

Title: Heilman : A Structuralist Critic In This Great Stage

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Spurgeon and Wolfgang Clemen, in their *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* (1935), and *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (1951) respectively, as the major Shakespearean "Imagery" critics. Despite the fact that they are not designated as Structuralists, they are considered the exponents of this type of criticism. Their approach to Shakespeare's artifacts has the symptoms of the underlying logos of Structuralism; their contributions are the seeds of the Structuralist enterprise. Deep down in their reflection upon imagery in Shakespeare's plays runs a vibrant vein tapped into by the Structuralist dawn. Part III constitutes the heart of the matter; it is an engagement with Heilman's *This Great Stage* with the purpose of examining his stance and status as a Structuralist critic. It is a self-critical task designed to define and analyse his position as to whether or not he can be designated as a Structuralist critic.

Part I: Structuralism in a Nutshell

Structuralism is a method of interpreting social phenomena in the context of a system of signs whose significance lies solely in the interrelationships among them. Initiated in the linguistics of Saussure and Chomsky, Structuralism was applied to other disciplines by Lévi-Strauss, Piaget, Althusser, Lacan, Barthes, Foucault, and Eco. Most Structuralists share a conviction that individual human beings function

Abstract:

This research paper is a critical investigation into the masterpiece of the prominent critic Robert Bechtold Heilman entitled *This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear* (1948). The present study is an attempt designed to address the following lines of enquiry. What are the major tenets of Structuralism? Who are the major authorities in the field of Shakespearean structuralists? What are Heilman's main critical concerns? Does he fulfill the criteria of a typical Structuralist critic?

Heilman: A Structuralist Critic
In

This Great Stage

Focal points:

This essay proposes to examine Robert Bechtold Heilman as a Structuralist critic in the context of his critical work entitled *This Great Stage: Image and Structure in King Lear* (1948). The present study is an attempt designed to address the following lines of enquiry. What are the major tenets of Structuralism? Who are the major authorities in the field of Shakespearean structuralists? What are Heilman's main critical concerns? Does he fulfill the criteria of a typical Structuralist critic? Thereupon, this study is divided into three parts. Part I provides an overall view of Structuralism, and its major tenets. It is a concise exploration into this approach and an introduction to its key ideas and methods. Part II sheds light on Caroline

characterize the Structuralist perception of system or structure. For each system to stand, it needs to have its own codes and signs. Elements, seeking to gain access to this system, need to verify their position along the lines of these laws. Upon subscription and membership, the cooperation of these elements stand guarantee for the survival of their system. The dynamic interaction of these elements and their participation breathes life into the veins and arteries of this system. The health of the system, as a result, hinges on the collaborative effort of its members, their dynamic interaction, active participation and communal cooperati

Structuralism is distinctive for studying its objects explicitly as wholes and the parts which make up those wholes as parts, that is, never purely intrinsically but in terms of the contribution they make to the whole they are part of. Structuralism is thus by definition a holistic mode of thought and as such increasingly in tune with the age we live in, since demands that we should think holistically rather than in the atomistic ways of old are constantly heard. (Sturrock 21)

I. Structuralism: Background and Origin

Structuralism finds its origin in the work of the early twentieth-century linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics. In his *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), he calls for a scientific study of language rather than a historical one. Saussure's attempt was to reduce language to a set of propositions based upon formal relationships that define and exist between various elements of language. For him, language is a sub-system of the total system of society. The language system, according to Saussurean linguistics, is made up of linguistic signs. A linguistic sign is a double headed psychological entity. The two heads are the signifier (sound image), and the signified (concept or meaning image). Saussurean linguistics has three fundamental assumptions:

solely as elements of the social networks to which they belong. "The genesis of individualities," holds Rabate, "is subsumed under the global idea of the system" (6). The individual has little meaning on his or her own. He or she acquires meaning only by being a member of a particular community. Framed and punctuated by the poetics of solidarity, community and collaboration, Structuralism seeks to undermine the too high value placed in the intellectual and cultural atmosphere on the contribution made by individuals. Yet, it accentuates "that anonymous chorus of contemporary thought that is the enabling condition of originality" (Sturrock 19).

Structuralism stands opposed to ideologies of individualism, to that excessive ad hominem attribution of ideas which dates back to the nineteenth-century heyday of Romanticism, if not all the way to the Renaissance. Structuralism emphasizes systems of thought above the individuals; it emphasizes the impersonal in thought above the personal. (Sturrock 19)

Marked by the poetics of the communal, Structuralist thought underlines the inner coherence of the whole. Harmony is a prerequisite for the whole-part relationship; this nexus is conceived and conceptualized as organically constructed and rhythmically organised. The focus lies on the inner laws in charge of the conduct of the elements for the well being of the whole. The health of the whole is the result of the collaborative spirit of all its elements and the communal voice of all its members. In the words of Piaget: "Structuralism is chiefly a departure from the diachronic study of isolated linguistic phenomena which prevailed in the nineteenth century and a turn to the investigation of synchronously functioning unified language systems" (4). The key word here is "system". According to Piaget, this word implies three key ideas: wholeness, transformation and self-regulation (5). These three ideas concisely

completely functional. Signs are therefore structured in relation to each other in accordance with the principle of differential relations, and of opposites (binary oppositions). The relations between opposites are charged with deep meaning in human culture. Only historical convention ties the signifier to the signified. Therefore the sign itself has no immanent or inherent relation to the external referent (the world, or reality). Language is both the process of articulating meaning (called signification) and its product (communication).

