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Body, Personation and the True Imitation in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *1 Henry IV**

Miki Nakamura

Introduction

Anti-theatrical commentators in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England argued that the play was a 'counterfeit' or 'counterfeiting.' Alexander Schmidt's dictionary explicates that the word as noun means 'simulation, feigning' and 'deceitful imitation' (2, 3) and as verb it means 'to copy or imitate' and 'to feign, to forge' (1, 2). Those who criticised the stage particularly laid stress on the deceitfulness. For instance, William Prynne writes in *Histriomastix*:

All things are counterfeited, feined, dissembled; nothing really or sincerely acted . . . the whole action of Playes is nought else but feining, but counterfeiting, but palpable hypocrisie and dissimulation . . . by the feining used in our Stageplayes, many of our Spectators are deceived, all cheated . . . Cheated, with shadowes instead of substance. . . . (156-57)

Prynne uses the word 'counterfeit' and other related terms to disparage players. Their performances are not genuine because they do not act in a sincere way, and spectators watching them are deceived by 'shadowes.' According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 'shadow' was applied to 'an actor or a play in contrast with the

reality represented' and 'often contrasted with *substance*' (sb. 6b, 6a). Thus, in Prynne's view plays are deceitful shadows that have to be contrasted with reality. Likewise, John Cocke rebukes players for counterfeiting in *A Common Player*: 'His[a player's] chiefe essence is, *A daily Counterfeit*' (Chambers 255).

Anti-theatrical writers also attacked a player's action for being an imperfect image. In the same essay Cocke goes on to state: '[Y]ou must confesse there is no truth in him: for his best action is but an imitation of truth, and *nullum simile est idem* . . .' (257). That performances can never be identical with the reality imitated is a proof of their inferior and deceitful quality. Stephen Gosson impugns plays on the same ground in *Plays Confuted in Five Action*:

The perfectest Image is that, which maketh the thing to seeme, neither greater nor lesse, then in deede it is . . . and a greate many Coedies [sic] made at y Blacke friers and in euery Playe house in London . . . is made like our shadows, longest at the rising and falling of the Sunne, shortest of all at hie noone . . . Which inuincible proueth on my side, that Plays are no Images of trueth. (D4^r)

Gosson draws an analogy between shadows and plays, which seems like a deliberate punning, to demonstrate their inaccuracies. Plays do not represent reality perfectly any more than shadows, so they are judged to be untruthful.

It can be seen that what was at stake then was the dubiousness of dramatic imitation: from the standpoint of anti-theatrical polemicists it was not 'true' in the following senses of the word: 'sincere, truthful,' 'real, genuine' and 'exact, accurate, precise' (*OED* a. 2, 5a, 4a).

However, we also find contemporary accounts which say that what was presented on the stage was 'true,' and 'lively.' The word 'lively,' which is very frequent in the seventeenth century, means as adjective 'lifelike, animated, vivid' and as adverb, 'in a life-like manner; vividly, "to the life"' (*OED* a. 3, adv. 4).¹ I would

like to suggest that the two terms referred to truth and reality audiences found. In contrast to Prynne, Cocke and Gosson, they discovered that an actor imitated life sincerely, genuinely and accurately.

Actually, the idea of the 'true' imitation was shared by some writers then. For example, Roger Ascham writes in *The Schoolmaster*: 'The whole doctrine of Comedies and Tragedies is a perfite imitation, or fair lively painted picture of the life of every degree of man' (116). For Ascham, the purpose of dramatic mimesis is to make a perfect and lifelike picture of life. Moreover, Ben Jonson states in *Timber: or Discoveries*: 'The true Artificer will not run away from nature, as hee were afraid of her; or depart from life, and the likenesse of Truth' (587). The 'true' dramatist, in Jonson's opinion, should follow nature or life in making plays. These writers envisaged the stage could create the 'true' likeness or image.

