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The "Doubleness" of *The Malcontent* and Fairy-tale Form

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This essay rests on the assumption that one of the main characteristics of *The Malcontent* is the extraordinary structural "doubleness" of the play. While working out a fictional plot of the utmost cultural seriousness (a wrongfully deposed duke regains his throne and cleanses society by restoring moral order to his wholly treacherous and venal court), Marston's manner of employing his formal raw materials is so candidly and wittily offhanded, so archly knowing in its artifice, that the resulting serio-comic vision makes the most confounding demands on its audience.

There are no known sources of *The Malcontent* which might help to clear up this structural obscurity. Anthony Caputi observed in 1961, respecting both this work and the author's light comedy *The Fawne* (pr. 1606), that "We have neither Marston's immediate sources for them nor any conclusive evidence that he knew plays or stories that might have furnished him with hints for the disguise plots used."[1] More recently, however, David J. Houser has challenged Caputi's assertion that Marston was the first dramatist to base his two plays on the duke-in-disguise plot. Professor Houser argues for "a possible link to an earlier use of disguise" in *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1592), an anonymous play which he declares "is markedly similar to Marston's plays, sharing with them a specific pattern of events, dominated by a disguised authority figure."[2] It suffices here merely to attend to the weakness of the claim that *A Knave* is a possible source for *The Malcontent*.

A double-plot play, *A Knave* has a pseudohistorical romance for its overplot and an "estates" morality for the subplot. Houser attaches most weight to the fact that in the subplot a morality abstraction named Honesty is delegated authority by the king to search out knavery in the realm and to punish perpetrators. He concedes the

point that Honesty, unlike Marston's dukes, assumes no single physical identity to enact his role as an undercover royal spy for the duration of the play. Instead, Honesty goes about undetected in various roles and disguises to ferret out representative social evils in the whole of society. Counterargument need not be labored, but even granting a situational resemblance of the most general sort, differences in essentials between the "Honesty pattern" and the plot structure of *The Malcontent* are so profound as to render remote the possibility of influence. Indeed, at least as persuasive as source materials are the long since noted echoes of plot, setting, character, language, and theme of *Hamlet*. Houser's argument is finally undermined, however, by the author's needful admission that he is "aware of no positive evidence that Marston borrowed specifically from *A Knack*" or from any other play sharing common sources with it (996). No adequate basis exists, then, for modifying the long-standing assertion that claims for immediate literary sources or precedents for *The Malcontent* remain inconclusive. Therefore, *The Malcontent* seeming a dramatic composition *sui generis*, the critic does not start from certainties but from the questions raised by the text, the most intriguing being the "doubleness" of its formal and thematic structure.

T. S. Eliot was the first modern critic to observe this two-fold quality of the playwright's drama and to be persuaded that it was a mark of high distinction. Eliot noted "a kind of doubleness in the action, as if it took place on two planes at once," and concluded that "It is . . . by giving us the sense of something behind, more real than any of the personages and their action, that Marston establishes himself among the writers of genius."[3] In varying ways later commentators have taken up this notion of Marstonian doubleness, but not all find it praiseworthy.

John Scott Colley, for example, actually quotes Eliot's comment in his own full-length study. But by making doubleness apply to Marston's Calvinistic outlook on the divided and paradoxical nature of man, Colley uses the term to impugn the playwright's artistic integrity.[4] Even conceding the author's moral and intellectual earnestness, Colley despairs at his "lapsing into caricature or burlesque at the very points he may be stressing an essential dramatic or intellectual truth" (3). *The Malcontent* itself "is not merely trivial or

superficial in its moral concerns" but there is also on Marston's part "some essential lack of conviction in what he is depicting on stage. . . . The play is flawed, ultimately, because Marston was not totally committed to his theme" (120, 128). And Professor Colley has company among the detractors. David L. Frost similarly argues the lack of a sustained vision: "His whole career shows this failure to commit himself wholeheartedly to the work in hand: the symptoms are there not only in variations of tone and inconsistencies of plot or characterization but in Marston's language."[5] But the leading resentment against the author that underpins the allegations of half-heartedness or disingenuousness is his perceived failure to reconcile an obvious flair for comic theatricalism, on the one hand, with an apparently sincere ethical gravity, on the other:

> . . . although the characters sometimes take themselves seriously, they inhabit a sort of cartoon version of a corrupt court, . . . all seem chiefly involved in playing games.[6]

> The sense of the theater in Marston is used primarily destructively, to cut down his characters and deflate their actions. . . . he not only undermines the very medium he employs, but makes it appear to be feeding upon itself.[7]

> Marston does not have Shakespeare's ability to mingle gloom and gaiety to the advantage of both. . . . The structure of the play is defective, and so is the conception of its chief character, Malevole.[8]

Nevertheless, Marston attracts contemporary admiration from critics endowed with a more generous supply of "negative capability," those capable of sensing that the presence of humor does not necessarily vitiate a genuinely intense disgust with social corruption and the neglect of religion. R. W. Ingram, for example, understands that

> Tragic involvement and sardonic detachment are immiscible; and one of Marston's discoveries is that, although this fact is logically true, it can at times be theatrically false. In modern times the absurd can be serious and true.[9]

Jonathan Miller, in the program notes for his own production of *The Malcontent* at Nottingham in 1968, also affirms the more broadminded view of the play's balance of comic and serious tendencies:

> The plot is simple, the argument clear. Only the texture is rich. In fact the whole surface of the play glistens with comic invention; darkened throughout by a rich thrilling pessimism.[10]

These varying perspectives on Marston's doubleness are a touchstone of the critic's ability to fathom dramatic unity behind opposing modes of authenticity and histrionism in his plays generally and *The Malcontent* in particular. To my mind this double-edged quality is so essential a part of Marston's aesthetic that, rightly understood, it should win new appreciation for *The Malcontent*'s achievement. T. S. Eliot's reference to the dramatist's twin planes of action was short on specificity, except that the critic believed they were a function of poetic drama rather than of allegory or symbolism. His insight, however, that Marston is "occupied in saying something else than appears in the literal actions and characters whom he manipulates" (189) is illuminating.

I will now try to flesh it out in concrete terms for this play, proceeding on the assumption that the key to Marston's doubleness is a certain creative discontinuity he achieves between form and content, a tactic most skillfully realized in *The Malcontent*. It is his particular satiric bias to foreground all aspects of dramatic form (genre conventions, characterization, language, and plot structure), highlighting rather than obscuring their status as the familiar semiotic codes of literature. This jocular, often parodistic attitude towards formal elements interacts with the play's dark expressions of fallibility and *contemptus mundi*, not undermining them as some critics argue, but melding both into a pungent symbiosis. Marston's detractors, to their loss, mistake this unexpected ludic collusiveness with the audience for flippancy or tentativeness. One could expect modern readers to be more receptive to this brand of serio-comic moral fable, in view of Samuel Beckett's like-minded method in *Waiting for Godot*.

Genre is the aspect of dramatic form used by Marston with self-conscious paradoxicality throughout his career; it is simply that, in *The Malcontent*, tension between soberness of content and levity of form makes keener demands upon our sophistication. As early as 1598 the intentions of his oxymoronic, serio-comic method were neatly encapsulated in the opening two lines of the proem to Book III of the trenchant verse satire, *The Scourge of Villainy*: "In serious jest and

jesting seriousness / I strive to scourge polluting beastliness."[11]
Similarly, in the letter to his satiro-comic revenge tragedy, *Antonio
and Mellida* (1599), which moreover is addressed to that paradoxical
entity/nonentity, "Nobody," Marston confesses that his "humorous
blood" inclined him "to affect (a little too much) to be seriously
fantastical."[12] With regard to *The Malcontent*, the author's letter to
the reader refers to the work as a "Comedy" (l. 31) but the Latin
dedication to Ben Jonson describes it paradoxically as his "harsh
comedy" (*asperam thaliam*), and indeed, he himself presumably
volunteered its oxymoronic genre as "Tragicomoedia" for the Stationers'
Register entry on 5 July 1604.