II. Key Assumptions:

- (1) Literature is an artifact of culture, and is modelled on the structure of language. Language constructs the very nature of one's perception of reality.
- (2) This premise allows the Structuralists to investigate the manner in which literary texts are structured like a language, or what they call its grammar.
- (3) Literature is a system within and in relation to other systems in a particular culture, all of which are based upon the linguistic model.
- (4) Structuralism seeks the processes of meaning-making, that is, how the text constructs meaning.

(5) The text is seen at three levels:

- a) as a system in itself with its own constitutive elements and law (grammar)
- b) as one element within the literary system as a whole. That is, the generic contexts of a text—the novel, a poem, etc.
- c) as it relates to the culture as a whole

These correspond to the levels of Structuralist reading: at the level of the individual poem, at the level of the genre, and the level of the cultural matrix. The structuralist critic's main concern is to highlight the underlying 'grammar', the master code common to all individual texts,

- (1) Arbitrariness: The meanings one attributes to words are entirely arbitrary, and prescribed through usage and convention only. There is no inherent or natural connection between the word and the meaning. Language refers only to itself, since all words lead to other words. A signifier is always already a signified.
- (2) Relational: Linguistic elements are defined in relationships of combination and contrast with one another. All words exist on the paradigmatic axis, the axis of choice. The selected words are combined on the axis of chain, the syntagmatic axis. No word has its meaning in isolation; it possesses meaning only through its difference from other words in the organizational chain.
- (3) Systematic: Language constitutes our world, and our very existence. The whole is greater than the parts. One therefore should look not at what people say, but what makes speech possible at all. One needs to analyse how meaning is produced through the acts of language. One needs to understand the set of structures in language that enable one to speak and make sense. In short, one needs to study signs and sign systems.

Saussure argues for a distinction within language. The system or structure of language and the conventions that rule and govern speech is 'langue.' The actual utterance in the social context is 'parole.' To make sense of the utterance (parole) one should be aware of the underlying system at work (langue). This relationship between a communal and shared root (language and the conventions of language) and an individual practice (the act of speaking or expression) was at the root of all cultural practice for Saussure.

The relation between the signified and the signified is purely arbitrary and

understanding what was still to come, or perhaps to provide a counterpoint to one of the central themes of the play” (Clemen 3). The most interesting and important images, it is contended, are those which contribute either to the overall meaning of the play, or to a biographical impression of the author. Kenneth Muir, G. Wilson Knight, Caroline Spurgeon, Wolfgang Clemen, et al contribute significantly to this type of criticism. The seeds of their critical rigour are Shakespeare’s imagery and structures out of which they attempt to weave various symphonies of arguments and crystallize angles of vision. Central to their project is the crucial insight that an image or a structure has little meaning on its own, but acquires meaning in being a member of a cluster, in having a communal identity, in assuming an active role in a group’s activity. Having such a functional membership, the image or the structure concerned can then be an essential element in the meaning-making process of the work of art.

I. Caroline Spurgeon

In her *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Spurgeon presents an ambitious contribution to the world interested in Shakespeare and the genius of his craftsmanship. She employs imagery as a technique to throw light on “Shakespeare’s personality, temperament and thought” and “the themes and characters of the plays” (ix). Her method of “counting the images” pertinent to a certain realm and preparing charts and graphs is statistical, quantitative and biographical; the method starts with accumulating the images in certain groups according to a certain criterion, and then proceeds to reconstruct the mentality of their creator. She evaluates the images as documentation of Shakespeare’s senses, tastes and interest, feeling and mental qualities. Spurgeon maintains that the fact that Shakespeare selected certain classes of images displays his own individual outlook on things or his personal sympathies. She uses the term image as the only available

by focusing on the ‘function’ of their elemental compositional unit, with a view to

devising a fully-fledged typology of literary genres. The need to isolate the ‘deep structure’ of narrative caused the critic’s attention to shift away from all surface appearances—the concrete, the particular, the historical. Instead of seeking to tell a basic truth about the individual cultural text

under analysis, the structuralist critic defines its meaning simply as the effect of the play of structures in a game of communication. (Onega 278)

Part II: Shakespeare “Imagery” Critics

The first few decades of the twentieth century give rise to new approaches to Shakespeare criticism. New avenues of critical exploration see the broad light of the day and develop trajectories as how to critically grapple with Shakespeare’s plays, especially in terms of imagery and structure. This focus on the structural elements of the artifact, as an integral component of a whole and as a form of imaging and conceiving things, remarkably captures the critical attention of the period. Images, it is assumed, can express great passion and correspond to the depth and immensity of human emotion. They can illuminate different shades of meanings, and help one forget irrelevant associations. Through the focus on imagery and structure, relations between the world of the play and the outside world can be established, so can stage effects, iterative language and so on. The study of imagery and structure takes into consideration the ability of images and structures in closing a scene, providing information, displaying powerful emotions on the part of a character, developing dialogues, and disclosing the meaning of the play. Images can also help “to lend enhanced expression to the feeling of the character concerned; at other times, it might have been [the author’s] intent to give the audience a hint toward

