

wildest of theologizers, maintains that it is an identification.

It is perhaps no trivial coincidence that these same worthies of antiquity come together again in *Hamlet*, though in an altered context, in the course of the prince's melancholy reflections on death and the grave, as he recalls how even the great Alexander died and returned to dust, "like imperious Caesar." Such is not the end of *Henry v*, where the dramatist studiously avoids all mention of his hero's death, though mentioning that he was succeeded by Henry the Sixth. We have to infer that Henry died and returned to dust, being "but a man"; and that *sic transit gloria mundi*. For, as Fluellen so truly observed, "there is figures in all things."

As for Levin's interpretation of these words as a "devastating parody," may we not answer him with those other words of Gower to Pistol: "Will you mock at an ancient tradition?"

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To the Editor:

Richard Levin argues that Shakespearean critics who find Christ figures in Shakespeare are like Shakespeare's Fluellen in *Henry v*, who, in the belief that there are "figures in all things," found that Henry's life mirrored Alexander's "indifferent well," comically making use of some absurdly far fetched parallels. Levin pokes fun at a number of instances of Christ figures that he has collected—many of them are sufficiently odd to make it easy to do so—and asserts that these are not to be regarded as "abuses of this method; they *are* the method itself" (p. 308). These Shakespearean critics, he states, are like those who compiled a list of "astonishing" similarities between the assassinations of Lincoln and Kennedy: since any two events must have some similarities, one can always draw up such a list of coincidences.

It is all very clever—and quite beside the point. For the critic is not in the position of the compilers of the Lincoln-Kennedy list. He does not assert that history has a cabalistic meaning; he asserts that, to hypothesize a play about Kennedy in which, say, a choric character discourses about the greatness of Lincoln and Kennedy, the dramatist is suggesting a comparison between the two men. The critic need not agree with this comparison to assert that the dramatist has suggested it. Of course, critics who find "figures in all things" and who are devout believers in the myth of Camelot might, like many theologically oriented Shakespeareans, impose such a comparison where it is not justified, but this would be an abuse of critical method, not the use of an inherently invalid one.

But we need not deal in suppositions. All the critics who have written on Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* have agreed, in an epidemic of "Fluellenism," that this play drew an analogy between the Salem witch hunts and the McCarthyism of its day. I am afraid that most of them would continue to do so even after reading Levin. They might point out in support of their position that the phrase "witch hunt" was currently used to refer to McCarthyism and that in Miller's adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* the fomenters of mass hysteria against Tom Stockmann echo Red-baiting clichés while Tom's wife, referring to their plan to emigrate to the United States, says, "I'd hate to go half around the world, and find out we're in the same place." Levin, sticking to his argument, could retort, first, that the reinforcement gained from *An Enemy of the People* is simply "a self-sustained chain reaction" (p. 311, n.) such as that in which "a character's credentials for Christ figurehood" (p. 311, n.) are "established by comparing him to other alleged Christ figures" (p. 311, n.) and, second, that the belief that Miller's audience, alive to the issues of its time, must have been reminded of McCarthyism as a "postulation of a special audience with special viewing habits" (p. 310). I think that most of us, however, would remain convinced, and rightly so, that *The Crucible* has reference to McCarthyism.

What is easier for us to see in a contemporary play is also true of Shakespearean drama. It is not only to parallels in events that some of the so-called Fluellenist critics point but to biblical echoes and allusions in the dialogue such as the echoes and allusions in *An Enemy of the People*. This Levin entirely disregards. He speaks sarcastically of the claims of a critic to "undeniable and undismissable plot correspondences" (p. 309), but what the critic wrote was "verbal and plot correspondences," and Levin makes no attempt to deal with this matter of verbal correspondences that suggest a comparison between a character and Christ.

Levin also does not examine the evidence of the scholars who argue that Elizabethans regarded the universe as a divine pattern whose figures repeated each other, with the good Christian being, as one seventeenth-century writer put it, a "microchristus." Although he is the author of a book on multiple plots in Elizabethan drama, Levin does not seem to realize that the parallels between the main plots and subplots, which of course are not merely coincidences collected by "Fluellenist" critics, had their origin in the Elizabethan mode of regarding the universe as made up of repetitions of a basic pattern. But an understanding of this is just as important for reading Shakespeare as is an understanding of the climate of opinion of Miller's audience for reading *The Crucible*.

