On the Dancing in *Romeo and Juliet*

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Romeo and Juliet first exchange words, hands, and lips against the backdrop of the dancing which occurs during Act I, Scene v. The significance of that dancing – the full range of its possible functions – comes most clearly into view if the “old” strategy of examining the cultural context within (and against) which Shakespeare worked is combined with a “new” approach that calls upon us to think about Shakespeare’s plays not just as literature but also, perhaps even primarily, as theatre. The chapters on dancing in Sir Thomas Elyot’s *The Boke Named the Governour* (1531) demonstrate the insights into *Romeo and Juliet* which such a combination of “old” and “new” approaches can generate. Elyot explains that dancing is an “exercise of the body” which is

...of an excellent utilitie, comprehendinge in it wonderful figures, or, as the grekes do calle them, *Ideaes*, of vertues and noble qualities, and specially of the commodiouse vertue called prudence. . . .¹

Elyot’s shaping premise that ordered movement of the human body can convey complex abstractions to those who are, in his words, “diligent beholders and markers” (241) is also a central assumption of advocates of a performance-centred approach responsive to the extra-verbal dimensions of Shakespearean drama. Conversely, Elyot’s explication of the precise, extensive correspondences that he sees between dancing and “the commodious vertue called prudence” can contribute considerably to making us “diligent beholders and markers” of *Romeo and Juliet* both on the page and in the theatre.

In explaining “howe in the fourme of daunsinge, nowe late used in this realme amonge gentlemen, the hole description of this vertue prudence may be founden out and well perceyued” (240-41), Elyot links each of the “meuyngs” or “motions” common to all dances with one of the seven branches of prudence.² Especially pertinent to *Romeo and Juliet* is Elyot’s analysis of the correspondence between the second “motion” of dancing and the second branch of prudence:

By the seconde motion, whiche is two in nombre, may be signified celeritie and slownesse, whiche two, all be it they seme to discorde in

their effectes and naturall properties. . . yet of them two springeth an excellent vertue where unto we lacke a name in englishe. Wherefore I am constrained to usurpe a latine worde, calling it *Maturitie*. . . .

Maturitie is a meane betwene two extremities, wherin nothing lacketh or excedeth. . . . The grekes in a prouerbe do expresse it properly in two wordes, whiche I can none other wyse inteprete in englishe, but speede the slowly. . . .

Maturum in latine maye be enterpreted ripe or redy, as frute when it is ripe, it is at the very poynte to be gathered and eaten. . . . Therefore that worde *maturitie* is translated to the actis of man, that when they be done with suche moderation, that nothing in the doinge may be sene superfluous or indigent, we may saye, that they be maturely done. . . .

In the excellent and most noble emperour Octavius Augustus. . . nothinge is more commended than that he had frequently in his mouthe this word *Matura*, do maturely. As he shulde have saide, do neither to moche ne to litle, to sonne ne to late, to swiftly nor slowly, but in due tyme and measure. (243-45)

The passage suggests several ways in which the dancing during Act I, Scene v, does more than provide an interlude of communal harmony that contrasts with and thereby accentuates the violence stalking the streets and squares of Verona. Elyot's remarks help us to see how that violence arises from the absence — in the civic and familial structures of Veronese society as well as in specific characters — of virtues, particularly prudence and maturity, which the dancing during Act I, Scene v, might very well have signified to Renaissance audiences. As Elyot explains them, prudence and maturity are not necessarily incompatible with youth nor are they inevitably acquired with age. Capulet in his rage at Juliet's refusal to marry Paris, the Prince in his feeble efforts to preserve civil peace, perhaps even the Friar in his futile attempt to establish harmony in Verona by using his ecclesiastical offices to assist the young lovers — each acts in ways which are, by Elyot's criteria, as immature and imprudent as any actions undertaken by Romeo and Juliet, Tybalt and Mercutio and Paris.³ For "diligent beholders and markers," then, the measures⁴ through which the dancers move can function to define a norm of prudence and maturity applying to individuals and to the city and families of which they are members. That norm is, on the one hand, less harshly condemnatory of the lovers than the judgement found in Shakespeare's source,⁵ but, on the other, it undercuts a modern audience's impulse uncritically to glorify Romeo and Juliet as flawless lovers.