(215). She contends that this “predominant passion” is a characteristic feature of Shakespeare’s genius. It is this “passion” which acts as the centre round which different elements and images revolve. Images contribute significantly to the construction of this unity, which under further consideration and deliberation, provides a possible way of arriving at the personal qualities and peculiarities of their writer. Spurgeon accentuates this point as it provides a substantial and solid ground for her argument. Pointing out the dominant part played in *Hamlet* by images of disease and corruption, Spurgeon relates this first to the state of Denmark, to the mental condition of its Prince, and by inference to the mood of the playwright. Shakespeare, she concludes, sees

the problem of Hamlet not as the problem of an individual at all, but as something greater and even more mysterious, as a condition for which the individual himself is apparently not responsible any more than the sick man is to blame for the infection which strikes and devours him, but which nevertheless, in its course and development, impartially and relentlessly, annihilates him and others, innocent and guilty alike. That is the tragedy *Hamlet*, as it is perhaps the chief tragic mystery of life. (319)

II. Wolfgang Clemen

In the preface to his *Development of Shakespeare’s Imagery*, Clemen says that Caroline Spurgeon’s *Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us* appeared two years after the completion of his study, and that, accordingly, he has only been able to refer to it in footnotes. Nevertheless, while paying a high tribute to the value of Spurgeon’s work, he insists that his own aims and methods are entirely different. Clemen is primarily interested in Shakespeare’s imagery as a literary phenomenon—in what it essentially is: its nature, its development, and the most interesting and important ways in which it

word to cover every kind of simile. She suggests as image every imaginative picture drawn in every way that may have come to the poet, not only through his senses, but also through his mind and emotions, as well as the forms of simile and metaphor for the purpose of analogy.

Spurgeon defines an image as the “little word-picture used by a poet or prose writer to illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought” (9). It is an explicit or implicit description or thought through which the profundity of the writer’s vision is transmitted. The image is projected here as an effective medium by virtue of which the reader can have a quite clear understanding of the genius of its creator; the image has the potential to arouse in the reader different associations of thought and to colour his or her attitudes of mind. In Spurgeon’s modality of perception, the image is an indispensable catalyst in the reconstruction process of the author’s likings and dislikings, attitudes and aptitudes, etc.

More valuable conclusions are drawn in the chapters on “Evidence in the Images of Shakespeare’s Thought,” where the grouping is according to the major term—Evil, Love, Time, Death. Shakespeare’s favourite comparison of evil to a weed is much more important in what it tells us about his attitude to evil than in what it tells about his attitude to gardening. Here the grouping is itself illuminating; and especially interesting is Shakespeare’s habit of using a popular, pictorial notion—Cupid, the skeleton death, old father Time—as the basic assumption of his images. There are also fresh examples of Shakespeare’s habit of using recurrent “complexes” of images.

In the second part of the book, where the clustering of images proceeds according to plays and the “leading motives” are explored, Spurgeon quotes and remembers Coleridge’s remark that images “become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion”

much further in *Richard II*, where many aspects of the king's character are expressed by many different symbols: the sun, a mockery king of snow, a neglectful gardener, a withering rose, time's numbering clock, an unregarded actor. In *Romeo and Juliet* he notices the rapid development of that fusion of inner and outer which is the secret of Shakespeare's famous "atmosphere," observing of

Romeo's lines:

O, speak again, bright angel: for thou art As glorious to this night, being o'er my head, As is a winged messenger of heaven Unto the white-upturned wondering eyes Of mortals that fall back to gaze on him When he bestrides the lazy-pacing clouds And sails upon the bosom of the air In this image there is a confluence of three functions that one can usually find only apart: it is the exalted expression of Romeo's own being; it is a comparison, and, as such, a symbol of Juliet (the most important symbol for her, light, appears here); and, in filling the void of night with clouds and stars, it creates atmosphere (p. 86).

In discussing the plays of the middle period, Clemen notices the fact that now images often reveal their significance only at the end, or towards the end, of the passages in which they are developed, and insists that this is a proof that they were now occurring to Shakespeare as he wrote, that the time when he used to tack them on ready-made was now far behind him. He quotes an excellent example from King John:

. . . and England now is left To tug and scramble and to part by the teeth The unowed interest of proud-swelling state.

Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace. Here the second line merely presents a string of verbs applicable to dogs. Then, in bare-pick'd bone of majesty, the language draws nearer to this conceptual-centre. From the general conception of tugging

differs from that of his contemporaries. He poses such questions as these: Is there a development in Shakespeare's use of imagery? Is it particularly frequent in particular situations? Can we distinguish between characters according to the imagery they employ? Can we distinguish between images that reveal Shakespeare's own peculiar way of looking at things and those which do not? To answer such questions, the images must be studied, not in a catalogue, but in their contexts, in the plays, and this Clemen has done, with remarkable penetration and comprehension. His most important point is that Shakespeare progresses from imagery as mere ornament to imagery as the form of an entirely original perception, from mechanically superadding images to thinking and feeling through images; and he develops and deepens this point by means of a careful analysis of the nature and function of imagery in representative plays of Shakespeare's early, middle, and later periods.

The value of such a study is cumulative, and can only be suggested by means of a few examples and illustrations. In the earliest phase, most clearly and sharply represented by *Titus Andronicus*, Clemen observes how comparisons, with "like" or "as," where the thing compared is coldly and consciously perceived as separate from its mechanically superadded and subtractable embellishment, predominate over more organic metaphors; how the things compared are almost always purely material; how the images are not thrust upon the poet, but carefully selected from natural history; and how, like the thoughts they embellish and the lines in which they occur, they follow each other without any organic connection or development. In *Richard III*, he observes how the greater concentration and passion of the play is reflected in its imagery, and how character begins to be revealed through imagery, although the beast-images reflect but one side of Richard's nature; how this development is carried

- d. The image is rooted in the totality of the play; it is associated with the very fabric of the play.

An isolated image, an image viewed outside of its context, is only half the image. Every image, every metaphor gains full life and significance only from its context. In Shakespeare, an image often points beyond the scene in which it stands to proceeding or following acts; it almost always has reference to the whole of the play. It appears as a cell in the organism of the play, linked with it in many ways. (Clemen 3)

Part III: Heilman: A Structuralist Critic in *This Great Stage*

Heilman's *This Great Stage* is exclusively designed to grapple with Shakespeare's immortal monument *King Lear*. In a critical engagement with this drama, he attempts to diagnose its veins and arteries, point out their symbiotic nature, unearth their compatibility, and weave them all into one symphony of creative fluidity. Deep into this endeavour runs an ardent faith that the whole and the part together compose a unity, organic in nature and dynamic in structure, in charge of rendering the work meaningful. The meaning of the artifact hinges primarily on the interaction of its constitutive elements; its meaning is a product of the collaborative effort of its components. Divorced from the community to which it belongs, each part stands meaningless. The whole, too, is denied its vehement force without the support of all the parts. The work of art is thus conceived and conceptualized as an organic totality, a self-sustained structure of knowledge, and a self-maintained autonomous entity—"a collaboration of all parts is perhaps the ideal situation in poetic drama; the individual drama then becomes, in the most complete sense possible, an organism" (Heilman 18). Thereupon, *This Great Stage* attempts to read into *King Lear* along these lines, and investigates into its different

and scrambling the direct image of a dog bristling for a bone is developed, but the angry, snarling dog itself first appears in the penultimate line (Clemen 94).

Besides, Clemen insists that the key to *Hamlet* and his "mystery" can be felt and found only in the very texture of the play itself, in the imagery Hamlet instinctively uses and his creator instinctively gave him. Clemen also states that in *Antony and Cleopatra*, even when abstract matters are handled, the imagery is interpenetrated with the breath of ocean and the spaciousness of continents, that Cleopatra and the engendering serpents of the Nile, revealed to us through her speeches, are not ultimately separable, and to his remark that the numerous contradictory interpretations of her character are easily explicable when one considers the diversity of the images that describe her. All these points clearly show the organic relationship of images and thought as exemplified by Clemen.

In short, Clemen's basic argument can be summed up thus. In Shakespeare's

- a. early plays, imagery is not an integral part of the work or of the characters. His focus is on words for their own sake. "There was a certain showiness and obtrusiveness in the imagery of the early plays" (219). As a result of the Elizabethan exuberance, images were conceived and conceptualized as "ornament, embroidery or arabesque" (Clemen 220).
- b. middle period plays, images become less decorative; they begin to grow out of characters and situations; they become an integral part of the play. Like in *Richard III*, the use of imagery is direct and spontaneous.
- c. great tragedies, there is a perfect unity among image, structure, form, and character. By this time, Shakespeare's imagery has reached its highest perfection, realizing and interpreting through imagery the potential meaning.

moments, phrases, and situations. It is a mode of knowledge; it "itself is a mode of meaning" (Heilman 9). A recurrent word is characterized by a dual relationship: one of its links is to the thing denoted, and the other is to the sum of uses of the word. Reiteration serves various ends. It draws one's attention to certain words which may help explain a certain situation. It sometimes provides one with key ideas to a particular problem. And most important of all, repetition may signify the attempt to go beyond the limitations of the human language, to expose the inadequacy of this language so as to capture larger and higher truths of human existence. "The repeated," contends Heilman, "is invested with special, transliteral values" (9). *This Great Stage* presents a critical exploration into the "formal dichotomy which determines the essential conflict of the play: we see, ultimately, the shrewd, sharp-thinking, worldly people (Goneril, Regan, Edmund) balanced against a set of apparently helpless incompetents (Edgar, the Fool, Lear)" (Heilman 28). This critic exerts every possible effort to trace the patterns of meaning in *King Lear*, which go deeply into the thematic material of the play. He attempts a "structural analysis" (8); it is a scrutiny of such structural devices as imagery, repetition, and parallelism only with a view to connecting them with the larger thematic and moral questions of the play. Despite the fact that the study may seem formalistic in approach as it focuses attention on images, tone, and recurrency, its orientation defies and transcends this claim. The study does not highlight the formalistic properties of the play for their own sake. Rather, it employs these techniques and devices only to examine the symbolic significance they take on, to see how it is related to the whole play, and to reflect on the thematic vision and the far-reaching philosophy of the drama.