Scholars have identified this trend which grew in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. First, John Russell Brown writes in the context of Elizabethan acting: '[A] new naturalism was a kindling spirit in his [Shakespeare's] theatre. This naturalism was not what we understand by the word today, but, in contrast to formalism, it did aim at an illusion of real life' (477). Also, R. A. Foakes concludes: 'What can be said is that Elizabethan acting was thought at the time to be lifelike, at any rate in the public theatres' ('The Player's Passion' 76). Finally, Janette Dillon argues in her recent book: 'early theatre is not, of course, without realism or the capacity to immerse the audience temporarily in an imaginative, unified, fictional world, and the tendency towards realism increases as the period advances' (159). It is difficult for us to give this trend a proper name for there is a risk of anachronism in the use of terms such as naturalism or realism. Hereafter, I use a phrase 'the true imitation' to describe the core of the trend which had been apparent from the late 1590s to the early decades of the seventeenth century.

The present study argues that some of Elizabethan playwrights make the true image on the stage by two means: the actor's body and personation. In the first place,

dramatists at the time depended on the actor's body to engage audiences. Although plays were termed shadows and thought to be unsubstantial, it was the physical presence of the actor that had a vital effect on spectators in the theatre. Besides, concrete and visual reality of the body was a medium by which they linked the stage with the real world.

In the second place, an alternative style of acting, represented by a new word 'personate,' appeared around the end of the sixteenth century. As Brown pointed out, the English theatre shifted toward a more natural acting and extant testimonies testify to it.² Audiences wondered at a performance and nearly assumed that it was done 'in deed' or 'in earnest.'

The play was a shadow, but at theatre its corporality attracted audiences; although the acting was condemned as counterfeiting, people sometimes found it true. It might be the case that the actor's body and personation impressed viewers all the more because of the very existence of such an idea and criticism. The stage representation during this period will be understood more fully if we take the interplay between the prevalent opinions and an actual experience in the theatre into consideration.

With this premise in mind, this paper considers the way in which the true image is created in *The Spanish Tragedy*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *I Henry IV*. The reason why I choose the three plays is because these plays, written at the end of the sixteenth century, are indicative of the growing tendency toward the true imitation.³ Thomas Kyd and William Shakespeare managed to present a realistic stage. The former's method was to put onstage the actor's body which recalled a genuine spectacle of punishment; the latter's was to contrast the new acting style with the old one, thereby revealing its naturalness.

The first two sections survey a couple of oppositional ideas of drama: shadow and body, counterfeiting and the true imitation. In the following sections I analyse several scenes in the three plays where a character, or an actor, performs death. My

concentration on these scenes is due to an assumption that the interplay mentioned above is most evident there. For a start, I investigate the presence of Horatio's corpse in *The Spanish Tragedy* and see how the actor's body constructs an illusion of dead body with reference to a public execution at that time. Next, I focus attention on Bottom, one of amateur actors in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* who as Pyramus kills himself in the play-within-the play. Whereas Bottom's performance is not 'true' but rather poor, it is likely that the actor playing Bottom personated the character truly. Finally, I look closely at the battlefield scene in *1 Henry IV* and compares Falstaff who feigns to be dead with Hotspur who is dead. Falstaff's counterfeiting of death discloses and highlights the 'true' acting by the actor of Hotspur.

I Shadow and Body

Plays and players were frequently referred to as shadows in the writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Prynne's comment quoted above is one example. Shakespeare too employs the idea of actors as shadows in his works. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Theseus comments on the play performed by the mechanicals: 'The best in this kind are but shadows' (5.1.211). The Riverside edition notes that 'in this kind' means 'of this profession, i.e. actors'; so, the line says that even the best actor is just a shadow. In addition, Puck's phrase at the end of the play, 'we shadows' (423), signifies the players as well as the fairies. What is more, a famous soliloquy in *Macbeth*, 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage' (5.5.24-25), is based on the association between shadow and player.

Contrary to this idea, plays in production are characterised by the physical reality of players and the Elizabethans were not unaware of it. Sir Philip Sidney, for instance, employs the phrase, 'corporal actions,' as he reviews contemporary stage productions in *An Apology for Poetrie* (110). The ensuing discrepancy between

the idea and an experience in the theatre is very interesting. Let us see the opening dialogue of *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*:

POETRIE. Truth well met.

