Avant-propos

Henri Suhamy

Cet ouvrage collectif, où alternent le français et l'anglais, fait suite au petit livre intitulé *Première leçon sur King Lear*, publié chez le même éditeur, où sont présentées, comme suggéré par le titre, et selon un plan de type traditionnel et pédagogique, un certain nombre de données objectives ou de portée immédiate sur la pièce. Le présent ouvrage contient des études variées, plus personnelles, nourries de recherches plus spécialisées et menées dans des directions diverses, mais exposées toujours avec un souci de rigueur et de lisibilité. Tout en présentant l'attrait de la variété des thèmes traités et de la pluralité des points de vue critiques, l'ensemble de ce recueil vise à une synthèse au moins formelle, en groupant les articles selon des centres d'intérêt bien définis.

On trouvera à la fin de l'ouvrage quatre exercices susceptibles d'intéresser particulièrement les candidats aux concours. Tout d'abord une composition en français et un commentaire en anglais, conçus selon les exigences des épreuves écrites du C.A.P.E.S., puis une dissertation française et une explication de texte en anglais, destinées aux candidats à l'Agrégation. Il n'existe pas de différence de nature entre le niveau exigé à l'un et à l'autre concours, tout au plus une différence de degré, du fait que la durée de l'épreuve d'écrit diffère entre l'un et l'autre, et il va de soi que les candidats et candidates aux concours sont invités à prendre connaissance de ces quatre textes. Beaucoup d'entre eux et d'entre elles affrontent d'ailleurs les deux concours la même année. Bien que ces quatre textes ne prétendent pas au statut de travaux de recherche, puisque ce ne sont que des exercices d'application, il est espéré que les lecteurs, quelles que soient leurs perspectives immédiates, tireront quelque profit — aussi bien dans le domaine méthodologique que dans celui de la réflexion sur l'œuvre — de la lecture de ces pages. Ont été ajoutés aux quatre exercices en question quelques plans d'exposés, pouvant donner quelques idées en vue des leçons d'agrégation à l'oral, mais également aux dissertations ou compositions écrites.

Conformément aux instructions officielles, les auteurs se sont appuyés sur l'édition New Arden établie en 2000 par R.A. Foakes. Celui-ci s'est appuyé sur les éditions originales, c'est-à-dire sur le texte du *Quarto* de 1608 et du *Folio* de 1623, publié sept ans après la mort de Shakespeare par ses amis et collègues acteurs. Incidemment les mots français sont *in-quarto* et *in-folio*, mais quand on parle de Shakespeare, on utilise couramment les

termes anglais. On sait que le texte de 1608 présente une caractéristique insolite : il fait partie de ce qu'on appelle les mauvais in-quartos, ou les in-quartos pirates, publiés sous une forme bâclée sans l'assentiment de l'auteur et de la compagnie à laquelle il appartenait ; pourtant il contient des passages non dénués d'intérêt et pourtant absents du texte de 1623. Il est bon de se renseigner sur les problèmes soulevés par l'établissement du texte, et l'on pourra sur ce point consulter les pages que consacrent à cette question les divers éditeurs. Il convient également de rappeler ici que les lecteurs disposant d'une autre édition que la New Arden de Routledge peuvent parfois se trouver devant un texte légèrement différent de celui qui leur est familier, notamment en matière de ponctuation, de découpage et de numérotation des vers, et bien entendu des lignes de prose.

Imagination and Image Types in *King Lear*[1]

Jean-Marie Maguin

> LEAR Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,
> to sweeten my imagination (4.6.126-7)

While almost every Shakespearian critic and scholar will, irrespective of his theme, readily rely on the evidence to be yielded by a given image content taken from the poems and the plays, it is interesting to note that up to the mid-1970s few full-size works advertised in their title a special preoccupation with Shakespeare's imaginative powers and his recorded imagery. Almost all was told, then,[2] when one had mentioned Caroline Spurgeon's *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1935), W.H. Clemens' *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (1951—but originally published in German in 1936, the war period interfering with the spreading of scholarship), and E.A. Armstrong's *Shakespeare's Imagination, A Study of the Psychology of Association and Inspiration* (1946). Fifty or so years later, the research track culminated and would have appeared to have died in the proceedings of the third world congress of the International Shakespeare Association of 1986[3] entitled *Images of Shakespeare*. I gleefully took part in that moment of critical attention and feel to this day that we are far from having exhausted the potential of imagery studies.