Two prominent genre-straddling actions in the play reveal how the
most obvious of comic situations can be endowed with double-
layered meaningfulness. Malevole's sudden springing to life ("*Starts
up*," V.iv.84 s.d.), several uncertain minutes after Mendoza had
apparently poisoned him in cold blood before the audience's eyes and
had gloated over the prostrate body in front of a stunned Celso, is
a *coup de théâtre* that provides not only an abrupt comic surprise
but also a chilling reminder that Mendoza's amoral viciousness might
well have been fatal. A second example, occurring in the play's final
moments, illustrates that most palpably conventional device of formal
closure for comedy, the judgment scene. With the same turn of
phrase as that earlier used at the same juncture by Shakespeare's
malcontented Jaques in *As You Like It* (1600), the newly undisguised
Duke Altofront allots due punishments and rewards to Mendoza,
Pietro, Aurelia, and the other courtiers (V.vi.161-65). Yet, counter-
balancing this facetious laying bare of comic technique are prominent
religious motifs that lend dignity to the climactic moment when
Altofront both retrieves his dukedom and attains his highest purpose,
to resacralize Genoa under God's providence ("Who doubts of
Providence . . . Heaven's imposed conditions . . . the Great Leader
of the just stands for me," IV.v.136, V.vi.148, V.iv.91-92; cf. I.ii.23,
IV.v.124). His arch-enemy Mendoza is significantly and often referred
to as a devil (IV.iii.73, 114; V.vi.8, 17, 39; cf. II.v.106, III.v.31).

The profound implications of these two examples are not undercut
by their sportive theatrical form, as some would contend; instead, by
virtue of the author's capacity for "serious jest and jesting seriousness"

or the "seriously fantastical," the second plane of action tonally complements the first. Enlightened performers could be relied upon to sustain the tonal balance, not permitting witty histrionism to derogate from genuine moral fervency. However, realization that such evenhanded complementarity could be lost upon the reader, as opposed to an auditor, was likely reason enough for the playwright's self-declared unease: "only one thing afflicts me, to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken should be enforcively published to be read" ("To the Reader," ll. 26-28).

Characterization is yet another formal element Marston uses to establish a firm comic rapport with his audience, building playfully upon familiar character types and conventionalities but investing them with disquietingly serious traits. Malevole, on whom critics have lavished most attention, affords the leading instance of Marston's serio-comic, discrepant approach to characterization. Malevole's comic role-playing as a malcontent, the notoriously "stagey" humour character like Shakespeare's Thersites or Jaques, who would "Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world" (*AYL* II.vii.60), counterpoints his true identity: the disillusioned Duke Altofront who reasons that "Man is the slime of this dung-pit, and princes are the governors of these men" (IV.v.114-15). Even the villainous Mendoza displays serio-comic doubleness, but of another sort. In the first two of his seven soliloquies, Mendoza is an innocuous version of an *alazon*, the self-deceived, presumptuous stock character of Greek Old Comedy: ". . . to be a favorite, a minion? To have . . . a stateful silence . . . a confused hum and busy murmur of obedient suitors" (I.iii.23-26). Not by accident, nor previously noted, Mendoza's words are a witty paraphrase of Shakespeare's "overweening rogue" Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* (1602), as he fantasizes marriage to the Countess Olivia: "To be Count Malvolio! . . . to have the humour of state . . . Seven of my people, with an obedient start, make out for [Toby]" (II.v.27-56). In his five subsequent soliloquies, however, Mendoza emerges as the menacing villain he actually is (I.vii.82-88 *et seq.*). Many minor characters have a similar Janus-faced quality. Aurelia both amuses as the jilted lover of high comedy in her first scene ("I love to hate him; speak," I.vi.28) and disaffects in later ones as the murderous hedonist and enforced penitent. Maquerelle and Bilioso, whose literary antecedents are the

stock characters of Roman Comedy, the old procuress and the sycophant,[13] engage Malevole often in almost playful banter. Yet, their comic aspects never obscure the fact that the garrulous old crone is a "picture of a woman and substance of a beast" (V.ii.9), or that the temporizing gull is really an emblem of depravity—"a fellow to be damned . . . a whoreson flesh-fly" (IV.v.103-05).