TRUTH. Thankes Poetrie, what makes thou vpon a stage?

POETRIE. Shadowes.

TRUTH. Then will I adde bodies to the shadowes,

Therefore depart and giue Truth leaue

To shew her pageant.

POETRIE. Why will Truth be a Player? (Scene 1, 7-13)

That Truth helps Poetrie may result from the aforesaid prejudice that the play in itself lacks truth. At first, Poetrie uses the name for plays, 'Shadowes.' However, as Truth utters the word 'bodies,' Poetrie replies with a relevant term, 'a Player.' Here we cannot but be reminded of the physicality of the players who appear on stage. The dialogue shows us that drama is a bodily action as well as a shadow.

Critics have paid attention to the duality inherent in drama. To begin with, Dillon considers it in terms of reality and fiction:

[T]he actors participate in two worlds, the real world in which representation takes place (which we may call 'this world') and the fictional world represented in the drama (which we may call 'the other world'); and the play moves between these two worlds from moment to moment. (89)

Martin Esslin too points out the two dimensions of drama: '[A] play in performance is a fusion of the wholly imaginary with an element of the living reality of actors, their costumes, the furniture which surrounds them, the things they handle, such as swords or fans or knives and forks' (87). The two worlds or the fusion of imaginary

and real has been an essential condition of the play, admittedly. But 'the living reality' would have impressed the audiences at that time more strongly than in other periods since the idea of play as shadow was common. We shall see, as Carol Rutter argues, that the bodies on the stage are bogus proxies whose fake effects produce, in spectators, real affect (xvii).

II Counterfeiting and the True Imitation

As I mentioned in Introduction, anti-theatricalists contended that plays were deceitful and imperfect imitations. Yet, what is noticeable from the last decade of the sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century is a series of affirmation that a play on the stage is 'true' and acted 'lively.' John Webster praises the production of *The White Devil* in the postscript of the published play:

For the action of the play, 'twas generally well, and I dare affirm, with the joint testimony of some of their own quality, (for the true imitation of life, without striving to make nature a monster) the best that ever became them. (5. 301-05)

Unlike the anti-theatrical commentators, Webster states that the performance is 'the true imitation.' Besides, we can find the two important terms, 'life' and 'nature' in this passage. In *An Excellent Actor*, which is presumed to have been written to refute Cocke's essay, Webster moves on to commend the quality of an actor:

He doth not striue to make nature monstrous, she is often seene in the same Scaene with him . . . for what we see him personate, we thinke truely done before vs: a man of a deepe thought might apprehend, the Ghost of our ancient *Heroes* walk't againe, and take him (at seuerall times) for many of them.

(Chambers 258)

It is very likely that he had in mind an actor whose action looked real and whom spectators took for historical figures. The key words in the commendation are 'nature,' 'truely' and 'personate.'

It has been pointed out that the last word represents an emergent style of acting. John Marston is the first to use it in *Antonio and Mellida* in 1599: 'Whom do you personate?' (Induction 5). As Andrew Gurr writes, what the players were presenting on stage by the beginning of the century was distinctive enough to require a whole new term to describe it (99). Dillon argues that the term 'personation' came to stand for more naturalistic style (97). This new style helped to create the true image onstage.

Thomas Heywood describes in detail what personation is like in *An Apology for Actors* published in 1612:

And this is the action behoooueful in any that professe this quality, not to vse any impudent or forced motion in any part of the body, no rough, or other violent gesture, nor on the contrary, to stand like a stiffe starcht man, but to qualifie euery thing according to the nature of the person personated. (C4^r)

Heywood contrasts an acting style which is either violent or stiff with personation by which an actor imitates a person in every aspect. And personation is summarised by Heywood as follows: "[A]s if the Personater were the man Personated, so bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action . . ." (B4^r). It is a lifelike acting that bewitches the audience by creating the 'as if' situation onstage. Through this style, an actor represented life realistically.