The trio of books mentioned before the last congressional tribute is an odd one. It has been fashionable (fortunately less frequently of late) to deride Caroline Spurgeon's enterprise almost ever since it materialized in print. It is true that her statistical approach leads to an awkward levelling down of all instances of an image, irrespective of its context. Yet most of the criticisms levelled at Caroline Spurgeon are unfair inasmuch as her interest in Shakespeare's imagery is subordinated to what it tells her, that is to say that Shakespeare is Shakespeare and neither Marlowe nor Bacon—as some propagandists would make us believe—and that he was a man who disliked dogs. E.A. Armstrong's study is potentially the most interesting. It succeeds in pointing to curious linkages between words creating idiosyncratic image associations that recur in both the poetic and the dramatic works. Armstrong names the method "cluster criticism",

1. An earlier version of this paper appeared in *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 9, Montpellier, avril 1976, p.9-28.
2. Donald A. Stauffer's *Shakespeare's World of Images, The Development of his Moral Ideas* (1966) is, as the subtitle suggests, more oriented towards the study of moral concepts than focused on image forms in their specific contexts.
3. Held in Berlin.

and indeed one could have foreseen fruitful results had not the effort been ultimately warped by an ambition similar to Spurgeon's—that of penetrating and unravelling not so much the complexities of the works as the meanders and minutest twists of their author's brain. Clemen's work, which follows in the tracks of G. Wilson Knight's symbolical approach, is by far the wisest and most reliable of the three books quoted. His claim that the play is to be regarded as an "organic whole", that "every image, every metaphor gains full life and significance only from its context"[1], and that the fundamental fact is that "the image is rooted in the totality of the play"[2] should absolutely rule every enquiry into the dramatist's image forms and image meanings. The basic drawback of Clemen's book however, and the reason why it does not help fashion a method for dealing with imagery, is the complete absence of a definition of what is in the first place held to be an image. Judging from his general lack of sympathy for Spurgeon's approach, one presumes that he also disagrees with her characterizing the image as

> the little word-picture used by a poet or prose writer to illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought. It is a description or an idea, which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood, with something else, transmits to us through the emotions and associations it arouses, something of the 'wholeness', the depth and richness of the way the writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us.[3]

Unlike Caroline Spurgeon or E.A. Armstrong, Clemen's preoccupation was not with the wholeness of the way the writer viewed or felt what he is telling us, but more appropriately with the wholeness of that which is being told us in any given play. Clemen was very definite only in his flat refusal to seek help from rhetoric and its formal types:

> A separate treatment of comparison, simile, personification, metaphor and metonymy, would only be illuminating if there were a definite and regularly recurring relationship between these formal types and the imagery—e.g. if from the fact that an image appears in the guise of comparison, specific and similar conclusions could be drawn as to the nature and the function of the image. But that is not the case; the same formal type has manifold possibilities of application, and it is solely the context in which the image stands that can offer any information about what a particular formal type may signify 'just here'.[4]

1. Clemen, *op. cit*. p.3.
2. *Ibid*. p.4.
3. Spurgeon, *op. cit*. p.9. This definition of the literary image is accepted by E.A. Armstrong in his *Shakespeare's Imagination*, p.9.
4. Clemen, *op. cit*. p.7.

Since these words were written, what fragile consensus there might ever have existed on what is metaphor, metonymy or synecdoche has been utterly lost among contemporary rhetoricians and linguists. It is curious, however that Clemen, denouncing as useless the analysis of the image form, was not tempted to enquire systematically into the image function. With one romantic sweep of the hand he brushed aside the potential pertinence of any manner of classification:

> It is an odd fact that our critical endeavours are generally satisfied when we have succeeded in classifying and cataloguing something. We believe that our perceptive faculties have reached their goal when we have divided and subdivided phenomena of poetry and history into a system of pigeon-holes and have pasted a label on to everything. That is a curious error.[1]

The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery developed from this refusal to classify. The perception of its author is excellent as he addresses himself to play after play, each seen within the context of its period of composition. Eventually, however, the reader, student or scholar is let down by the lack of a critical tool beyond the justified critical *a priori* of the organic examination.

