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Collected Essays

WOLFGANG CLEMEN

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2 *Wandlung des Botenberichts bei Shakespeare.* Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 1952, 4.

3 *Past and Future in Shakespeare's Drama.* Annual Shakespeare Lecture of the British Academy 1966. From the *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. lii, Oxford University Press.

4 *Shakespeare's Soliloquies.* The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association, 1964, Cambridge University Press.

5 *Schein und Sein bei Shakespeare.* Festrede in der öffentlichen Sitzung der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften München 1959.

6 'Shakespeare and the Modern World' in *Shakespeare Survey* 16, 1963, Cambridge University Press.

7 'Das Drama Shakespeares'. Lecture given on the occasion of Shakespeare's 400th birthday to the German Shakespeare Society (West) 1964, published in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch (West)* 1965.

8 'Wie sollen wir ein Drama von Shakespeare lesen?' Introduction to a German edition of Shakespeare's works in 4 volumes by Winkler Verlag, München 1967.

The German versions of 2, 5, 7, 8 have also been reprinted in *Das Drama Shakespeares* 1969. In preparing the English versions of the German articles various alterations have been made.

Preface

Four of these eight essays go back to earlier articles which were included in a volume *Das Drama Shakespeares*, published by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in 1969. The opening one, however, on Shakespeare's art of preparation was written in 1970 and no German version has been published as yet. Of my English publications, the Annual Shakespeare Lecture of the British Academy 1966, the Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association of 1964, and a lecture given at the Tenth International Shakespeare Conference at Stratford in 1961, have been included. For permission to reprint them here acknowledgement is made to the British Academy, the Modern Humanities Research Association and the editors of *Shakespeare Survey*. References to the original places of publication are given in a bibliographical note opposite.

For advice and criticism I wish to thank Ernest Schanzer, Ina Schabert, Anne Barton, Muriel Bradbrook, and John Northam, and in particular Inga-Stina Ewbank and Stanley Wells, to whom the book is dedicated and who some years ago encouraged me to pursue my plans further, even if the originally intended full-length study of Shakespeare's dramatic art could not be completed for the time being.

Thanks are also due to my colleagues L. C. Knights and Henry Gifford who invited me to Bristol University in 1964, under the sponsorship of the Churchill Foundation, to give a series of lectures, in which several subjects treated in this volume were first discussed in lecture form.

For remarks and suggestions bearing on Shakespeare's technique of preparation I am indebted to unpublished theses by Friedrich Kastropp and Heinz Sprogies which will be referred to in the notes.

I feel particularly grateful to Charity Meier-Ewert and Gemma Geoghegan for their help in preparing the English version of the essays, to Ingeborg Boltz for compiling the index, and to Gisela Oswald for typing the manuscript and checking the quotations which as well as the line-numberings are based on the text of Peter Alexander (Collins-Shakespeare, London, 1951).

Wolfgang Clemen

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I

Shakespeare's Art of Preparation. A Preliminary Sketch

INTRODUCTION

Preparation is one of the most important elements of drama, but at the same time it is the most difficult to isolate and to define. This applies to Shakespeare even more than to other dramatists. In his plays preparation is a wide and complex phenomenon, which is manifested in many different ways and which presents itself to us in diverse contexts. Up to the present no attempt has been made to describe Shakespeare's art of preparation,[1] and the most probable explanation of this lies in the difficulty of delimiting and categorizing so varied and complex a process. For preparation may mean the announcement of a new character about to enter for the first time, but it may also mean the gradual working towards a catastrophe or a climax, extending over several acts; it may include the insertion of omens, portents, dreams and supernatural appearances, and may extend to the use of dramatic irony, of prophetic hints concealed in the imagery, and premonitions of the characters themselves.