We have to remind ourselves, as R. A. Foakes warns, that this acting could only be 'realistic' within the Elizabethan system of reality ('The Player's Passion' 70). It follows that what they thought as real or natural would be different from the modern sense of reality. However, it is fair to say that the audience in those days

were captivated by personation. An exemplary actor who performs in the new style is Richard Burbage, a famous tragedian of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Actually, it is conjectured that the model of John Webster's excellent actor is Burbage (Chambers 257). An elegy written soon after Burbage's death in 1619 describes his performances in detail. First, it informs us that this actor played 'young Hamlet, old Hieronimo, / Kind Lear, the griev'd Moor, and more beside' (Wickham, Berry and Ingram 182). The popular stage characters were played by him.⁴ Then, the elegist deplores that these characters '[t]hat liv'd in him, have now forever died' (ibid.). It is Burbage's art of personation that gives rise to the confusion of actor with role. The following part of the elegy recounts how his acting affected audiences including the elegist:

Oft have I seen him leap into the grave,
Suiting the person, which he seem'd to have,
Of a sad lover, with so true an eye
That there I would have sworn he meant to die.
Oft have I seen him play this part in jest
So lively that spectators, and the rest
Of his sad crew, whilst he but seem'd to bleed,
Amazed, thought even then he died in deed.
O let not me be check'd, and I shall swear
E'en yet it is a false report I hear.
And think that he, that did so truly feign
Is still but dead in jest, to live again. . . . (ibid.)

'True' in the third line possibly means sincere and genuine. Burbage acted in accordance with a role, and with a required emotion. His power of impersonation was so great that he became his characters (Stopes 116). Besides, because Burbage

performed a scene of death truly, the elegist thought that Burbage 'died in deed.' In this way, Burbage's performance is real enough to absorb his fellow actors as well as spectators, which leads to confusion about his acting: Burbage acted both 'in jest' and 'in deed' in the eyes of viewers. They found the true image in his counterfeiting. The ambivalence did not leave the mind of the elegist, and he inclined to hope that Burbage was 'dead in jest.'

Thomas May too writes about the ambivalence in Burbage's acting in *The Heir* in 1620. Polimetes asks Roscio how to behave on the death of his son, and Roscio mentions Burbage's personation:

POL[IMETES]. I must expresse a grieffe

Not vsuall, not like a well left heire

For his dead father, or a lusty Widdow

For his old husband, must I counterfeit,

But in a deeper, a farre deeper straine

Weepe like a Father for his onely sonne,

Is not that hard to doe, ha, *Roscio*?

RO[SCIO]. Oh no my Lord,

Not for your skill, has not your Lordship seene

A player personate *Ieronimo*?

POL. By th'masse tis true, I have seene the knaue paint grieffe

In such a liuely colour, that for false

And acted passion he has drawne true tears

From the spectators eyes, Ladyes in the boxes

Kept time with sighes, and teares to his sad accents

As had he truly bin the new man he seemd.

Burbage's personation of the father with 'false and acted passion' was so true that

it elicited the viewers' true emotion. Both the falseness and the truth interested the writer.

These ambivalences might be a common part of theatrical experiences. Yet, because there was the idea of play as counterfeiting in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, probably they were more vivid than those in other ages. In the end, what the stage aimed to produce during the period was not a total illusion or complete absorption of the audience but an incessant interplay of shadow and body, of counterfeiting and the true imitation. There would certainly have occurred 'a complex alternation of audience engagement with the illusory stage world and the audience's detached awareness of the play as a play' (Whitney 47).

III *The Spanish Tragedy*

In the final play-within-the-play of *The Spanish Tragedy* Hieronimo presents for the onstage audience a scene of murder which will turn out to be real. At first, the court audiences enjoy watching the inner play as a fictional sport. The viceroy's words, 'Were this in earnest, Bel-imperia, / You would be better to my son than so' (4.4.70-71) bespeak his view that the production is not 'in earnest' but in jest. Soon after this, Hieronimo makes a long speech with a description of such detachment at theatre:

Haply you think, but bootless are your thoughts,
That this is fabulously counterfeit,
And that we do as all tragedians do:
To die today, for fashioning our scene,
The death of Ajax, or some Roman peer,
And in a minute starting up again
Revive to please tomorrow's audience. (76-82)

The presupposition that the performance is counterfeiting is demonstrated. Indeed, in the courtiers' eyes the dead characters on the stage are players who are not dead and who would rise up after the show.