Elyot's interpretation of *Maturum* also clarifies possible links between the dancing and the imagery of ripening articulated during the play. Capulet associates that imagery with Juliet when he rejects Paris's first proposal of marriage to her with the comment: "Let two more summers wither in their pride,/Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride" (I.ii.

10-11). Juliet extends the imagery of ripening to include the love which she and Romeo share: "This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath, / May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet" (II.ii.121-22). The dancing can be seen as a "figure," a choreographic representation, of the processes of ripening which are aborted during the play, principally through the unknowing actions of the only two characters who declare that they will not dance — Romeo and Capulet.⁶ Capulet's abrupt decision to have Juliet marry Paris forces Friar Lawrence, a character well-versed in the properties of herbs and flowers, to improvise a plan which calls upon Juliet to imitate the withering and subsequent ripening of plants by seeming to die and then, "in due tyme and measure" (245), re-appearing as Romeo's spouse. That plan, which is tantamount to having Juliet enact the Proserpine myth signifying the cycle of the seasons,⁷ miscarries when the Friar's message to Romeo fails to reach him and Romeo returns too soon from exile, in effect cutting short the process of "ripening" which the Friar has set in motion.

Elyot's reference to "celeritie and slownesse" also directs attention to dancing as an activity which reconciles the extremes of speed and slowness which are repeatedly presented during *Romeo and Juliet*. The sight of people "kepyng iuste measure and tyme" as they "daunce truely" (241) during Act I, Scene v, alerts us to other pairings during the play which juxtapose, rather than harmonize, speed and slowness in moving. One such pairing comes into focus at the conclusion of Act II, Scene iii, as we watch Romeo rushing to leave ("O let us hence; I stand on sudden haste" — 1. 93) while the Friar, moving less quickly after him, warns: "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast" (1. 94).⁸ A similar pairing emerges when the Nurse enters in Act II, Scene v, and Juliet, eager for word of Romeo, rushes toward the slow-moving figure whose lack of speed afoot she has just been lamenting:

O she is lame! Love's heralds should be thoughts,
Which ten times faster glide than the sun's beams

.....
Had she affections and warm youthful blood,
She would be swift in motion as a ball;

.....
But old folks, marry, feign as they were dead,
Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead. (II. 4-5, 12-13, 16-17)

The "slouthe and celeritie" (245), to use Elyot's terms, of the characters' physical movements are analogous to the leaden tenacity with which most characters cling to old hatreds and, at the other extreme, the suddenness, "Too like the lightning" (II.ii.119), with which Romeo and Juliet are caught up in their new affections. Those affections give

rise, in turn, to desires that move with extreme speed or slowness. Waiting for Romeo to come and their marriage to be consummated, Juliet yearns for the sun to speed across the heavens:

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging; such a waggoner
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately. (III.ii. 1-4)

Later, their night together spent, she refuses to acknowledge that the sun's movement has proceeded apace: "Yond light is not daylight, I know it, I;/ It is some meteor that the sun exhales" (III.v.12-13). Romeo is willing to agree:

I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon grey is not the Morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
. . . . Let's talk; it is not day. (III.v.18-20,25)

In filming *Romeo and Juliet*, Franco Zeffirelli⁹ gave the motif of quick and slow movement prominence of a kind it probably cannot have on stage. Our first sight of Juliet during the film is as she dashes through the house in response to the Nurse's calls, a sequence which is later inverted when we see Juliet's parents running frantically in response to the Nurse's cries upon finding Juliet's "corpse." After first showing us Romeo, love-sick for Rosaline, walking lethargically through the streets of Verona, Zeffirelli gives us a prolonged shot of him running ecstatically through shrubs and trees after leaving Juliet on the balcony. In addition, the fight between Romeo and Tybalt is choreographed so that they repeatedly race after one another or after weapons that have been knocked away from them.