Thus we find ourselves in an odd situation. We are constantly using the concepts of image and imagery to Shakespeare's works while none of the above quoted three books either succeeds or accepts to promote a usable definition. The ambition of this paper is to test the validity of Clemen's claim that classification is a mere intellectual vanity. We shall, in *King Lear*, try and see whether there are types of images defined by dramatic function; types whose function, while organically studied in the body of the particular play, signals a sufficiently general problem of dramatic expression for them to recur in other works. In the meantime I shall no doubt display shortcomings equal to those cited above but still hope that new openings on the discussion of a delicate question will be found. Bear in mind that the image types listed below do not represent the complete list of devices of that nature used by Shakespeare in drama. They are simply those that, as spectator and reader of *King Lear*, I have been able to identify.

Whatever definition one chooses for the literary image will not entirely fit the brand of imagery envisaged here, that is, *dramatic* imagery. In the printed book of verse or prose—with the significant exception of illustrated or emblem books—nothing is visually actualised beyond the words on the page. Drama on the other hand is an audio-visual medium, and even if we granted—which is impossible—the likeness of the word that is heard and the word that is read, there still remains the difference of the actualised

1. *Ibid*. p.7-8.

space of the stage in which actual human creatures move and speak. It is to fit this context that dramatic imagery is created. Its specificity is the direct result of the singularity of the dramatic situation.

On the stage, the actors provide perfect imitations of the flesh-and-blood human creatures that they stand for; their speech for all the dramatic and poetic conventions prevailing in any given period is essentially no different from the speech of their human models. Plato notes the specificity of the dramatic speech integrated in a non-dramatic work like the *Iliad* of Homer. He names those parts where the author pretends to be another (and no longer shows himself as author) *mimesis*; as opposed to *diegesis*, the bulk of narration and description in which the author reports, without concealing his presence, the goings-on of his human fictions. The narratologist, Gérard Genette,[1] goes one major step further and claims that direct speech does not imitate itself but is itself, and that therefore the only mimetic element—i.e. the element striving to represent the business of life—is what Plato called diegesis. Although one may grant with Genette that actors speaking their parts on the stage are no *mimesis* of life but life itself, it would be absurd to infer that the theatre play is the very stuff of life. The play is manifestly irreducible to the string of dramatic speeches comprising it. It relies on the clearly mimetic world of set and properties leading its own artificial existence alongside the verbal exchanges. Trick-swords result in faked deaths; the grassy bank is but a poor imitation of a real turfed slope. Above all, scenic impossibilities—those restrictive conditions of the stage which film technology conquers more and more easily, resulting in the concept of virtual reality—introduce clearly mimetic elements into those speeches that theory claimed to be no imitations but life itself. On the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages moonlight and sunlight alike could not be technically represented in a credible manner. Nearly all light effects were entrusted to speech, to wit Gloucester: "Alack, the night comes on…" (2.2.390).[2] Crowd scenes, large-scale battle scenes for example, must be either stylized, left out—as is the case in *Lear*—, or reported. While in one sense the battle report is perfectly life-like as such, it is also in terms of theatre the imaginative compensation for an episode that is scenically unachievable. As such, it is entirely mimetic. Elaborate though a set may be on a modern stage, the space and structure of, say, a forest defies full realistic representation. Here again speech will be entrusted to stimulate the spectator's imagination. Speech thus supplements, perfects and at times entirely supersedes the décor. Whatever the skill of the stage director and the set designer of *Lear*, the heath of act 3—an early eighteenth century

1. Gérard Genette, "Frontières du récit" in *Figures II* (Seuil, Paris, 1969).
2. All citations of *King Lear* refer to the Arden 3 edition by R.A. Foakes (1997).

scenographic invention by Shakespeare's first critical editor, Nicholas Rowe—[1], and storm, bar the noise of thundersheets or other such devices, are altogether contained within the images strung up by the Knight, in 3.1, by Lear himself, Kent, the Fool, and Gloucester. All in all, the dramatic image frequently fulfils a compensatory function: it deals with that part and those aspects of the wide world of nature and man that the stage can neither contain nor contrive. The compensatory image-sequences ("the moonlight sleeps upon this bank", *The Merchant of Venice*, 5.1; "Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks…" *King Lear*, 3.1.1, etc.), all too frequently glossed over as 'poetic' and thus lost in the mass of purely decorative imagery are, on the other hand, highly specific because of their necessary, functional character, and because they introduce into the speech fabric of the play the element of artifice and imitation that theorists strip it of.