All these inner organisms of image and symbol contribute to the total statement of the play; each of them, insofar as it incorporates its truth in a

parts only to arrive at how their final confluence becomes possible. Taking the parts as the key starting-point, Heilman proceeds to explore the grouping of these elements into certain patterns, how these patterns work within themselves, how they influence each other, and how they ultimately contribute significantly to the meaning-making process. The move, as it seems clear, is from the part to the whole, from the microcosm to the macrocosm of the whole play. Inductive in approach, the study commences with the little bricks of the play and moves onto its larger blocks. It is a critical strategy meant "to account both for the functioning of the bodies of related words as wholes, and for the enrichment of the single word which comes about through its being felt as a part of such an imaginative paradigm" (Heilman 6).

Heilman pays attention to imagery and reiteration in *King Lear*, examines their intricate use, and connects them with the larger meaning of the play. Imagery, he contends, is essential as it is pregnant with meaning (8). The play is replete with images of various kinds such as visual, olfactory, auditory, etc. Contextually charged with meaning, these images become symbols worth further critical reflection. The blindness of Gloucester, the violence of the storm, the nakedness of Edgar, his assumed madness, the Fool's wit and irrelevance, and Lear's real madness are not mere images, imposed on the play. Rather, they are part and parcel of the whole scheme of the play; they embody a great deal of what the work has to say. Images, holds Heilman, can remarkably illuminate the essence of the tragic structure of the drama (36). They can intensify a certain situation, provide a key clue to a dilemma, demonstrate certain moods and states of mind, cast further light on certain aspects, and help resolve a conflict. "The critical task," maintains Heilman, "is the discovery of the structural role of the symbol" (10). Moreover, repetition, according to him, is yet another technique useful to shed light on particular

exercises. In these portions, he is seen to gradually and in a step-by-step manner grapple with the personages of *King Lear*, their actions, attitudes, nature, and ends. Between the introductory and the concluding parts of *This Great Stages* Heilman puts into practice his critical assumptions, and utilizes his critical talents to be in the service of profound human issues as remarkably crystallized in this play.

In "I Stumbled When I Saw," Heilman touches on the sight pattern in detail. He begins with Gloucester, and discusses his blindness as a symbol of lack of insight. Gloucester, according to Heilman, takes evidence at its face value; he is tragically slow in seeing what is implied in the situations in which he finds himself. "The light in which he sees things lights up only the surface of the world" (Heilman 42). As a consequence, he is appropriately made blind because "the blind may see better than the proudly keen-eyed" (Heilman 67). On being blind, he is made to undergo a purgatorial stage, and, as a result, his spiritual awakening is very subtly managed. Seeing in this context comes to be associated with understanding. Gloucester yearns to see Edgar though he can only touch him now. The father comes to the true understanding that he did Edgar injustice; he realizes how deceptive his eyes were. His failure, according to Heilman's reading, lies in his inability to see essential things. Gloucester's failure to see essential things is further substantiated by Edgar's "The dark and vicious place where thee he got / Cost him his eyes" (V.iii, 172-73). Spoken to Edmund, the word "dark" here connotes not only the physical feature of the place, but also, and more importantly, Gloucester's characteristic failure to see what his deed involved (Heilman 45). In the light of these situations, what Gloucester needs most is a sense of inner illumination and spiritual awakening, and his "spiritual darkness is perfectly symbolized by his blindness" (Heilman 282).

paradox, is a restatement of the central theme on a reduced scale- a restatement which never merely repeats, but amplifies, enriches supports, and gives a new perspective to the central theme. For each paradox poses the problem of The World. (Heilman 277)

In Heilman's modality of thought, the whole play becomes the larger metaphor within which the plot is a metaphor and the different parts are different metaphors, too.

The progressive display of Heilman's points of discussion invites critical attention. *This Great Stage* is structurally designed in such a way that there is a clear trajectory in its composition. A glance at the way in which the chapters of this book are arranged and presented may show that the items of discussion have a certain pattern of presentation. Heilman begins with the sight imagery, then moves on to the clothes, and ultimately engages with the nature of man or the relationship of man and nature. Under each of these items, he touches on other relevant issues. In the context of the sight imagery, for example, he does not restrict himself to discussing only those images with which sight comes to be associated, but he also attempts to evoke the latent meanings and the dormant powers of suggestion. From the image of sight, he brings in the idea of insight, reflects on their nexus in the play, and opens up whole new vistas of critical exploration.