The real audience in Kyd's theatre must have taken this attitude for two reasons. For one thing, comments from the other group of onstage audiences, Revenge and the Ghost of Andrea, remind them of the fact that they are watching the play throughout. In the first scene of *The Spanish Tragedy*, Revenge says: 'Here sit we down to see the mystery, / And serve for Chorus in this tragedy' (1.1.90-91). And at his second appearance Revenge calms Andrea who irritates:

The end is crown of every work well done;
The sickle comes not till the corn be ripe.
Be still, and ere I lead thee from this place
I'll show thee Balthazar in heavy case. (2.6.8-11)

These lines give the audience the awareness of the play as a play. For another, a frequent use of theatrical terms such as 'act' and 'plot' makes them remember the fictionality of the work. Devices like these possibly offer a metatheatrical perspective to the audience.

The detachment of both the court audiences and the real audiences is interrupted by the discovery of Horatio's corpse, and a terrifying reality shocks them. Hieronimo says:

See here my show, look on this spectacle.
Here lay my hope, and here my hope hath end;
.....
From forth these wounds came breath that gave me life;
They murdered me that made these fatal marks. (89-90, 96-97)

Most noticeable in this disclosure is an abundance of deictic words such as 'here,' 'this' and 'these.' They emphasise the presence of the body of Horatio, and Hieronimo asks the courtiers to look at it. It is at this point that they cease to experience the aesthetic delight of watching a well-acted play and experience the personal horror of death (Hawkins 30).

Audiences in the theatre, too, would gaze at the dead son of Hieronimo. First of all, they would be gripped by the fact that the murder was real in 'the other world.' Charles Spencer who reviews the RSC production of the play in 1997 writes that the denouement has 'a terrific manic intensity' ('RSC's Triumph'). This turn of events can engage the audiences in a gruesome way.

Moreover, what Kyd's audiences saw actually was the body in 'this world.' Their reception on this level is very important. Let us consider the following remark by Robert Leach: '[T]he actor's body is real, but it performs, or presents, a fictional body; this fictional body, however, clearly has a physical reality' (93). Theatre audiences, being invited to look at a fictional body of Horatio, also saw the real body of the actor who played Horatio. I want to argue that the audiences were absorbed by the physical reality of the latter.

This is highly probable if we explore a close connection between theatre and a public execution in Elizabethan England. D. F. Rowan, supposing that an arbour remained on stage throughout the play, states it would be effective to reveal the body of Horatio hanging in it as it was in the murder scene (120). If the discovery scene was produced in this style at the original production, audiences may have noticed its resemblance to a public execution they were familiar with. Critics have discussed the similarity. For example, Molly Easo Smith writes that public punishment functioned as spectacles not unlike tragedies, and theatre enacted an execution scene; there was a metaphoric alliance between them. In addition to this, distance between spectacle and spectator was eradicated in both cases (72-75). As a result, to quote Jonathan Bate, 'the interplay of art and life has become blurred' (270). Likewise, James

Shapiro points out 'the potential indistinguishability of theatrical and state violence' (107). What concerns us especially is an effect such blurring had on the audiences. Watching the real body of the actor playing Horatio, they may have superimposed the image of an actual execution on it. Consequently, this would have caused a genuine feeling of horror. Thus, the concrete and visual reality of the body onstage, linked to the real world in the consciousness of audiences, brings about the true image. As Rutter wrote, the fake effect of the body produces real affect.

Indeed, as Smith astutely says, what we find in this play is its uncanny reliance on the spectacle of Horatio's body. We are never allowed to forget this spectacle, and characters keep reminding us of this event in various ways (79). Such reliance or repetition indicates that Kyd was conscious of the effect the body would have on viewers and intended to exploit it as much as possible. We can say that his dramaturgy is founded on the corporality to a large extent. That a picture of hanged Horatio is used in the title-page to the 1615 edition might be a sign of the impact of the body.