Let me add a word of warning about a second frequent error that we should guard against in considering the image, dramatic as well as literary in general. The visual suggestion implied in the word 'image' should not lead us to thinking of it as having a purely descriptive function in the literary work of art. Although she tries hard to rid the word 'image' of its exclusively visual sense, Spurgeon eventually indulges in defining the literary image as a "word-picture". One must insist that an image may be narrative as well as descriptive. To take but one example from *King Lear*, the image of the "wheel of fire" (4.7.47) is, as well as visually stimulating in a descriptive vein, in the nature of a formidable narrative condensate. It contains the whole history of Ixion's sin and damnation,[2] thus paralleled with Lear's story by Lear himself, and realizes a subtle mixture of pagan and Christian myths. The image of the wheel of Fortune (2.2.171), so common in Elizabethan historiography and drama, pictures just as well as it narrates the cyclical pattern of life and death, of good and ill fortune. To be accurate, in the emblem of the Wheel of Fortune, as in all emblems, the specific medium of the narration is visual. The whole fatal cycle is instantly conjured up in the minds of the audience by the condensate of the verbal image.

Besides, when dealing with the dramatic image, we should pay due attention to the personality of the locutor. Whereas the subtle techniques of non-dramatic prose writing may succeed in hiding the identity of the locutor, or at least confuse the issue, the identity of the image locutor is nearly always manifest in drama. We see as well as hear the person

1. R.A. Foakes chooses to return to the unspecified location of Q and F.
2. After being pardoned by Zeus for murdering his father-in-law, Ixion attempted the chastity of Hera. He was deceived by a cloud shaped like the goddess and begat the Centaurs on this form. By way of punishment, he was bound on an endlessly revolving wheel.

wielding the image. Let us again turn to the famous passage: "I am bound/ Upon a wheel of fire…" (4.7.46-7). It is clear that the image of the wheel of fire, curious and interesting as it is in itself, is inseparable from the 'I'. The image to be analysed is that of 'I-bound-upon-a-wheel-of-fire'. Image and locutor, here united in exemplary fashion, must be related consciously even when the speaking subject does not bind himself symbolically to the image he uses. In dealing with the dramatic image three types of data must be taken into account: the content of the image, the identity of its locutor and that of the person(s) before whom the image is spoken or to whom it is addressed (allocuted). Locutor-image-allocuted form the indissoluble triangle mapping out the significance of the image, delineating the borderlines of the semantic field covered. To go back to the exclusively visual relevancy of the image as picture, and show the difference between this and the dramatic image, let us say that the 'I', the wheel of fire, and Cordelia correspond in the world of painting to the simultaneous perception of Leonardo da Vinci at work, the *Mona Lisa*, and the viewers of the painting (including Leonardo and his model)—a fascinating and clearly impossible situation. Yet on the stage we have Lear painting the wheel of fire on which he burns, the virtual wheel with all its shades of meaning, and Cordelia, the person who unwittingly triggered off this moment in the dialogue by originally instigating the occasion of her father's sin. Because the dramatic image points unfailingly to the personality of the image-monger, referring both itself and us to it, it is one of the plainest manifestations of dramatic discourse. It bears the mark of the speaking subject on speech.

After these preliminaries, we may now turn to the study of image functions and image types in *Lear*. My hypothesis is that the various functions fulfilled by dramatic imagery in the play define so many image types. Through each case analysed is witnessed a peculiar functioning of man's imagination within the particular play world. *In fine* this must be endorsed by the spectator's own imagination as he gives life to the fiction by adhering to the imaginative patterns created by the dramatist and expanding them.