Preparation can appear in one recurrent obvious device, but it may also operate through the structure of a whole scene, an act, or an

[1] The most coherent discussion still is Arthur Colby Sprague's chapter on 'Preparation and Surprise' in *Shakespeare and the Audience*, Camb., Mass., 1935. For scattered remarks on the subject see the books by William Archer, Brander Matthews, Sir John Squire, B. Evans, H. S. Wilson, V. K. Whitaker, N. Coghill, W. Rosen, J. R. Brown, J. L. Styan quoted on the following pages. Of earlier critics S. T. Coleridge gave a good deal of attention to preparation in Shakespeare (cf. J. R. de Jackson 'Coleridge on Shakespeare's Preparation' *Review of English Literature* 7 (1966)). Of twentieth-century critics it is H. Granville-Barker who in his *Prefaces* shows much awareness of the aspect of dramatic preparation. In Germany Otto Ludwig in his *Shakespearestudien* Leipzig, 1872 made some pertinent remarks on Shakespeare's dramatic preparation. A subtle and detailed analysis of the preparatory function of first scenes in Shakespeare is to be found in E. Th. Sehrt, *Der dramatische Auftakt in der elisabethanischen Tragödie*, 1960.

extended dialogue, in which case it is much more difficult to demonstrate. Finally, what we call preparation is very closely linked with other aspects of dramatic art, with the technique of exposition, with the creation of dramatic tension, suspense and expectation, and even of dramatic contrast. How then are we to make the necessary distinctions and divisions?

In view of these difficulties it may at first seem advisable to examine individual aspects of Shakespeare's art of preparation separately. One could for instance trace recurrent conspicuous devices, such as the use of omens and portents, or examine the part played by premonitions, or study the preparation for the first appearance of main characters – one could treat them as we treat clearly defined aspects like the aside. But in this way we cannot grasp the complexity of the subject; we do not see how Shakespeare usually, in aiming at a particular effect, works on several, different levels and with 'infinite variety', nor can we show how closely the different aspects of dramatic art are interwoven and conditioned by one another. In order to recognize and demonstrate the interdependence and co-operation of the individual means of preparation, it is advisable to abandon systematic treatment of this sort and make a new start proceeding in a selective way. One will have to omit some points of importance and refrain from going into questions related to the art of preparation yet mainly connected with other aspects of dramatic technique. An exhaustive discussion of dramatic preparation would in any case necessitate a whole book, probably a long one. The present study, concentrating on only eight plays (of which the selection will be justified on p. 11) cannot therefore hope to be more than a preliminary sketch of a complex subject which calls for more detailed and full treatment in the future.

A brief study of the subject will have to limit itself to those forms of preparation which can be demonstrated by quotations. For as with other elements in drama there are some aspects of preparation which can be illustrated from the text and others which are much more difficult to demonstrate because they are less tangible and less evident in individual passages, affecting rather the whole 'lay-out' of an episode. Such forms of preparation would need a detailed interpretation of a whole scene or act in order to become manifest. We therefore give preference to forms of preparation which are articulated at particular points in the play.

Why is preparation in drama particularly important, and a distinctive characteristic of this genre? For one thing the dramatist works within limitations which do not apply to the story teller. The novelist may describe at length the setting in which his story is to take place, he may tell us something about the whereabouts of his characters, about their background, their ideas, their previous history. In the course of his narrative he can pause whenever he likes to record the changing conditions which are to influence the conduct of his characters, and he can analyse those factors which are to motivate and explain future actions. The dramatist cannot avail himself of this freedom. He must put all these elements, background, description, motivation, psychological analysis into dialogue. Gesture, setting and spectacle may help him in conveying these elements to the audience, but the spoken words of the characters will always remain his chief resource. Moreover, the need to limit length is a constant pressure on the dramatist. He must be economic, concise, selective. Condensation must be his aim and hence he must try to do several things at once. While informing the audience, he must carry on the conversation on the stage and make the characters reveal themselves; while painting the background and atmosphere he must move the action forward. He cannot pause to comment, describe, prepare and explain, unless this is done under another pretext by the characters themselves. This means that much of what belongs to the substance of preparation must be 'smuggled in' as an unobtrusive and convincing part of their utterance. A criterion for good drama is therefore the degree to which the matter which serves the purpose of information and preparation is turned into lively dialogue and action.

The less leisurely quality of drama as compared to the novel is connected, as was shown, with the fact that the dramatist has no opportunity for direct comment. This leads to a further distinction: not only is the progress of the action on the stage, during a scene, identical with the progress of the author's narration, but also with the progress in the minds of the audience. While in a novel we can pause or slow down the tempo of reading for moments of retrospection, reflection and interpretation, and, on the other hand, can take in an elaborate description, an analysis of a state of mind at one sweeping glance, as it were, the play is in constant motion, and in watching it we proceed from one moment to the next. We cannot look back to the top of the page, we

cannot obtain a comprehensive contemplation of a whole passage; we have to go on at the same speed at which the action on the stage proceeds. Steady progress, or – as Thornton Wilder put it – 'forward movement',[1] is one of the basic laws of drama.