The recurrent imagery of sight constantly underscores the failure to see, or the kind of seeing, by which the characters are in part defined. Darkness and light, eyes that glare or squint or even shed tears of pity- here are further variations upon the theme of blindness and perception. (Heilman 283)

The book commences with Heilman's statement of his critical method, objectives and destination. He concludes the book with critical remarks, too. In between these parts, which lay down the logos adopted by the writer, there reside his critical

necessary in order to get acquainted with the harsh realities of human existence on earth.

Heilman remarks that the madness pattern is enriched by the support of the sight pattern, which shows Lear as progressing, not from a blind sight to a seeing blindness, like Gloucester, but from an unwillingness to see, through a period of gradual anguished enlightenment, to a final passionate struggle to see (53). Early in the drama, Lear, blinded by anger, orders Kent, "Out of my sight!" (I.i. 159); there is more than chance in these words, for Kent picks them up immediately with, "See better, Lear, and let me still remain / The true blank of thine eye" (160-61). Kent, according to Heilman, sees what is involved; Lear does not. His vision called into question, Lear swears by Apollo—the god of light; and Kent retorts, "...by Apollo,... / Thou swear's thy gods in vain" (162-63); both invoke the power of light, and Kent obeys only an oath by Jupiter, the overriding absolute (54).

In interpreting the play, we must place beside the vast implications of seeing and not seeing the equally extensive ones of taking off and putting on. Human beings may with ironically good intentions remove the coverings which constitute or symbolize their defense against experience; or they may be stripped of them; or they may resort to nakedness.

Human beings may likewise pit on new coverings, as a defense in a disordered world, or as a disguise of real intentions that must not appear openly until evil forces is lessened. Some men do not see clearly enough; some see too clearly; some are not adequately clad; and some are overdressed.

Further, fate does not let some dress as they will, and others cannot see the character behind the dress. (Heilman 87)

The imagery of clothes is yet another element in Heilman's critical discourse upon *King Lear*. This pattern makes a running commentary on the intellectual and moral problems in Lear's kingdom.

Heilman observes that the sight pattern is recurrent in the play; it can be read in different images like "at night." He traces the repetition of "at night"—things not to be seen and things not meant to be seen—in the play and shows how the meaning of this image contributes significantly to the meaning-making process. He also underlines the fact that each repetition is a repetition with difference. "At night," a number of events take place. It is at night that Gloucester comes into allegiance with Lear. In (III.vi.) he hunts up Lear in the stormy night, just as he hunted for Edgar at night in (II.i.). "This time," remarks Heilman, "he finds what he is looking for, and at the same time, so to speak, finds himself" (47). Moreover, the scene of Gloucester's arrival on the heath, according to Heilman, is full of imaginative connections with other scenes. Just before Gloucester enters, the Fool says: "Now a little fire in a wild field were like an old lecher's heart—a small spark, all the rest on's body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire" (III.vi, 116-19). Heilman observes that the Fool's citing of this simile is no accident especially at the moment of Gloucester's entrance. It is a direct announcement of his arrival. Furthermore, the Fool's language, according to Heilman, is appropriate: Gloucester's heart has so far been a "small spark," and on the field of Lear's desolate situation, Gloucester's help is hardly more than "a little fire" (47).

The madness theme in the play, observes Heilman, stands as a remarkable manifestation of a world in convulsion. Madness plays a vital role in the course of the development of the whole play. Madness helps Lear to gain an imaginative grasp of a disintegrating universe, a firmer sense of evil, and of the ills of humanity. Edgar, too, gains a new practical and moral insight, and acts energetically. In the context of *King Lear*, madness is projected as an asylum, the first step in the process of illumination (Heilman 283). It is a recurrent motif, a uniting element

330). "To have a thankless child," Lear generalizes, is "sharper than serpent's tooth" (I.V, 310-11). Heilman continues his elaboration upon this animal imagery by citing the Fool's final line in that scene, and describes it as appropriate:

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to slaughter.... (340-42)

Goneril and Regan are described as "dog-hearted daughters" (III, vii, 54). Heilman comments that the use of such denunciatory imagery is highly significant as a reflection of the vile nature of these ungrateful daughters. The use of the dog imagery is effective as "this imagery shows the domestic world in moral turmoil along with the political world" (Heilman 95). However, it is of interest to notice that the animal imagery is also used to describe good characters: Gloucester calls Edgar a "monster" (I.ii, 102) and "worse than brutish" (I.ii, 82); Cornwall calls Kent "beastly knave" (II.ii, 75); Regan calls Gloucester an "ingrateful fox" (III.vii, 27) and the Servant who defends Gloucester "dog" (74). In these passages, comments Heilman, "it is the speaker who are characterized: it is one one index of the art of the play that such metaphors as a class used ambivalently" (96).