Zeffirelli's film departs from Shakespeare's script in ways which further emphasize speed and slowness afoot. While Shakespeare calls for Tybalt to return after Mercutio dies, Zeffirelli has Romeo dash through the streets in pursuit of Tybalt, and in Zeffirelli's film Friar Laurence's message to the exiled Romeo arrives too late not because the Friar carrying it has been held in quarantine but because Balthasar, whom we see astride a galloping horse, outpaces the Friar, whom we glimpse sometimes riding upon, sometimes walking beside a slow-footed donkey.

A moment — in both the play and Zeffirelli's film — which allows special emphasis to fall upon the motif of movement which is unduly quick or slow comes with Juliet's hurried entrance immediately after Friar Laurence has counseled Romeo: "Therefore love moderately; long love doth so;/ Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow" (II.vi.14-15). The lovers can move to embrace with an eager swiftness that visually undercuts the Friar's words, in which "diligent beholders and markers" might

detect an echo of Elyot's paraphrase of Octavius Augustus' injunction, *Matura*: "...do neither to moche ne to litle, to soone ne to late, to swiftly nor slowly, but in due tyme and measure." The dancing during Act I, Scene v, can be seen, then, as the articulation through orderly bodily movements of a norm of properly-timed, mature action which is also expressed verbally through the Friar.

The connections between the dancing and the Friar's advice which Elyot's paraphrase of "*Matura*" helps to bring into focus are particularly relevant to the play's final scene, during which young Romeo, moving swiftly, arrives too early at the tomb of the Capulets and the Friar, his "old feet" (V.iii.122) stumbling over the graves, arrives too late. Their entrances, both equally "tardy," complete a pattern of mis-timed arrivals initiated in the opening scene when Tybalt enters just as Benvolio has drawn his sword in an effort to stop the fray (I.i.72). The same pattern also manifests itself not only in Tybalt's untimely return after Mercutio has died but also at a point the full significance of which Elyot's remarks help us to appreciate — the exchange between Romeo and Benvolio before they move on to the dancing at the house of the Capulets:

Ben. Supper is done, and we shall come too late.

Rom. I fear too early . . . (I.iv.105-06)

Friar Laurence's comments when Romeo comes to his cell after leaving Juliet turn on the question of whether Romeo has risen too early or, not having slept at all, has been awake too late.

What early tongue so sweet saluteth me?

Young son, it argues a distempered head

So soon to bid good morrow to thy bed . . .

Therefore thy earliness doth me assure

Thou art up-rous'd with some distemp'rature;

Or if not so, then here I hit it right,

Our Romeo hath not been in bed to-night. (II.iii.32-42)

Thus, the dancing is preceded, and the balcony scene followed, by dialogue explicitly concerned with the issue of whether actions are timely — undertaken neither "to soone ne to late. . . ."

If the dancing embodies a norm of appropriately-paced, timely action, the relationship between the dancing and the lovers which each production of the play establishes is of potentially crucial significance. The possibilities are numerous. In the Royal Shakespeare Company's 1976 production of *Romeo and Juliet* (directed by Trevor Nunn with Barry Kyle), Romeo virtually snatched Juliet from amidst the dancers, who then drifted off-stage — a playing which isolated the lovers, in the force of their awakening affections, from the order implicit in the dancing. Zeffirelli in his film, on the other hand, had Romeo look on as Juliet

participated in a slowpaced, formal dance, then join — heedless of his earlier resolution not to dance — in a second dance, the Moresca, which pairs him occasionally with Juliet and concludes with the dancers whirling more and more quickly and wildly in two circles, one within the other, moving in opposite directions. Zeffirelli thus links the emerging love between Romeo and Juliet with energies that burst the confines of order, be it the civil order of Verona or the formal order of the dance. Another possibility is to have the dancing continue as Romeo and Juliet speak, join hands, and kiss, thus juxtaposing the lovers who are held almost motionless by the force of their new passions against the background movement of those who are keeping “due tyme and measure” as they dance.