Another criterion for good drama is therefore the degree to which we are drawn into this process; and on the other hand an understanding of the nature of it may give us a key to the principles underlying the art of preparation. In a successful play the audience not only watches what is happening on the stage at the present moment, but is also constantly looking out for what is going to happen next. We want to see and know more of what we have just seen, our minds are stretching forward, our awakened interest asks for continuation and clarification. The building up of impressions which is going on all the time in the minds of the audience while the play is in progress also includes a building up of expectations.[2] While fixing our attention on the immediate presence of the spectacle, the dramatist also keeps our imagination busy with speculations about the further development. What we see at the present moment we judge on the basis of what we have learned so far about the characters and on the basis of what we have been expecting all the time (only at the very beginning of the play is this different). But this does not mean that our previous knowledge and our expectations must always be fulfilled by the course of the action. The clash between expectation and fulfilment constitutes an important source of dramatic effect. Shakespeare, in his handling of the art of preparation, made rich use of it.

The 'progress of time' of which we have spoken also means that the dramatist is under greater pressure of time in shaping his plays than the novelist. A whole life's tragedy may be compressed into a three hours' 'traffic of the stage'. More things happen as a rule, more conflicts and developments are presented to us, in a play than in a novel limited to three hours' reading. Without proper preparation the audience would be overwhelmed by the impact of these inner and outer events following closely one upon another. Preparation, used subtly and unobtrusively, is a means for the dramatist to stretch out time, to create the

[1] Thornton Wilder 'Some Thoughts on Playwriting' in *Playwrights on Playwriting*, ed. Toby Cole, New York, 1960.

[2] Cf. J. L. Styan, *The Elements of Drama*, Cambridge, 1960, Ch. 6, 'Building the Sequence of Impressions'.

illusion of 'double time', to convey to us the experience of the gradual ripening of a decisive action, of the seemingly slow approach of a catastrophe or crisis. We are ready to accept a radical change in a character's mind or a fatal reversal of inter-human relationships though they may take place within half an hour's time, because we have been led up to them little by little.

On the other hand, by informing us beforehand about the circumstances and conditions under which a climax, a catastrophe will take place, the dramatist may concentrate the audience's entire attention on the emotional impact of the event, excluding all informative detail. Preparation thus becomes a means of economy, of saving up the resources of stagecraft.

Another aspect of the art of preparation derives from the foreknowledge of the audience. Shakespeare, as a rule, takes the audience into his confidence at an early stage. The audience thus possesses knowledge which is superior to that shared by the main character or characters. This foreknowledge makes the spectator watch the development of the play, the delusions, hopes, discoveries, the 'false' and the 'right' actions of the characters on the stage with a mixture of pleasure, apprehension, and critical detachment. He feels at once remote, looking at the play with an almost god-like prescience from a superior vantage-point and he also feels involved,[1] for he will suffer for and with the characters, looking through their false hopes and illusions and foreseeing the fatal consequences of their doings. He may identify himself with their reactions and attitudes and may at the same time judge and reject them on account of his superior knowledge. In his comedies Shakespeare made ample use of this 'gap of awareness', which has a direct bearing on the peculiar technique of preparation characteristic of these plays.[2]

But although Shakespeare gives to his audience, as a rule, a good deal of foreknowledge, he does not tell them everything. There is also a certain amount of guess-work on the part of the audience. We must not know too well what is going to happen, or if we know, we must not know *how* it will happen. The art of preparation consists in establishing

[1] On the concepts of 'involvement' and 'detachment' see William Rosen, *Shakespeare and the Craft of Tragedy*, Oxford, 1960, p. 57; cf. V. Whitaker, *The Mirror up to Nature. The Technique of Shakespeare's Tragedies*, San Marino: California, 1965, p. 154.

