionysos on the other. I would suggest that in the two forms of English portraiture in the 16th century, and the two representational logics that inform them, we have an analogous symmetry. The miniature is presided over by Dionysos, that is to say the strategy of fusion, while the full-length frontal portrait is the realm of Gorgô, fascination by fixation. The consequence for the critic is that it is no good importing history into literature or art without passing through this double filter imposed by the dialectics of desire.

NOTES

- i The significance was first pointed out by E. Panofsky. Shakespeare may have seen the spy-hole anamorphosis of Edward VI which a German visitor, P. Hentzmer, saw hanging in Whitehall in 1598, and which Shakespeare may have seen when playing with Lord Strange's Men. Cf. *infra*, and note 43.
- 1 All references are to the Arden Edition : *Hamlet*, ed. H. Jenkins London, Methuen, 1982 ; *All's Well*, ed. G.K. Hunter (1959) 1967.
- 2 All references to Arden edition, ed. J. Russell Brown, Methuen, London, 1955, 1981.
- 3 Cf. Samuel Y. Eggleton Jr., *The Renaissance Discovery of Linear Perspective*, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1975, p. 74ff.
- 4 Cf. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, London, Weidenfeld, 1971, p. 7.
- 5 *A Treatise concerning the Arte of Limning* by Nicholas Hillyard, c. 1598-1603 ? ed. R.C.R. Thornton and G.T. G.S. Cain, Manchester, MidNAG Press, 1981.
- 6 *Op. cit.*, p. 77.
- 7 Paris, Champ Vallon, (Collection L'Or d'Atalante), 1986.
- 8 Jean-Pierre Vernant, *La Mort dans les Yeux*, Paris, Hachette, p. 33. Baubô, in Rabelais, becomes La Vieille de Papefiguière, Quart Livre, ch. 47, for example.
- 9 E.g. «One must draw away those salt and greasy mixtures that starve and poison the colours». (p. 117).
- 10 Edward Norgate's somewhat later *Miniatura* (1638) recommends a weasel's tooth.
- 11 Cf *Astraea : The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century*, London, Routledge, (Ark), Frances Yates, pp. 144.
- 12 Oxford, O.U.P. World's Classics, p. 263-4, I, i, 610ff.
- 13 Ed. J.B. Steane, Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1972, p. 345.
- 14 Cf. Ellis Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain 1530-1790*, Harmondsworth, Pelican, (1953) 1962, p. 3ff.
- 16 The translation of the title is in itself a whole programme : English praxis replaces Italian theory : carving for sculpture, building for architecture, and curious thrown in to boot.
- 17 For example : Lomazzo's «*The further importance of this beauty and majesty of the body is seen more clearly in the culto divino than in anything else, for it is a marvelous thing how piety, religion and reverence for God and the Saints are increased in our minds by the presence of Eurythmy*». becomes in translation : «*But if we shall enter into further consideration of this beauty, it will appear most evidently in things appertaining to civile dicipline. For it is strange to consider, what effects of piety, reverence and religion, are stirred up in men's mindes by meanes of this suitable comeliness of apt proportion*», quoted by Roy Strong in *Portraits of Queen Elizabeth*, Oxford, O.U.P., 1963, p. 36. This infidelity was first pointed out by Elizabeth Jenkin.
- 18 Following Freud's reading in «*The Head of the Medusa*» (1922), a fragment he never developped ulteriorly.