Before closing, I wish to make two statements. The first is that Levin is not the first discoverer of "Fluel-

lenism.” In my *Shakespearean Tragedy and the Elizabethan Compromise* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1957), I said that in Fluellen’s speech Shakespeare “poked fun at straining for extended historical analogies” (p. 215) and that this should warn us against turning the plays into “subtle and intricately constructed allegories” (p. 216). However, Fluellen is not the only Shakespearean character to speak of “figures.” The Bishop of Carlisle speaks of Richard II as “the figure of God’s majesty” and says that if he is deposed England will be called “the field of Golgotha”—a reference to the crucifixion which, together with Richard’s reference to those who, “as Judas did to Christ,” betrayed him and delivered him to his “sour cross” and York’s description of the jeering crowd’s throwing dust upon Richard’s “sacred head,” indicates that if Shakespeare did not write detailed allegories he did suggest analogies.

My second statement is that I am the author of two of Levin’s anonymous quotations. In forgoing the usual documentation Levin was evidently animated by charitable motives: he thought that he had exposed the nakedness of the critics he cited and was giving them a protective cloak of anonymity. The reader, however, will judge for himself whether or not it was necessary for him to imitate the behavior of the Good Samaritan meeting the man stripped of his garments in Christ’s parable—if I may be permitted the comparison.

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Hamlet and Logic

To the Editor:

Harold Skulsky’s logical analysis (*PMLA*, 89, 1974, 477–86) of Hamlet’s quatrain: “Doubt thou the stars are fire, / Doubt that the sun doth move, / Doubt truth to be a liar, / But never doubt I love” (ii.ii.116–19), the logical form of which he says is “easy to mistake” (p. 485), is itself mistaken. In his effort to search for evidence that would prove his major contention that Hamlet is something of an anti-Cartesian methodical doubter, Skulsky asserts that a minor premise is an affirmation of a major, when in reality the major premise is itself a hypothesis. The major premise in Hamlet’s quatrain, like most majors in natural language logic, is a universally quantified assumption:

$$(1) \quad \overline{(x)(Px \supset \overline{Qx})}$$

which, if translated into para-English, means: “for all truths, if truth is analytical, i.e., tautological, then it is not the case that x, one particular instance of truth, is to be doubted.” The minor premise simply acknowl-

edges the possibility that (1) is (or may be) not true:

$$(2) \quad (\exists x)\overline{(Px \supset \overline{Qx})}$$

which asserts: “there exists [or, if modal logic is used, as it must be in natural language logic, “there may exist”] at least one instance [in this case 3, 2 of which are synthetic truths and 1 analytic] in which (1) is not true.” Hence

$$(3) \quad \vdash (x)(Px \supset \overline{Qx})$$

which translates as: “it is asserted that it is not the case that for all truth, if truth is analytical, then it is not the case that x is to be doubted.”

There are two types of “truth” in Hamlet’s syllogism: synthetic, the first two lines, and analytic, line 3. Line 1 is

$$(\exists x)(Px \cdot Qx) =_{\text{at}} \text{“there exists an element such that that element is a star and it’s on fire.”}$$

Line 2 is

$$(\exists x)(Px \cdot Qx) =_{\text{at}} \text{“there exists an element such that that element is a sun and that sun does not move.”}$$

Line 3, however, is

$$(x)(Px \supset Qx) =_{\text{at}} \text{“for all elements, if that element is a truth, then it cannot be a lie.”}$$

Failure to differentiate these two types of truth is what led Harry Levin to misread the lyric as a simple contrast of Hamlet’s *non-disputandam* love with the facts of the scientific world. Skulsky also fails to see the distinction when he says “a Pyrrhonian Hamlet is effectively ruled out by his equation of physical knowledge with the maxims of pure logic” (p. 485). It is only line 3 that could be categorized as “pure logic.” The prior two lines are maxims of pure science.

Nothing has been said so far about the adversative of line 4. It is in this line, and only in this line, that we can get some insight into Hamlet’s psychological assumptions. What the line asserts with its “But”—the “and surprisingly” of P. F. Strawson’s translation equivalent—is a conjunctive sentence that in a loose paraphrase says: “That’s OK. But never doubt that my love (and my strong assertion of it?) is not far truer than those analytic- and synthetic-truth functions.” In other words, “nothing pleases me more than that which befalls preposterously.”

I submit that these four lines are no proof of Hamlet the Unskeptic or Hamlet the Confident. What they do reveal is the absolute nonequivalence of natural language logic, as used by a poet, and the pure logic of logical theory. Shakespeare used whatever materials were at hand for the creation of poetry, and since poetry is the “art of feigning” (Sidney) or “the art of