While discussing “celeritie and slownesse,” Elyot observes that those qualities “may be well resembled to the braule in daunsing (for in our englishe tonge we say men do braule, when betwene them is altercation in wordes). . .” (242). The different meanings of “braule” which Elyot notes point us towards affinities between kinds of actions in *Romeo and Juliet* which at first glance seem antithetical: the dancing during Act I, Scene v, and the battles, always preceded by an “altercation in wordes,” which flare up during the play.¹⁰ When Romeo, after his first entrance, becomes aware of the signs of fighting scattered about, he exclaims “O brawling love” (I.i.182), a phrase equally appropriate for the dancing in which he later refuses to join. Mercutio’s characterization of Tybalt as “More than prince of cats” (II.iv.19) suggests that in his swordsmanship Tybalt displays a talent for “kepynge just measure and tyme” that is also apt in those who “daunse truely.” Tybalt handles his sword, Mercutio warns Benvolio,

. . . as you sing prick-song; keeps time, distance, and proportion; he rests his minim rests, one, two, and the third in your bosom. . . . (II.iv.20-23)

In addition, Mercutio draws his sword against Tybalt with words that explicitly link dancing and duelling: “Here’s my fiddlestick; here’s that shall make you dance” (III.I.50-51).

In performance the affinities between dancing and duelling established by Shakespeare’s script can be amplified by extra-verbal means. The Royal Shakespeare Company’s 1976 production of *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, allowed the audience to watch actors who were shortly to do battle in the opening scene as Montagues and Capulets going through warm-up exercises and, ballet-like, practising thrusts and parries, advances and retreats. In Zeffirelli’s film the second of the dances — the Moresca in which Romeo joins, momentarily linking hands with Juliet — ends with the movie audience looking on through the lens of a camera held waist-high in the centre of two circles of dancers whirling faster and faster.¹¹ That visual composition is repeated during the fight between

Tybalt and Romeo, as a low-placed camera pans several times around the circle of Montagues and Capulets which forms, breaks, and re-forms around the two young men locked in battle. The choreography of gesture and movements during a production can also be patterned so as to direct attention to the parallels between the dancers who are "holding eche other by the hande or the arme" (235) and the swordsmen who find themselves paired in combat, sometimes at swords' or arms' length, sometimes hilt-to-hilt or hand-to-hand. The gestures common to such disparate activities can help to bring into focus the play's presentation of a major gestural pattern, one in which characters repeatedly join hands — in fighting, in dancing, in friendship, in love, and, when Montague and Capulet join hands (V.iii.296) over the corpses of their children, in mutual grief.

Common to both kinds of "braule" is the process of people pairing off with and moving in response to one another, and that process is a major structural element in *Romeo and Juliet*. In dancing, as Elyot points out, the pairings are between men and women:

In every daunse, of a moste auncient custome, there daunseth to gether a man and a woman, holding eche other by the hande or the arme, whiche betokeneth concorde. (235-36)