In *This Great Stage*, Heilman does not leave any stone unturned. His critical eye dives deep down into the very nature of nature, into the complex nature of man, and employs them as occasions to discourse upon the larger questions relevant to human pilgrimage on earth. The theme of nature occupies a space in his inquiry. For him, the inquiry into the nature of man and his world finds its physical counterpart in the terrific storm of Act III. The storm is terrible, sometimes out of nature; the personages' awareness of its violence and unnaturalness is paralleled by their incredulous commentary upon the unnaturalness of the human conduct and demeanour throughout the play. The storm, writes Heilman, is considered in its relation, in Lear's words, to "the tempest in

Edgar is his illustrative example in this context. His disguise, contends Heilman, is characterized by psychological and physical aspects. As a pretended lunatic, he helps develop the madness pattern; as a disguised person he is the most obvious personage in the clothes pattern (70). His mask is virtual nakedness, and demonstrates how the literal and commonsense can go over into the symbolic. At one level, this state of nakedness is a technical propriety in the Bedlam beggar; yet it has a profound impact upon the reader owing to its inadequacy to a cold and stormy night. It becomes a symbol of helplessness and defenselessness in a world devoid of all human compassion and mercy, swept by the storms of ambitions and other uncontrolled emotions. Yet, Edgar's nakedness, remarks Heilman, is also a defense, if not against immediate enemies, at least against ultimate corruption (70).

Animal imagery constitutes another site for Heilman's critical investigation into *King Lear*. He employs this type of imagery to reflect upon human base instincts and vile intentions, away from all lofty meanings and sublime principles. This sense of animality lurks behind the surface, behind the coverings and disguises. Much of the animal imagery is employed to underline the ferocity and bestiality into which human beings can fall. Heilman writes that more than a dozen times the imagery is used to categorize Goneril and Regan (93). Their actions speak for themselves; they stand for the sordidness of their minds. Heilman makes reference to the Fool's couplet: The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long, / That it had it head bit off by it young (I.v, 235-36). Totally ingrate to their father, Goneril and Regan mercilessly injure him; things are upside down, the natural order is violated. In this context, Heilman alludes to Lear's description of Goneril's ingratitude: "Than the sea-monster" (I.V. 283). Lear calls her "Detested kite" (I.V, 284), AND Regan will "flay thy wolfish visage" (I.V,

have this dualistic configuration. As one can see good, there is always evil looming in the horizon. The naked philosopher, observes Heilman, is presented in opposition to the well-dressed man of opportunity. The defense and the innocent stand opposed to the protected against immediate blows and the "sophisticated". The active and direct youth, who are fooled by themselves, are portrayed as counterparts of the bumbling and bamboozled aged, who are able, through suffering, to achieve insight. The blind, who essentially come to see, stand opposed to the sharp-sighted who, confronted by the whole of life, evince a fatal myopia.

For, throughout the verbal and dramatic patterns of the play, throughout the structural dualities, there is a consistent and continual intimation: in the cosmos there is a justice (whatever the injustice in fact), there is an order (whatever the chaos in fact), there is an underlying reality (whatever the deceptiveness of appearance), in man there is a sight (whatever the blindness in fact) and an imaginative understanding (whatever the rationalistic obtuseness that may periodically dominate him) by which he may seize upon the realities necessary to his survival. (Heilman 287)

Conclusion:

In its ultimate analysis, it seems clear that *This Great Stage* is one of the pioneering contributions made by Heilman. Exclusively designed to discuss *King Lear*, it attempts to chart the various structural devices employed in this play, explicate them, and define their significance in the whole scheme of the play. It is not a mere formalistic exercise, designed to point out the devices as clues to the literariness or artfulness of art. Rather, it is a critical task devoted to dwell upon these devices, not as ends in themselves, but as means towards a far-reaching end.

First of all, these structural devices are critically approached to reflect on the larger unity of the artifact, whose form and content are inseparable. Organic in nature,

my mind" (III.iv, 12); his madness is another convulsion of nature (90). The storm provides a remarkable embodiment of the moral disorder prevalent in *King Lear*. Lear himself keeps reflecting upon the moral cause of his mental turmoil, and it is this which he tends to identify with the peltings of the physical storm. "In such a night / To shut me out ! Pour on; I will endure," he says (III. Iv, 17-18). That is, daughters and tempest both pour on, and both he will endure (Heilman 90).

In "The Historical Crisis," Heilman makes the observation that the play can be read as a struggle between two orders: the old order represented by Lear and the new order represented by Goneril. The play is a vivid crystallization of the tragic situation to which the old order is exposed in its encounter with the new order, which is "coolly calculating, on the make, quick to take advantage of flaws which sharp minds detect in the old men whose roots are in the past" (Heilman 279). Heilman diagnoses the dilemma of the old order, and points out that the confusions and distractions to which the old order is liable are the result of "arrogance, hasty and indiscriminate action, a complacency and loss of equilibrium which encourage the lust for self-aggrandizement" (279). Apart from this major temporal line of demarcation with its subsequent developments, Heilman sees in Gloucester another state of mind worth exploring. He states that Gloucester's passivity is but a natural result of his tendency to "lose sight of the ancient sanctions and to fall in with the spirit of the times, with the secularism that is always striving for autonomy" (279). Gloucester, in Heilman's reading, is careless, too fond of ease, quick to draw conclusions, ready to evade political and moral responsibilities. These traits are the cause of Gloucester's hamartia.