[2] See B. Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, Oxford, 1960.

a balance between certainty and uncertainty, between an assured foreknowledge and a vague presentiment. The dramatist must alternately unveil and veil, promise and again withdraw his promise, he must proceed rather by 'hints and guesses' than by obvious and obtrusive indications. Straightforward and direct preparation will fit certain developments only, but it is not the best solution for most cases. At this point we see that the often-repeated maxim enounced by Alexandre Dumas Jr. 'The art of the theatre is the art of preparation' needs some modification, and it is worth quoting William Archer, who, in reply to Dumas, wrote: 'Yes, it is very largely the art of delicate and unobtrusive preparation, of helping an audience to divine whither it is going, while leaving it to wonder how it is to get there.'[1] Thus the rousing of curiosity, of conjectures as to *how* things will develop, and as to how certain 'riddles' put to us at the play's beginning will be solved, form a strong element in Shakespeare's art of preparation. Dramatic art, as John Dover Wilson once defined it, is an art of 'progressive revelation'.[2] A play begins by showing us an unsolved situation, an issue not yet cleared up, a latent conflict of which we do not know the outcome. By and by we shall know more, for more things will be 'revealed' to us. Preparation is one of the means of setting this process in motion and of keeping it going. For every utterance which goes towards revealing an additional detail acts at the same time as preparation for other things which we may be expecting.

Preparation is often combined with the creation of tension and suspense. For an expectation of which the fulfilment is delayed acts as a stimulus to keep our interest alive and to put us into a state of keen alertness. We have been promised something and now we have to wait for it longer than we had expected; at the same time we may grow uncertain, wondering how it will take place or even whether it will take place at all. Tension depends a good deal on the amount of preparation the dramatist has put into operation. Delay and suspense, on the other hand, will increase the tension while deliberate preparation goes underground, having previously built up certain unforgettable expectations in the minds of the audience. We find many examples in Shakespeare of this use of delay through the insertion of episodes or

[1] William Archer, *Play-Making. A Manual of Craftmanship.* Re-issued ed. J. Gassner, New York, 1960, p. 132.
[2] J. Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet*, Cambridge, 1935, p. 231.

scenes which appear to interrupt, or branch off from, the main action, the audience having been previously prepared for certain issues.[1]

Dramatic preparation, not only in Shakespeare's plays, is usually judged and appreciated on the assumption that the play will be attended by an audience which has no previous knowledge of it. The ideal spectator is taken to be someone who not only sees the play for the first time in his life on the stage, but who has not even heard about it before. Surely most playwrights have this type of audience in mind when writing their plays, and this must have been true to a certain extent of Shakespeare too. But even Shakespeare, when composing plays like *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar* or *Antony and Cleopatra* (and a good many others), could count on his audience's knowledge of the story in its rough outline. And his audience, too, consisted of different groups of spectators with differing degrees of information about the contents of his plays. Some of these spectators would probably see the play for a second time. Much the same applies to a modern audience, although today a greater proportion will be familiar with a play by Shakespeare which they are going to see. However, previous information about a play does not invalidate the use of dramatic preparation, nor does it basically diminish the rousing of curiosity and interest which are so essential to the full enjoyment of a theatrical experience.[2] For although we have, at the back of our minds, knowledge of how the play will develop and end, we may nevertheless forget about it as we sit in the theatre and enter into the mood of someone watching the play for the first time. In identifying ourselves with these spectators and also with the characters on the stage we may experience the same tensions, qualms, uncertainties and hopes, no matter what we know of the happy or unhappy conclusion.

In fact, a spectator who has read the play beforehand will be in a better position to appreciate the subtlety of early preparatory devices or forebodings, not to mention the ironies which would escape a spectator seeing the play for the first time in any case. The playgoer who already knows the story will be able to switch his interest with more eager attention from the 'what' to the 'how' – and this is where dramatic art (and art in general) is revealed.

[1] Cf. Nevill Coghill, *Shakespeare's Professional Skills*, Cambridge, 1964.

[2] 'In the drama, our knowledge of the end of a play in no wise interferes with our enjoyment' Brander Matthews, *The Study of Drama*, London, 1910, p. 193.

The study of Shakespeare's technique of preparation will constantly cause one to ask what is happening in the minds of the audience. Analysing this process of accumulating impressions, expectations, and interests set in motion by the play as it is performed would shift the emphasis from mere textual explication towards another method of dramatic interpretation that has relatively seldom been tried out as yet.[1]

However, no principle can be laid down for this interplay between the audience and the stage, as too many different forms and degrees of preparation are involved. Even the requirement that preparation must not be too direct and straightforward but should provide for an element of uncertainty and guess-work (as was pointed out above) does not apply to all kinds of preparation. Indeed, any rigid categorization of dramatic devices and situations which lend themselves to the purpose of preparation would oversimplify the matter and would blur the distinction between the different degrees of expectation in the minds of the audience.