Dramatic language, so potent a source of comic energy throughout *The Malcontent*, is nonetheless another formal technique with divided implications. This quality shows most clearly in prose whose syntactical ordering itself invites laughter but whose content makes a dead-earnest ethical point. It occurs in the many instances of patterned speech, the Euphuistic devices of alliteration, assonance, parallelism, and repetition beloved of John Lyly in the 1580s for court comedies like *Gallathea* and *Endymion*. As Marston parodies such mannered eloquence that chimes perceptibly to the ear, he makes it both express mocking wit and signify the decadent order of *The Malcontent's* "Italian lascivious palace" (III.ii.34). The rhetorical schemata *isocolon* and *parison* (like-length and like-form phrases) are especially favored by the immoralists Maquerelle and Mendoza. Thus Maquerelle asserts that Marshal Bilioso "hath all things in reversion: he has his mistress in reversion, his clothes in reversion, his wit in reversion," etc. (V.v.30-34; cf. V.ii.43-47, V.vi.99-103). Mendoza declares hypocritically that women's "words are feigned, their eyes forged, their sighs dissembled, their looks counterfeit, their hair false . . . ," etc. (I.vi.88-94, cf. I.v.45-48). Even Malevole lapses briefly into the style ("For as nowadays no courtier but has his mistress, no captain but has his cockatrice, no cuckold . . . ," etc.) but breaks off disgustedly in mid-sentence, scorning his own verbal game-playing and the need for deception as symptoms of a flawed world ("[*Aside*] O God, how loathsome is this toying to me!" V.iii.38-43).

Another example of a double semantic nature inherent in what appears to be merely a comic verbal tic is discernible in Mendoza's persistent recitations of cynical *sententiae* (e.g., "'Mischief that prospers, men do virtue call,'" V.v.77) by Machiavelli, Seneca, and others. Modern actors might tend to accent the outrageousness of this clichéd villainy by perhaps speaking such maxims face-front, with raised forefinger, uplifted brows, or popped eyes. But Mendoza is no cardbord

Machiavel, and the heinousness of his ideas is distinctly unfunny; they could well be delivered quietly, deadpan, by a student of evil in the puckish Ricardian mold. That they can, attests further to Marston's penchant for his self-styled "jesting seriousness." The playwright's facility with comic language is therefore always apparent in *The Malcontent*, but a darker vein ever complements the lighter one; the "correct" tonal balance is left to the performers to determine. His darker propensity is corroborated by his disparaging view of human frailty, which reflects an absorption in the Calvinist fideism of Anglican England, making the entire work constitute a rich semantic field of antihumanistic motifs: animalism, scatology, illicit sexuality, and *contemptus mundi* ("World: 'tis the only region of death, the greatest shop of the devil," IV.iv.27-28).[14]

Plot structure is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of *The Malcontent's* doubleness. On the semantic level it depicts an earnest nobleman's fortunate counter-intrigue against a usurper whose court has become a "privy" where opportunists "rot and putrefy in the bosom of greatness" (I.iv.90, II.i.49). But the form of the overall narrative is one featuring the highest degree of literary stereotypy: the ageless, rule-governed pattern of the Returning Hero tale, replete with archetypal "hero," "villain," and "false hero" roles, and issuing in the determinate happy ending of comedy. The pattern thus described is one that replicates in detail the ageless, universal pattern of the fairy tale. The presence in the play of such a constant factor makes the "doubleness" of *The Malcontent* appear in a different light.

It was the landmark study, *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928; Eng. trans. 1958) by the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp, which first discerned the unitary morphological system underlying the folktale. In this seminal work Propp submitted all 177 national fairy tales from the well-known A. N. Afanasyev collection to a searching analysis of their form.[15] Amazingly, though the tales differed widely in their incidental details, all possessed a single compositional plan. In one tale, for instance, an eagle flies the hero away to another kingdom, in a second tale a horse carries the hero away to another kingdom, and in a third tale a little boat transports the hero away to another kingdom. Propp recognized in these examples that, while the incidental means of conveyance changed for the several heroes, their basic actions

remained a constant. Observing such stable elements to constitute the fundamental components of the tale, he applied to them the term *function* (a character's action significant for the course of the narrative). Propp found, moreover, that the total number of functions derived from all of the tales was not infinite, but finite (only thirty-one), and that all functions universally occurred in strictly chronological, linear-sequential order. Not all thirty-one of them were present in every tale, of course, and one or more might perhaps be absent from a particular series (e.g. 4-5-7-8 . . .), but without exception there was no deviation in any tale from the irreversible, linear-sequential ordering. Unlike motifs, then, which occur randomly throughout a folkloristic text, functions are simultaneously units of structure and content that occur only in an invariate, concatenated order.

What follows is a pairing of nine consecutive points of narrative-characterological action (Function Nos. 23-32 of Propp's model)[16] with reciprocal events occurring in *The Malcontent* in precisely the identical chronological order, thus establishing the play's structure as that of the fairy tale.