One vital strand of thought advanced by Heilman is that Shakespeare's play is structured on a dualistic mode; everything is seen to have a counterpart. The thematic patterns, with which the play is replete,

the work of art becomes a worthwhile enterprise.

Fourthly, in his critical delineation of *King Lear*, Heilman does not seem to lend considerable significance to any structural device in isolation. Each device seems bereft of meaning when it is read with no reference to the total work. The meaning of each device comes from its collaboration with other devices, techniques and its context in the play. The animal imagery, for instance, does not have a complete sense if it is not read against the backdrop of the whole play. The intensity of its meaning occurs as a result of a cumulative effort put in by all the other components. It is the communal power of all the constituent elements that renders the play meaningful. The individual unit then derives meaning from its context and the role it plays in the meaning-making process. In other words, the meaning of the structure hinges upon the collaboration and cooperation of its constitutive elements. Meaning becomes a product of the sense of belonging to a community. The community as a whole is in charge of meaning. Meaning is not the outcome of any element per se. The meaningful existence of each one is conditioned by its participation in the structurality of that structure. Along these lines of thought, Heilman's critical talent seems to flourish, and nurture this approach. Throughout *This Great Stage*, he is seen to follow these strict lines, and to read them into his reflections upon art. In the voice of a dedicated educator, he exerts every possible effort to orient not only his reading, but also his readers, to adopt one strict line of thought. His critical voyage has only one destination, and, therefore, its directionality is all clear. This voyage cannot be hampered by the different and divergent tides; it is a participatory and communal enterprise. Art, in the context of Heilman, one may conclude, is a structure of meaning, organic in nature, dynamic in mechanism, participatory in approach, and didactic in orientation.

they influence, and are influenced by, each other. Their relationship is marked by complementarity; they complete each other. The form of the artefact, as Heilman's study shows, can fruitfully serve its content, which, in turn, can substantiate it. Content and form must mutually support one another and not be in tension, unless such tension is again part of a metaform that reinforces the work's higher meaning. The work must thus cohere organically in terms of part and whole. No part can be inexpressive of the whole.

Secondly, the critical trajectory adopted by Heilman is worth noting. He attempts to read each single piece of information, like an image, a recurrent word, or a paralleled structure, and weave it into the larger fabric of meaning of the play. Each bit and piece in the play counts. They are the bricks of the larger bloc of meaning. Heilman's aesthetic touch perhaps resides in the fact that he endeavours to map across these bits and pieces, and to weave them into one symphony of creative and cognitive fluidity. In this modality of thought, the work of art rises as a structure of knowledge marked by harmony. In other words, Heilman's primary focus is the relation of sign to sign; the interplay of the sign systems is the structural grid of his investigation.

Thirdly, the integrative approach adopted by Heilman in his engagement with *King Lear* contributes significantly to highlighting aspects hitherto marginalized by the Formalist critics. His approach enables one to employ the structural techniques and devices to grapple with the thematic vision of the work of art. The critical effort is directed, not merely to point out the devices, but to attempt to address the profound messages of art, to harvest the fruits of the seeds sown by others, to gain more human experiences, to sharpen one's intellect, and to widen one's horizon. The work of art, in the light of this approach, becomes a crystallization of invaluable gems of meanings and rare lessons of wisdom. Didactic in orientation,

هذا المسرح العظيم

ملخص البحث :

تهدف ورقة البحث هذه الى عمل دراسة نقدية حول الكتاب الشهير للناقد الكبير روبرت بتشتولد هايلمان : هذا المسرح العظيم : الصورة والتركيب في مسرحية الملك لير (١٩٤٨) . هذا المبحث يحاول اثبات اعتبار هايلمان كناقذ تركيبي بنيوي عن طريق تقديم عدد من الاستفهامات في ضوء كتابه الحالي . ما اهم خواص المدرسة البنيوية؟ من هم اشهر النقاد في حقل البنيوي للدراسات الشكسبيرية ؟ ما اهداف هايلمان الاساسية ؟ والى أي مدى يمكن اعتبار هايلمان ناقدا بنيويا تركيبيا ؟

Last but not least, Heilman's critical examination casts further light on the fact that the work of art must have a supertemporal dimension. It cannot address a theme that interests one particular age and would be of little or no interest to other eras. His critical strategy and tools do not restrict the artifact to a certain readership; they rather exemplify its vision as universal. Art becomes the spatio-temporal manifestation of the timeless and universal language of humanism. His critical reading reflects the ability of art to transcend all barriers; it crystallizes art as a human creative and constructive force, capable of integrating and transforming disjunctive diversity into conjunctive unity. Art becomes an effective catalyst essential for existential sanity and social solidarity. It becomes an occasion by virtue of which the dualistic entities, like form and content, self and other, heart and head, etc. can come into a unity necessary for their mutual health and continuity. Hence, *This Great Stage* presents Heilman as a structuralist critic in his own right.

Works

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