Even among the more indirect forms of preparation there are some to which the concept of 'expectation' does not appear to apply. For of the many dramatic or tragic ironies woven into the texture of the tragedies only very few theatre-goers will catch the premonitory meaning; quite a number of these ironies will in fact only disclose themselves as deliberate forebodings to someone who reads the play for a second or third time, with a thorough knowledge of what will be said and acted in the later parts of the play. These ironies may be deciphered – as it were – only if one goes through the play in the opposite direction; from the end backwards to the beginning.

Among these subtle and hidden forms of preparation we may also include the use of certain recurring key-words or the use of imagery. Again 'expectation' or 'curiosity' would not be the right term for describing what happens in the minds of the audience. For these words or images act on our subconscious; they may create a mood of apprehension or danger, they may put us into another frame of mind in which we may more readily accept what the next act will present to us. We are 'tuned in' and imperceptibly drawn into an altered imaginative mood. These delicate effects are most difficult for the critic to assess and will differ from one theatre-goer to another, according to the degree of his sensitivity and imaginative capability.

[1] John Northam, *Ibsen's Dramatic Method*, London, 1953.

Shakespeare has always been praised for the way in which he takes up, in the later scenes of his plays, suggestions, phrases, hints or even situations which occurred in the first acts. There are seldom 'loose threads' in his plays, especially in those of his maturity. Again and again, when watching or reading attentively a later act or scene, we are reminded of a phrase or an image or even of a situation in the earlier parts of the play. There are numerous echoes, correspondences, variations and repetitions in each of the tragedies which help to bind the parts of the play together and make it a living organism of which all parts are interrelated. These echoes and correspondences establish links between the scenes, and often build a bridge between parts which at first seem unrelated. In studying the various forms of preparation our attention will be directed to a considerable extent towards this important aspect of Shakespeare's dramatic art. But here, too, the question arises as to whether all these echoes, which revive our memory of earlier scenes, enable us to place these earlier passages under the heading of 'preparation'. To quote a famous example: Is Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene which contains many echoes from an earlier scene (II, ii) therefore 'prepared' by this earlier scene? Surely, this 'preparation' (if we want to keep to this term at all in this connexion) is recognized only in retrospect.[1] The utterances made by Lady Macbeth in the earlier part of the play, soon after the murder of Duncan, may linger on in our memory because of their symbolic impact, but they do not rouse expectation of any kind in our minds. And this is true of a great many similar echoes and correspondences found in Shakespeare's later plays.

However, the consideration of this significant aspect may warn us that 'preparation' in Shakespeare's plays is not only evident in what the characters themselves say in the way of anticipation. Besides, foreboding or explicit anticipation are for Shakespeare's characters only one way of anticipating the future. As has been set out in another connexion,[2] Shakespeare makes full and frequent use of those natural attitudes and feelings in man which point towards the future. Any observer who looks out for utterances which, by drawing the future into perspective, may serve the purpose of preparation, will be struck by the great number of phrases expressing hope and fear, or stating promises, vows, threats, and warnings or indulging in wishful thinking.

[1] See the paragraph on *Macbeth* p. 84.

[2] See the chapter on 'Past and Future in Shakespeare's Drama'.

A strong subjective element thus comes in. The relevance of these utterances in view of their preparatory function will differ greatly and they cannot be taken at their face value. For in as much as the anticipation expressed in these utterances may be misleading, it will clash with the superior foreknowledge of the audience or with the even more superior omniscience of the dramatist himself. It is by such clashing that the intense interest with which we watch a performance is reinforced.

But apart from such anticipatory feelings expressed by the characters themselves the dramatist has at his disposal other means of preparing the audience. Some of these means, such as the acceleration or the slowing-down of tempo, the change in versification, the transformation of the vocabulary, the building up and organization of a long passage of dialogue or of a speech, cannot be discussed here; other means, such as the use of delay and suspense, will be considered briefly. With all these aspects, however, we shall become aware of the boundary beyond which preparation is an intangible and altogether too diffuse and complex subject to be demonstrated in a study of this kind.