- 19 The original was burnt. For the history and significance of this work, see the book Roy Strong devoted to it, *Holbein and Henry VIII*, 1969. Copy in Palazzo Barberini in Rome.
- 20 The most distinguished copy is by Titian, who cut the legs off to give a three quarter version.
- 21 Munich, Beck Verlag, 1964, p. 252.
- 22 «Nicholas Hilliard and Mannerist Art Theory», *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, VI, 1943, pp. 89-100.
- 23 *Idea*, (1924), 1983, Paris, Gallimard, p. 97.
- 24 Cf. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
- 25 Antonio Francesco Grazzini.
- 26 In John Shearman, *Mannerism*, Harmondsworth, Pelican (1967), 1979, p. 105.
- 27 In *La Pensée Sauvage*, Paris, Plon, 1962, p. 36ff.
- 28 Turin, Einaudi, 1983, translated into French, Paris, Rivages, 1985, see introduction, *passim*.
- 29 There is, according to the Oxford Etymological Dictionary, no extant proof of this derivation, but the context is so coherent that it is no wrench of probability to suppose that *blason* does indeed come from the Saxon root which gives the present day German *blasen*, to blow up.
- 30 Cf. P. Vidal-Naquet's analysis of the seven blasons in this play in *Mythe et Tragédie (II)*, Paris, La Découverte, 1986, p. 132 and ch. 6 *passim*.
- 31 On the domination of the oval after 1580, see Graham Reynolds, *English Portrait Miniatures*, London, Black, 1952, p. 8.
- 32 Oxford Etymological Dictionary.
- 33 And this irrespective of whether the practical cause was the unavailability of aristocratic and royal sitters : we know, for instance, that Ann of Cleves granted Holbein only three hours of her time, when he came to paint her likeness in preparation for Henry VIII's marriage to her.
- 34 Hence the well-known fact that historians of costume are extremely chary of using full-length portraits as historical documents, as sitters wanted to be shown to greatest effect rather than «as they were». Conversely, the intimate portraits in miniature of any period are one of the most important sources of knowledge for costume. In the full-length study, in other words, the costume, and *a fortiori* the pattern, act as a *leurre*.
- 35 The most detailed account of this work is to be found in *Holbein The Ambassadors : Anatomie d'un chef d'œuvre*, by Jean-Louis Ferrier, Paris, Denoël, 1977.
- 36 Cf. Ferrier, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-4.
- 37 This peculiar English style was imposed by English taste even on the Netherlandish artists who came to work here, forcing painters like Dick Tinto «to levy that tax upon the vanity of mankind which they could not extract from their taste and liberality», in J. Buxton, *Elizabethan Taste*, Sussex, Harvester Press (1963), 1983, p. III)- As Buxton does not fail to point out, «realistic» portraits like that of Martin Frobisher in Cornelis Ketel's Bodleian portrait are the exceptions which confirm the rule.
- 38 Cf. Buxton, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
- 39 Not the short stay of 1527-8.
- 40 *The English Icon*, London, Routledge, 1969, p. 5.
- 41 *Ibidem*, p. 3.

- 42 *Op. cit.*, p. 31-32 : «*Contrairement aux conventions figuratives qui régissent l'espace pictural grec à l'époque archaïque, la Gorgone est toujours, sans la moindre exception, représentée de face*». One has to wait for Mannerism and Polidoro to find a Gorgon's head in *occhio e mezzo*, which is practically a contradiction in terms. Even Medusa is subjected to the general skewing and slewing around which characterizes its mode of representation.
- 43 Corresponding to his tow stays, 1527-8, 1532-43, cf. *supra*.
- 44 Rivalled by Titian alone, in effect if not in manner.
- 45 In the Mauritshuis, The Hague, generally taken to be the standard of the second period.
- 46 Notes on Du Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*, in *Works*, ed. E. Malone, 1797, II, p. 250.
- 47 *Op. cit.*, p. 192.
- 48 The work of Eworth too, to cite but one, underwent a similar regression from Flemish robust bulk to English flat pattern.
- 49 Cf. note 19, *supra*.
- 50 *Op. cit.*, p. 197 ; our translation.
- 51a J. Lacan in «Hommage à Marguerite Duras» in *Cahiers Renault-Barrault*, 1965, n. 52, p. 7-15.
- 51b J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire*, Livre XI, (1963), Paris, Seuil, 1973.
- 52 In «On Envy», *Essays* (1625), London, Dent, (1906), 1965, p. 24.
- 53 Cf. «The Triumph of Chastity» in *Astraea*, *op. cit.* p. 112ff.
- 54 Cf. my own article, «Anatomy of a fistula, anomaly of a drama», in *Actes du Colloque sur All's Well that Ends Well*, Paris, 1985, November, in *Astraea*, n. I, Montpellier, 1986. The roses in the Ditchley Portrait function likewise.
- 55a *Between the Acts* (1941), London, Harmondsworth, 1972, p. 62. Our italics.
- 55b *Op. cit.*, p. 48. Our italics.
- 56 For a reproduction, see Reynolds, *op. cit.* The same effect is produced by the volutes of veil in the portrait of Lucy Harington, Countess of Bedford. One might analyze Hilliard's most celebrated miniature, *Unknown Youth Leaning Against a Tree* in this connection, but that has been done by Roy Strong in the chapter he devotes to the work in *The Cult of Elizabeth*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1977.
- 57 Cf. Strong, *op. cit.*
- 58 «*Hei mihi quod tanto virtus perfusa decore non habet eternas inviolata dies*» : Alas that a virtue infused with such modesty should not live eternally inviolated.
- 59 Reproduced in translation in the Arden edition of the play, ed. J. Russell Brown, London, Methuen, (1955), 1981, p. 140ff.
- 60 *Op. cit.* p. 147.
- 61 (1902), Harmondsworth, Penguin, (1973), 1979, p. 12.
- 62 Oxford Etymological Dictionary.
- 63 In *Mythe et Tragédie II*, *op. cit.*, «Figures du masque en Grèce ancienne».