No. 23. *THE HERO, UNRECOGNIZED, ARRIVES HOME OR IN ANOTHER COUNTRY. Here, two classes are distinguishable: (1) arrival home . . . ; (2) he arrives at the court of some king, and serves either as a cook or a groom.*
Duke Giovanni Altofronto, called Altofront, has returned from banishment to his former home at the Genoese court, where he is unrecognized in his disguise as the eccentric malcontent, Malevole (I.ii.17-31).

No. 24. *A FALSE HERO PRESENTS UNFOUNDED CLAIMS.*
Pietro, the false hero who usurped Altofront's throne, had left "No strategem of state untried" (I.iv.21) in conniving with the Florentines to claim regency.

No. 25. *A DIFFICULT TASK IS PROPOSED TO THE HERO. [Of every kind, these tasks may involve physical ordeals, riddle-guessing or ordeals of choice, or tests of strength, adroitness, or endurance.]*
Altofront rejects his friend Celso's proposal of mutiny to regain the throne, urging secret, gradual means rather than desperate ones ("temporize . . . Some way 'twill work," I.iv.28, 42). Indeed, most of the play (I.iv-IV.v) is taken up with the dangerous complications of Altofront's task, such as his posing as henchman of the villain, Mendoza; enlisting the aid of Pietro the false hero to oppose the villain (III.v) and even pretending to be Mendoza's victim (V.iv.45). Sleeplessness, fear, and self-doubt are constant ordeals (III.ii.1, III.iii.2-3, V.iii.43-44).

No. 26. *THE TASK IS RESOLVED.*
Altofront's attainment of his goal is signalled by the false hero's renunciation of power and vow that his "breast's care shall be, / Restoring Altofront to regency" (IV.v.130-31).

No. 27. *THE HERO IS RECOGNIZED.*
Accepting Pietro's manifestly sincere reformation, Altofront "*Undisguiseth himself*" (IV.v.132 s.d.), ending his role-playing as Malevole.

No. 28 *THE FALSE HERO OR VILLAIN IS EXPOSED.*
During the masque of Mercury, at which Mendoza had intended to celebrate his installation as duke, Altofront and his allies surprise the villain when "*they unmask*" and proceed to "*environ Mendoza, bending their pistols on him*" (V.vi.112-13 s.d.).

No. 29 *THE HERO IS GIVEN A NEW APPEARANCE . . . 2) The hero puts on new garments.*
Mendoza identifies the now unmasked Malevole as Altofront, the event being punctuated by a cornet flourish and the general acclamation, "Duke Altofront! Duke Altofront!" (V.vi.116 s.d.). In performance, such instant recognition is likely abetted by Altofront's letting his white masque robe or cape (l. 68.2 s.d.) fall away to reveal his ducal regalia. The costume reestablishes his authority for the ensuing judgment scene.

No. 30 *THE VILLAIN IS PUNISHED.*
Mendoza's treachery requires the death sentence, but Altofront disdains severe punishment in favor of a comic expulsion: "*(Kicks out Mendoza)* Hence with the man" (V.vi.160).

No. 31 *THE HERO IS MARRIED AND ASCENDS THE THRONE . . . 5) the marriage [of an already married hero] resumes as the result of a quest. . . . At this point the tale draws to a close.*
Having foiled Mendoza's enforced marriage to Maria, Altofront takes his wife to his side (V.vi.164) and reasserts his ducal authority in the play's penultimate line ("I here assume my right," l. 166).

The Malcontent's narrative clearly fits the fairy-tale paradigm to a tee—"fairy tale" being used advisedly here to refer to a special type of folktale. (The looseness of this term, incidentally, has long bothered folklorists, for fairies most often inhabit the legend genre and fairy tales only rarely.) As an earnest personal history, the tale depicts a royal protagonist who passes heroic tests of skill and guile to avenge the wrongful dispossession of his birthright. As an equally consequential social parable, the story allegorizes the purgation of illegitimate,

unethical authority from the duchy and the restoration of rightful, morally enlightened rule. In his introduction to the English edition of the *Morphology* cited earlier, Alan Dundes in fact pondered the relationship of Propp's analysis to the structure of another folk narrative, the epic. In particular, Dundes found it noteworthy that the identical sequence of narrative elements (Functions 23-31) just quoted in connection with *The Malcontent* was "strikingly similar" to the last portion of Homer's *Odyssey* (p. xiv). Dundes' almost offhand surmise proves to be absolutely correct, and it is easily verified by pairing each of the aforementioned narrative elements with the selfsame sequence of events which unfold chronologically, as follows, in Books 16-23 of the *Odyssey*:

> No. 23: Odysseus, prince of Ithaca, returns at last to his homeland disguised as an old vagabond; at Eumaeus' home he is unrecognized by Telemachus his son (Bk. 16). No. 24: Odysseus learns to his dismay that the Suitors have assumed control of the household (Bk. 16). No. 25: Now reunited with his son, Odysseus plans to defeat the Suitors (Bk. 16). No. 26: Helped by faithful servants who lock the palace doors, Odysseus confronts the Suitors, kills their leader (Bk. 22). No. 27: Death-threatening at first, the Suitors quake with fear upon recognizing Odysseus (Bk. 22). No. 28: Odysseus binds up Melanthius the goatherd, whom he guesses has armed the Suitors (Bk. 22). No. 30: Odysseus and allies kill the Suitors, hang their mistresses, torture Melanthius (Bk. 22). No. 31: Penelope's test identifies Odysseus as her estranged husband; their marriage resumes (Bk. 23).[17]

Thus despite nonessential differences in characterization between the royal protagonists, Altofront and Odysseus, the form and content of their respective disguise-, intrigue-, and comic-denouement plots, are revealed as fully homologous. Furthermore, Propp's work merely supplies systematic corroboration of what folklorists have already observed about the structure of Homer's epic for over a century, which is that the popular and widespread folktale of the Returning Hero provides the *Odyssey*'s core narrative, Homer having adopted it to apply to persons he believed to be historical.[18] Accordingly then, this Returning Hero folktale appears not only to have been extant in ancient Greece well before the *Odyssey*, and part as well of an independent body of Russian fairy tales collected by Afanasyev in the mid-

nineteenth century, but also to have been absorbed in toto into the plot narrative of Marston's Jacobean tragicomedy.[19]

Marston thus evidences his doubleness, on the level of thematic content, by the authentic pessimism and disgust with which he limns a sin-ridden milieu ("here round about is hell," V.iii.24), and on the level of technique by the unstudied advantage he gains from the optimistic teleology of the fairy-tale form itself, which subconsciously prepares us for its auspicious outcome. To be sure, he also employs form with even surer calculation in the tactically placed foreshadowings that neutralize suspense regarding Malevole's eventual victory: "Now 'gins close plots to work; the scene grows full . . . I find the wind begins to come about."[20]

In the act of "creating" a narrative spine for *The Malcontent*, Marston had absorbed an already well-established pattern whose recurrence has been proven to be universal, at least among Indo-European nations. Above all, the fairy-tale form permits the work's generous measure of social-satirical episodes (ethically pertinent but narratively digressive) to be integrated into a tightly unified gestalt, a clearly delineated heroic totality. Second, Marston had invented "original" leading characters in Altofront, Mendoza, and Pietro; but when these creations are examined with respect to functions performed in the determinate ordering of a folkloristic text, they are revealed as embodiments of "hero," "villain," and "false hero," the conventionalized dramatis personae of the folktale.

This bent for stereotypy, both in terms of archetypal story-line and characterization, also accords with another of the author's signature techniques. For, even as Marston offers us characters who are quite lifelike, he playfully makes transparent the fact that they are either enacting such theatrically familiar type-character roles or are on occasion deliberate echoes of known Shakespearean characters. In similar fashion, even as the playwright involves us in the genuine dangers and righteousness of Altofront's mission, he structures that experience in a comic form of recognizable "literariness," a form whose origins are locatable in both the stereotypic paradigm of the *Märchen* and in the formularized construction which Greek New Comedy gave to drama and which came to Elizabethans via Plautus and Terence.[21] I would suggest, then, that the fairy-tale form is the "something

behind, more real than any of the personages and their action," which Eliot sensed in *The Malcontent*.

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NOTES

[1]Anthony Caputi, *John Marston, Satirist* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1961) 179. All citations to *The Malcontent* are from the Revels Plays edition, ed. George K. Hunter (London: Methuen, 1975).