Romeo and Juliet presents us with pairings of men with other men — as friends and as antagonists — which clash with and disrupt the concord implicit in "the association of a man and a woman in daunsing" by which, Elyot adds, "may be signified matrimonie" (233). The interplay between the pairing of men with women and the pairing of men with other men in friendship or in enmity is most prominent in Act III, Scene i.¹² Mercutio dies from a hit taken when the newly married Romeo, acting out of love for Juliet, steps between his friend and his new kinsman Tybalt, the antagonist with whom Mercutio paired himself with the words, "Here's my fiddlestick; here's that shall make you dance" (II.50-51). Zeffirelli's film underscores the force of the friendship between Romeo and Mercutio by having the dying Mercutio cup Romeo's face in his hands as he asks, "Why the devil came you between us?" (I. 107). Earlier, on their way to the dance at the Capulets' house, Romeo had cupped Mercutio's face in his hands, seeking to quiet the terrors stirred in Mercutio by his musings upon Queen Mab: "Peace, peace, Mercutio, peace" (I.iv. 95). The dying Mercutio's repetition of that gesture visually asserts the bond of friendship which Romeo, with this second effort to entreat Mercutio to a peace, has violated in ways which Romeo himself makes explicit:

This gentleman, the Prince's near ally,
My very friend, hath got this mortal hurt
In my behalf. . . .

O sweet Juliet,
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
And in my temper soft'ned valour's steel! (II. 114-16, 118-20)

The pairing of a man and woman in sexual love has, in Romeo's eyes, emasculated manly courage and friendship, both of which manifest themselves in the pairing of men with men.¹³

By stepping between Mercutio and Tybalt as they brawl, Romeo is caught up in a process which sees him subsequently paired in diverse ways with a succession of people. With Mercutio's dying, Romeo is paired with him in a bond of friendship which, momentarily overriding his pairing in matrimony with Juliet, moves him to pair himself in mortal combat with Tybalt. Romeo is afterwards paired sexually with Juliet in a union which consummates their marriage, and still later he is paired in combat with Paris before the tomb of the Capulets. That pairing of husband and would-be-husband – of antagonists in love – directly precedes the final pairing, in death, of lovers who first saw and kissed one another during a dance.

The interplay among the various modes of pairing – in dance, in sexual love, in marriage, in friendship, in mortal combat – helps to make manifest one of the fundamental structural configurations in the play. As characters move from pairing to pairing, they are in effect changing one "partner" for another and participating in a "dance" radically unlike the dancing in Act I, Scene v. That dancing, which paired men with women, signified the generative potential of sexual union and matrimony, but the "dance" in which all the characters are moving is the one by which Death leads all human beings to the grave. A detail of George Murcell's 1976 production of *Romeo and Juliet* at the St. Georges Theatre in London directed the audience's attention to the link between the dancing and the process by which characters move towards death. Romeo and Juliet exchanged their first words standing downstage while other couples continued dancing, one by one exiting upstage centre. As the last pair of dancers exited, the male (Benvolio, I believe) paused, turned, and stared for a moment or two towards the audience, covering his face as he did so with a death's head mask. The effect was to have the audience see the lovers joining hands and lips in the foreground while a figure of death looked on from the background. *Romeo and Juliet* is, we should note, the only Shakespearean play which concludes with its characters – living and dead – assembled in a graveyard, and the dancing during Act I, Scene v, can make visible to "the diligent beholder and marker" an order implicit in and giving shape to the events which bring them there. All in Verona "dance" towards the graveyard.

Elyot's commentary on dancing also suggests how the measures through which the dancers move during Act I, Scene v, can function as a means of assessing, of "measuring" the dance-like process by which

the characters move towards death and the graveyard. To be most illuminating for today's actors, directors, and audiences, that "measure" of the play's actions need not — and probably should not — be rooted in the specific virtues of prudence and maturity but in Elyot's perception that dancing signifies the coming into being of a mean through the uniting of extremes. Elyot defines maturity as "a meane betwene two extremities, wherin nothing lacketh or exceedeth" (244) and, using terms more specific to dancing, as "the meane or mediocrities betwene slouth and celeritie, communely called spedinesse" (245). Elyot also discusses how "all qualities incident to a man, and also all qualities to a woman lyke wyse appertaynyng" (236) are "knitte to gether and signified in the personages of man and woman daunsinge" (238). "Wherefore," he explains,