The period during which *The Spanish Tragedy* was first performed saw the rise of commercial theatre and the English stage was beginning to mature. At that time the surprising turn of events and the body might have been the two options available for Kyd to produce reality effect. It is with the arrival of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, one of the most outstanding professional companies in the second half of the 1590s, that the importance of the actor's performance comes to the surface.

IV *A Midsummer Night's Dream and 1 Henry IV*

In Act 1, Scene 2 in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Bottom and his friends prepare for a play which will be put on at the Duke's wedding ceremony. During the discussion Bottom expresses his idea of acting:

BOTTOM. What is Pyramus? a lover, or a tyrant?

QUINCE. A lover, that kills himself most gallant for love.

BOTTOM. That will ask some tears in the true performing of it. If I do it, let the audience look to their eyes. I will move storms; I will condole in some measure. To the rest—yet my chief humour is for a tyrant. I could play Eracles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in, to make all split. . . . (22-30)

Bottom intends to play the part with a help of tears that would be suitable to an unfortunate lover. Interestingly, there is an affinity between what Bottom calls 'the true performing' and personation since he tries to bewitch audiences by turning into the character. However, the style of acting he actually favours and will choose eventually is an exaggerated ('in some measure') and violent ('tear a cat') one that Heywood, as we saw before, contrasted with personation.

The difference between Bottom's intention and performance is emphasised again in the rehearsal scene:

BOTTOM. Write me a prologue, and let the prologue seem to say we will do no harm with our swords, and that Pyramus is not kill'd indeed; and for the more better assurance, tell them that I Pyramus am not Pyramus, but Bottom the weaver. This will put them out of fear. (3.1.17-22)

Bottom is so confident about his performance that he cares about its effect on audiences. In this point, too, he describes the reality effect personation would produce. Nevertheless, Bottom does not hesitate to break the illusion by returning to Bottom. Although he hopes to perform Pyramus truly, he will stop turning into the character.

The contradiction, we notice, results from Bottom's ignorance of theatrical conventions, or 'the terms and conditions of the agreement' (Leach 174) between

performers and spectators. As a consequence of this, what Bottom does throughout the play is no other than a keeping of the onstage audiences from tears, or engagement. Even the final scene of 'passion' (5.1.288) does not attain empathy; rather, it just provokes a mockery by Demetrius: 'No die, but an ace, for him; for he is but one' (307). In addition, after performing the death Bottom jumps up along with Flute as Thisbe and discloses that what they have done is just a performance.

The distancing effect in the play-within-the play is augmented by the onstage audiences' cynical reviews. They do not have a mind to appreciate amateur actors' role-playing. For example, Theseus says: 'I wonder if the lion be to speak?' (5.1.153). If, as Gaylord says, the spectator serves as a psychological participant and empathetic collaborator in the maintenance and 'truth' of the fictive world onstage (136), the courtiers do not collaborate with the players at all in this scene; instead, all of them cooperate to break the illusion of the play of Pyramus and Thisbe.

The disparity between Bottom's plan and its outcome is a very amusing element in this play. This must have been one of the effects Shakespeare aimed at in characterising the mechanical. I want to suggest that Shakespeare also sought to demonstrate what the true 'true performing' was like by means of the contrast. Indeed, there are scholars who analyse the problem of different forms and styles in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* from a historical viewpoint. Anne Righter [Barton], for example, states: 'In its obsession with the presence of the audience, the little tragic-comedy seems to parody those older dramas written before the idea of the self-contained play had been commonly accepted' (98). Similarly, Clifford Davidson writes that one of the purposes of the play-within-a-play is to burlesque the older dramatic styles (88).