The Compensatory Image

The whys and wherefores of this image type have already been expounded and some examples given. Further instances will help complete the analysis. The relative desolation of the *Lear* universe (castle halls, courtyards, a hovel, an outer space blasted by the winds and singed by lightning) is almost totally lacking in picturesque elements of nature calling for either scenic representation through the use of properties or through

compensatory chains of verbal imagery. Edgar sketches what little there is of rural naturalism out in 2.3. He was saved "by the happy hollow of a tree" (2.2.173) and now draws a quick picture of "low farms,/Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes and mills" (188-9). "The happy hollow of a tree" reaches out far beyond the simple rural suggestion. It is, symbolically speaking the place where Edgar's return to nature as madman and beggar—a thing of nothing—is accomplished. The hollow tree acts in fact as a womb from which the new Edgar is reborn in a metamorphosed state. As for the few cottages and villages suggested, they are so completely isolated in the play as to be oddly superfluous in this world entirely centred on the warlords, their feudal dens and battlefields. And yet the land of this diseased king should be perceived as a wasteland.

The aspect of Nature that is entirely beyond scenic representation in the play is, on the other hand, the extreme violence of the elements. Only the flashes of lightning and peals of thunder can be fairly imitated (squibs and drum rolls or cannon balls rolled over a bumpy surface on the Jacobean stages). Visually, the sight of the characters reeling all over the playing area, and drawing the folds of their cloaks above their heads will suggest up to a point the violence of wind and rain. Yet all this is a far cry from the desirable suggestion of violence in scenes when nature so unleashes its forces that the world seems to draw to an end. Half the dramatic relevance of 3.1, with the exchanges between Kent and the Knight, is to have the violence of the storm solidly established by sane characters. Lear is described facing the violence of the elements from which the animals themselves, wild though they are, shelter. He

> Strives in his little world of man to outscorn
> The to and fro conflicting wind and rain;
> This night wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
> The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
> Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs,
> And bids what will take all. (3.1.10-15)

When in the next scene we meet Lear himself in the storm, we witness once more how the language engages in a compensatory activity, striving through the voice of the king and chief victim of this outrageous weather to give a sufficient notion of elemental violence loosed, in order to make the after-effects of the storm on man credible:

> LEAR Blow winds and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
> You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
> Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks! (3.2.1-3)

The significant device of this chain of images is prosopopeia. The king lends his voice to the storm, and the elements, wind and rain, become animate in an anthropomorphic way. They now have cheeks and a mouth ("spout"). The head is the prime hallmark of anthropomorphism. It is no surprise, after such an opening, that in the next breath the image of the king's own head, and the skull-like rotundity of the world itself should be introduced as a manner of counterpoint; after the persecutors, the victims:

> You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
> Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
> Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
> Strike flat the thick rotundity o'the world (4-7)

The head of the storm, the head of Lear, the head-like world. Rotundity is the theme of this chain of images. Its reiteration under various identities suggests an archetypal[1] role borne out yet further by the physical context of The Globe theatre. The recurrence of the image promotes the confusion between storm, man and world. The compensatory nature of the speech and the images that comprise it, the prosopopeia, the shared anthropomorphism of the forces in presence encourage our recognition of Lear himself as the storm. His superhuman stature throughout the storm scenes contrasts with the frightened songs and squeaking of the boy-Fool:

> O, nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this rain-water out o'door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools. (3.2.10-13)

The compensatory use of imagery also results on a higher level of perception than the compensation aimed at—though simultaneously apprehended—in a symbolical shifting of all dramatic values. Character significance and character relationship are directly affected. The storm, which must be given a human voice to be credible, led to prosopopeia. In the process Lear becomes the storm and, as a result, the Fool, the man in the storm. Lear's next reeling step nearer madness, indicated by the famous "this tempest in my mind" (3.4.12), is already fully prepared. From a symbolical point of view, the storm was given a head, Lear voiced the storm; thus are Lear's head and mind given a tempest.

The compensatory image, potentially the most humdrum type analysed here turns out to be richer than expected since compensation overreaches itself and reshuffles the basic dramatic data of the play. It will be noticed that, in *Lear*, compensatory imagery is very much shared out between

1. I use the word archetype in the sense given to it by Mircea Eliade to point to a matrix-like form or dynamic replicated in a whole series of myths and symbols.