when we beholde a man and a woman daunsinge to gether, let us suppose there to be a concorde of all the saide qualities, being ioyned to gether . . . And in this wise *fiersenesse* ioyned with *mildenesse* maketh *Seueritie*; *Audacitie* with *timerositie* maketh *Magnanimitie*; wilfull opinion and *Tractabilitie* (which is to be shortly persuaded and meued) maketh *Constance* a vertue; *Cousitise of Glorie*, adourned with *benignitie* causeth honour; *desire of knowlege* with *sure remembrance* procureth *Sapience*; *Shamfastnes* ioyned to *Appetite of generation* maketh *Continence*, which is a meane betwene *Chastitie* and *inordinate luste*. (237-38)

The specific qualities which Elyot sees as "knitte to gether" in dancing are less important in clarifying the dancing in *Romeo and Juliet* than is the underlying principle of a mean being generated by the reconciliation of extremes.¹⁴

The dancing during Act I, Scene v, of *Romeo and Juliet* functions most deeply as a non-verbal but intelligible paradigm of that principle — the "tempr'ring" of "extremeties" (II. Prol. 14) — which is shown breaking down in individuals, in families, and in Verona itself during the course of the play. The dancing which is the occasion of the lovers' meeting accentuates the fact that the other pairings which emerge during the play do not moderate extremes but intensify them. The all-male pairings arise from and sharpen the untempered extremes of loving friendship and mortal enmity, and those extremes, which clash most bloodily in the pairings of Act III, Scene i, undercut the principle of the mean "signified in the personages of man and woman daunsinge." The relationship between Romeo and Juliet on which the male pairings impinge most directly involves the opposite of the process of reconciling masculine and feminine qualities which Elyot sees as implicit in the act of dancing. Their affections do not balance one another in generative concord. Instead, enflamed by the very process of being shared and reciprocated, their affections prove to be as consuming and deadly as the hatred between their families.¹⁵

In the Verona of *Romeo and Juliet* the very act of people coming

together, of meeting — which is a fundamental condition of urban society — marks not a moment of potential reconciliation (as in the dancing) but a flashpoint. Extremes are not tempered by being, in Friar Laurence's words, "incorporate / two in one" (II.vi.37). Instead, they collide, destroying one another in the very act of meeting and touching — "like fire and powder, / Which as they kiss consume" (II.vi.10-11). Romeo and Juliet die, we recall, "with a kiss" (V.iii.120), and the meeting of the Prince and the Friar amidst the devastation which has emerged from the dance of events stresses the failure of forces — civil and ecclesiastical, secular and religious — to sustain that mean which is the basis for human order. Meeting in that same graveyard, Montague and Capulet — as fathers the agents of another mode of order, the familial, which has also collapsed — are moved for the first time to exchange words and hands in what the Prince characterizes as "A glooming peace" (V.iii.305). They do so over the paired and motionless bodies of their children, who first spoke, touched, and kissed amidst the dancing of Act I, Scene v.

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Notes

- 1 Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, ed. Henry Herbert Stephen Croft, I (London: 1883; rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), p. 239. Another work which illustrates the significance which certain Renaissance thinkers saw in dancing is Sir John Davies' *Orchestra or A Poem of Dancing* (1596). Davies argues that dance is the order which Love imposed on the formless void when creating the universe and then extended to human society by teaching mankind to dance:

Since when all ceremonious mysteries,
All sacred orgies and religious rites,
All pomps and triumphs and solemnities,
All funerals nuptials and like public sights,
All parliaments of peace and warlike fights,
All learned arts and every great affair,
A lively shape of dancing seems to bear. (stanza 77)

Davies stresses what might be called the civil and societal implications of dance, Elyot the personal and moral.