Most insightful is Louis Montrose's argument, which interprets the contrast as an expression of a professional self-consciousness of Shakespeare and his company:

Shakespeare calls attention to the artistic distance between the professional

players and their putatively crude predecessors. . . . *A Midsummer Night's Dream* parodies antecedent dramatic forms and performance styles . . . and juxtaposes to them the representational powers of the Lord Chamberlain's Men and their playwright. (81-82)

Montrose finds that the difference between the performance by the Lord Chamberlain's Men and that by their predecessors is encoded in this play. Especially, Bottom embodies it: 'the contrast between amateur and professional modes of playing is incarnated in the performance of Bottom—by which I mean the Elizabethan player's performance of Bottom's performance of Pyramus' (82). Thus, concerning the play-within-the play, the illusion of Pyramus is shattered. Meanwhile, the illusion, or the true image, of Bottom is created by means of the actor's personation of Bottom in the play itself. On the first level, Bottom's exaggerated acting makes the court audiences detached, only to induce their laughter. On the second level, the actor, by representing Bottom in a lifelike manner, possibly bewitches the audience.⁵

As the sixteenth century came to the close, the English stage became more conscious of truth and reality in acting. The consciousness is recorded in a comical manner in *1 Henry IV*. Particularly, I want to examine Falstaff who is 'one locus of the play's insistent concern with counterfeiting' (Kastan Introduction 62). Undoubtedly, one of Falstaff's characteristics is his counterfeiting. In Act 2, Scene 4, we see him extemporise the King and the Prince in the tavern. As he starts the role playing, Falstaff says: 'I will do it in King Cambyeses' vein' (387). Shakespeare parodies the title of Thomas Preston's *Cambyeses in A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and he refers to an extravagant style of the play here. It is clear that Shakespeare was aware of the change that had happened during a few decades.⁶

Then, Falstaff shows us a counterfeiting again on the battlefield of Shrewsbury. After he feigns death to escape from Douglas' further attack, Falstaff rises up alive just as Bottom did and says:

'Sblood, 'twas time to counterfeit, or that hot termagant Scot had paid me scot and lot too. Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit. To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. (5.4.113-19)

He makes use of the word 'counterfeit' in his reasoning. First, he means 'feign' by the word and excuses his cowardice. Then, switching to the meaning 'deceitful imitation,' Falstaff insists that he is not a counterfeit since he is not a dead man. Audiences would almost be convinced by his rationalisation. They may also think of the living actor playing Falstaff at this point.⁷ A physical reality, or the 'life,' of the actor in 'this world' is foregrounded, and viewers would find his concluding words very apt. More importantly, according to Falstaff's logic counterfeiting has brought about 'the true and perfect image of life.' Although spoken as a witty jest, these words point to the sense typical of the age.

To understand the significance of the phrase fully, we must turn our attention to the dead Hotspur on the stage. Falstaff expresses his fear: "Zounds, I am afraid of this gunpowder Percy though he be dead. How if he should counterfeit too and rise? By my faith, I am afraid he would prove the better counterfeit . . . Why may not he rise as well as I?" (121-26) As Kastan points out in a note of the Arden edition, this is a rich metatheatrical moment as Falstaff's anxious expression voices the reality of the actor playing Hotspur (5.4.121-22). Indeed, Falstaff's comment has rich implication. First, it discloses that the actor of Hotspur is just counterfeiting death in 'this world' as Falstaff was in 'the other world.' Until this point, the audiences might have been absorbed by that actor's performance of death, just as Douglas had been by Falstaff's counterfeiting. Falstaff's lines break the illusion and at this point occurs the alternation of engagement and detachment in the minds of audiences.

Second, although the disclosure causes us to be detached, it might still be

possible that we wonder at 'the better counterfeit.' In contrast to Falstaff who does not maintain the illusion of death in the fictional world, the actor of Hotspur would continue to perform his death, even on Falstaff's back; his 'better,' or true, counterfeiting will produce 'the true and perfect image' of Hotspur.⁸ By implying the difference between them, Shakespeare tells his audience how deceitful acting could be on the one hand, and how true and real it could be on the other hand.