[2]David J. Houser, "Purging the Commonwealth: Marston's Disguised Dukes and *A Knack to Know a Knave*," *PMLA* 89 (1974): 993-1006, 993.

[3]T. S. Eliot, *Elizabethan Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934) 189-90.

[4]John Scott Colley, *John Marston's Theatrical Drama*, Jacobean Drama Studies 33 (Salzburg: U of Salzburg, 1974) 2-3.

[5]David L. Frost, *The School of Shakespeare: The Influence of Shakespeare in English Drama 1600-42* (Cambridge: CUP, 1968) 182.

[6]R. A. Foakes, "On Marston, *The Malcontent*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy*," *The Elizabethan Theatre VI*, ed. G. R. Hibbard (Hamden, CT: Shoe String P, 1977) 69-70.

[7]Arthur C. Kirsch, *Jacobean Dramatic Perspectives* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1972) 32.

[8]John Peter, *Complaint and Satire in Early English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1956) 238.

[9]R. W. Ingram, *John Marston* (Boston: Twayne, 1978) 85.

[10]Jonathan Miller, quoted by Ingram 168n4. Cf. Eugene M. Waith, *The Pattern of Tragicomedy in Beaumont and Fletcher* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1952) 67.

[11]*The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1961) 149.

[12]*Antonio and Mellida*, ed. G. K. Hunter, Regents Renaissance Drama Ser. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965), "Letter Dedicatory," ll. 5-6.

[13]George E. Duckworth, *The Nature of Roman Comedy: A Study in Popular Entertainment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1952) 253, 261.

[14]Brownell Salomon, "The Theological Basis of Imagery and Structure in *The Malcontent*," *SEL* 14 (1974): 271-84.

[15]Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 2nd ed., rev. and ed. by Louis A. Wagner, with an introduction by Alan Dundes (1st ed. 1958; Austin: U of Texas P for the American Folklore Society, 1968). Propp uses the term *volsebnaja skazka* (magical folktale) to refer to this specific class of folktale (Aarne-Thompson tale types 300-749); in English translation the term became "fairy tale." Some confusion was created by Propp's Leningrad publisher, who, with the aim of generating wider interest, misleadingly suppressed the qualifying word "magical" in the title. But in fact later scholars, including Propp himself, have verified the cross-cultural

applicability of his paradigm to the gamut of folk narratives: other bodies of folktale, epic, classical myths, ancient Greek romances, the Biblical story of Jacob, etc. "The Myth Structure and Rituality of *Henry V*," my article forthcoming in *YES*, examines how Shakespeare's play employs an integral heroic segment of it. That essay reviews earlier applications and documents as well as the important point substantiated by many folklorists: that all types of folk narrative (myth, folktale, fairy tale, etc.) are co-identical both as regards morphology and genre, notwithstanding differences in cultural seriousness among them.

[16]Propp 60-64.

[17]The *Odyssey* has a No. 29 (Odysseus bathes, changes clothing before meeting Penelope), but it occurs after rather than prior to No. 30. For convenience, I paraphrase the excellent synopsis of the *Odyssey* by Lillian Feder, *The Meridian Handbook of Classical Literature*, Meridian Books (New York: NAL, 1986) 284-89.

[18]See Denys Page, *The Homeric Odyssey* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1955) 1-2, 18n1, and his *Folktales in Homer's* Odyssey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1973) 3-4, 177n3.

[19]It is a moot point whether the Greek epic might have provided direct inspiration for Marston's own plot structure. Two allusions to the *Odyssey* are present in the text (III.ii.47, IV.i.56), but these casual references to Penelope's faithfulness in her husband's absence and to the difficulty of stringing Ulysses' bow are proverbial and available from indirect sources. For the first, see Ovid's imaginary verse epistle, "Penelope to Ulysses," in the *Heroides*, I.83-86, a work Marston also directly quotes in Latin (II.v.126). For the second, see Tilley B562, The Bow of Ulysses (M. P. Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* [Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1950]).

[20]I.v.160, III.iii.17; cf. III.ii.50-51, IV.v.148.

[21]Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (1957; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1967) 163. This comic pattern applies equally to *The Malcontent* and the *Odyssey*. Although ethical seriousness, social implications, and violent incidents are important features in both works (in Homer, numerous usurpers meet their deaths), their underlying form makes comedy the operative genre.