- 2 The seven branches of prudence are honor to God, maturity, providence, industry, circumspection, election, experience, and modesty (discretion).
- 3 As Elyot defines them, two of the other branches of prudence signified by dancing, providence and industry, also apply with particular force to the Prince and Friar Laurence.
Providence is wherby a man nat only forseeth commoditie and incommodie,
prosperitie and aduersitie, but also consulteth, and therewith endeouoreth as well
to repelle anyounce, as to attaine and gette profite and aduantage . . . Semblably
it is the part of a wyse man to forsee and prouide, that either in suche things as
he hath acquired by his studie or diligence, or in suche affaires as he hath in hande,
he be nat indomaged or empeched by his aduersaries.

In lyke maner a gouernour of a publike weale ought to prouide as well by menaces, as by sharpe and terrible punisshementes, that persones iuell and improffitable do nat corrupte and deuoure his good subiectes. . . .

Industrie . . . is a qualitie procedyng of witte and experience, by the whiche a man perceyueth quickly, inuenteth freshly, and counsayleth speedily. Wherefore they that be called Industrious, do moste craftily and depely understande in all affiairs what is expedient, and by what meanes and wayes them maye sonest exploite them. And those thinges in whome other men trauaile, a person industrious lightly and with facilitie spedeth, and fyndeth newe wayes and meanes to bring to effecte that he desireth. (246-49)

- 4 Note how both the choreographic and the normative meanings of "measure" converge in Benvolio's lines: "But let them measure us by what they will,/ We'll measure them a measure and be gone" (I.iv.9-10). All quotations from *Romeo and Juliet* follow *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare*, ed. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill, New Cambridge edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1942).
- 5 Arthur Brooke's *The Tragical Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). The following excerpt from Brooke's Address to the Reader accurately conveys the work's moral stance:

To this ende (good reader) is this tragicall matter written, to describe unto thee a couple of unfortunate lovers, thralling themselves to dishonest desire, neglecting the authorite and advise of parents and frendes, conferring their principall counsell with drunken gossypes, and superstitious friers (the naturally fitte instrumentes of unchastitie) attemptyng all adventures of peryll, for the attaynyng of their wished lust. . . .abusyng the honourable name of lawefull mariage, to cloke the shame of stolne contracts, finallye by all meanes of dishonest lyfe, hastening to most unhappy deathe.
- 6 See I.iv.11, 14-16, 35-38 and I.v. 32-35.
- 7 Perdita — like Juliet, a daughter whose parents think her dead — explicitly refers to this myth in IV.iv. 116-27 of *The Winter's Tale*.
- 8 Brents Stirling traces the theme of hastiness in his chapter on *Romeo and Juliet* in *Unity in Shakespearian Tragedy* (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), pp. 10-25.
- 9 Jack J. Jorgens provides a fine discussion of the film in *Shakespeare on Film* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp. 79-91.
- 10 David A. Samuelson first called my attention to correspondences between the dancing and the fighting.
- 11 The whirling circles of dancers are then juxtaposed against the circle of those who listen motionlessly to the boy singing of mortality and the transience of love while Romeo and Juliet talk, touch, and kiss beyond that circle.
- 12 The efforts of Lady Montague and Lady Capulet to keep their husbands from joining in the opening brawl (I.ii.83,87) could be taken as an earlier example of this conflict.
- 13 The tension between sexual love and male friendship is present in other Shakespearean plays, most prominently in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Merchant of Venice*.
- 14 Elyot's emphasis on finding a mean between extremes is also a central motif in Castiglione's *The Courtier*, which includes in Book III, a discussion of how "from the union of male and female there results a composite which preserves the human species, and without which its parts would perish." (III.14)
- 15 The dance sequence provides the finest moments of Alvin Rakoff's television production of *Romeo and Juliet* for "The Shakespeare Plays," and the failure to link that sequence effectively with other moments in the play is an important facet of that production's over-all weakness. The production does little more than establish a simple contrast between the peace, order, and beauty of the dance and the violence, disorder, and death which ensue. [A grant from the All-University Research Fund of Michigan State University helped to meet expenses incurred in preparing this essay for publication.]