Conclusion

Drama had been considered as counterfeiting, but the English stage started to make the true image from around the turn of the sixteenth century. I have examined the three plays to illustrate how the theatre moved toward the true imitation. Although selection of examples is arbitrary and this study cannot cover the entire situation of change, I would like to infer the way in which the transition took place. First, when *The Spanish Tragedy* was performed, Kyd used the unexpected turn of events and the actor's body to convey reality. If this is the preliminary stage, the next step is to suggest the naturalness of personation by contrasting it with the older acting style. Watching Bottom's clumsy acting we are to appreciate the true acting of the actor playing Bottom; as Falstaff feigns to be dead and comments on Hotspur's death, we realise how the actor of Hotspur personates his role better. In these two cases, the comparisons are made in a comical style. This might be attributed to the fact that the Lord Chamberlain's Men had not achieved an arrangement in which a tragic actor, especially Richard Burbage, came to the centre yet and that there was the presence of a famous clown, Will Kemp.⁹

By the end of the sixteenth century the sense of truth and reality of the stage had developed in the minds of audiences as well as writers, which probably had to do with the emergence of the new term, 'personate.' At this stage of development appeared Richard Burbage whose true imitation amazed audiences.

Hamlet, first performed in 1600, presumably starring Burbage as the hero, is written in the context of the new way of staging. Hamlet advises the players:

O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to spleet the ears of groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipt for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-Herods Herod, pray you avoid it. (3.2.8-14)

Burbage, the embodiment of personation, criticises an exaggerated and violent performance. His words and action illustrate the difference between the new and old style, and the audience then would have realised that they were witnessing the change.

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Notes

- 1) Shakespeare uses the adverb 'lively' five times in his works. For example, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Julia as Sebastian tells Silvia that she acted her lamentable part so 'lively' with tears that her mistress wept (4.4.165-71). Such a performance and its effect will be one of the focuses of this study. Hereafter all citations from Shakespearean plays are taken from the Riverside edition.
- 2) There had been a long debate over whether Elizabethan acting was formal or natural. For arguments by a formalist, see Harbage. For the opposite view, see Brown. While stressing the importance of a natural acting, this study supposes the coexistence of different styles in the Elizabethan age. Therefore, I agree with Dillon who states: 'It should not be thought that the emergence of a fashion for greater restraint simply replaced the older, more rhetorical

style. Increased realism and interiority developed alongside a continuation of various kinds of formal, patterned and excessive performance' (98).

- 3) *The Spanish Tragedy* was written in 1587 (Erne xv); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1595-96 (Foakes Introduction 4); *I Henry IV* had been written by early 1598 (Kastan Introduction 76).
- 4) On the issue of Burbage as Hieronimo in *The Spanish Tragedy*, Jeffrey Kahan writes: 'Burbage may not have been the first Hieronimo. He simply may have been the most popular' (254). Following this argument, I would like to presume that Burbage contributed to the character's popularity by means of personation in the 1590s.
- 5) Donald Friedman, inferring that the role of Bottom was written for Will Kemp, reads a tension between Shakespeare and Bottom and concludes that the playwright tried to restrict the clown's improvisation. By his account, Shakespeare creates 'a role in which the clown must always appear to be himself, in which every improvised line or gesture appears to be part of the character he is playing, in which, in short, the clown is both displayed perfectly and, in a sense, imprisoned' (317). If this is true, Kemp did not have to personate the character at all. Or, Shakespeare may have thought that the only way for an actor like Kemp to personate a character was to be the one which was his double; then, it is possible to say that Kemp acted, or behaved, very naturally and could be the perfect image of Bottom/Kemp. Since we cannot know for certain who played Bottom in the first production of the play, I do not treat this subject fully in this paper.
- 6) The title of the amateur actors' play, 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus / And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth' (5.1.56-57) must have recalled that of *Cambyeses*, which starts with 'lamentable tragedy mixed ful of pleasant mirth.'
- 7) There are scholars who argue that the original actor of Falstaff is Kemp. See, for example, Wiles, 116-35. If Kemp did play the role, he, perhaps involuntarily, became a foil for the style of personation as we shall see below.
- 8) Roberta Barker points out that Hotspur's presence was one of the play's major selling points in its own time. Besides, she argues that the Elizabethan actor playing the role was expected to play out Hotspur's 'contradictions,' or the inconsistency in his character (288, 303). In this regard, this role in itself demanded a skilful personation.
- 9) See Gurr, 88-89.

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