On the other hand it is just this intricacy and many-sidedness which make a study of this phenomenon 'preparation' especially fascinating and fruitful. Studying this single aspect we may learn more about the whole play. For we shall see how in each play the forms of preparation are determined by the overall principles of structure and style, and we shall find that the manner in which preparation is handled even reflects the play's theme and meaning. It is one of the aims of this study to enquire into the correspondence existing between the kind of preparation used and the other constituent elements of each play. Thus the study of preparation could open up a new approach for which this preliminary and fragmentary sketch is designed to give some suggestions.

The eight plays which will be treated individually on the following pages have been chosen because they illustrate the range of techniques of preparation as well as the range of meaning which the very concept of preparation – as suggested above – involves. All of these plays differ from one another considerably as to the technique of preparation used and as to its relationship with the nature of the play and its major characters. Some additional aspects of the art of preparation, which could not be examined in these eight sections, will be mentioned and briefly discussed in a concluding chapter.

Of Shakespeare's histories *Henry VI*, *Richard III* and *Richard II* have been selected because, on the one hand, a remarkable development can be traced in these plays, for they exemplify the advance from 'technique of preparation' towards 'art of preparation'. On the other hand, these histories also display strong contrasts as far as the function of preparation is concerned, which will be revealed in particular by a comparison between *Richard III* and *Richard II*.

Of Shakespeare's tragedies *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth* were chosen. In these five plays we find not only a wide variety of different techniques and functions of preparation but also, in each case, an illuminating connexion between the general character of the drama and the specific art of preparation. The development of the art of preparation culminates in *Macbeth*, the concept of preparation becoming at the same time so complex that its investigation by the methods tried out so far becomes a problem. The romances and comedies have not been included in this study. The comedies in particular would require an altogether different and detailed approach. For the manifold intrigues, disguises, mistaken identities, discoveries and deceptions are in each play tied up with a good deal of preparation and most (although not all) of Shakespeare's comic effects depend on preparation rather than on surprise. In some comedies we even find scenes of eavesdropping which have been beforehand carefully rehearsed. One would have to go into great detail in order to disentangle the threads of intrigue, leading up to the comic confrontations and confusions. Moreover, a study of preparation in the comedies would have to take into account Shakespeare's art of building up several levels of awareness, especially of a discrepancy of awareness[1] which acts as a powerful agent in preparing the minds of the audience for the ensuing comic effects. An examination of the comedies from the point of view of preparation therefore constitutes a major task.

A FIRST SCENE AS AN EXAMPLE: A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM, I, i.

However lest the comedies be altogether omitted, we propose to start by looking at the first scene of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. For this scene can well illustrate a number of points which were made about the

[1] Cf. Bertrand Evans, *Shakespeare's Comedies*, 1960.

features of preparation in our introduction. Combining exposition with preparation the scene not only gives us the information we need in order to understand the following events, introducing in a skilful manner the various strands of the action, but it also prepares us for the mood, atmosphere and theme of this comedy. We can see how the art of preparation consists in the playwright's ability to do several things at once, 'smuggling in' his bits of information in an unobtrusive manner. But we can also note the part played by imagery and by 'key-words' in attuning us to what is to come and we shall see how the time-element too has an important share in rousing expectations for the future.

Some of this can already be shown in the very first lines of the scene:

Theseus. Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour
Draws on apace; four happy days bring in
Another moon; but, O, methinks, how slow
This old moon wanes! She lingers my desires,
Like to a step-dame or a dowager,
Long withering out a young man's revenue.

Hippolyta. Four days will quickly steep themselves in night;
Four nights will quickly dream away the time;
And then the moon, like to a silver bow
New-bent in heaven, shall behold the night
Of our solemnities.

Theseus. Go, Philostrate,
Stir up the Athenian youth to merriments;
Awake the pert and nimble spirit of mirth;
Turn melancholy forth to funerals;
The pale companion is not for our pomp.
Hippolyta, I woo'd thee with my sword,
And won thy love doing thee injuries;
But I will wed thee in another key,
With pomp, with triumph, and with revelling.

(I, i, 1)

It is not a matter of chance that Theseus is the first character to speak. For he and Hippolyta not only form what we may call the 'enveloping action' which binds together the various plots, and which will be taken up again in the fourth act when the world of dreams and errors is to