‘Variable Passions’: Shakespeare’s Mixed Emotions

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‘... his heart burst smilingly’

Shakespeare uses several times the words ‘conjunct’, conjunction’ and ‘conjunctive’, for example comprehensively canvassing some of their meanings and associations in a single passage spoken by King Philip of France in *King John*:

> This royal hand and mine are newly knit,
> And the conjunction of our inward souls
> Married in league, coupled and linked together
> With all religious strength of sacred vows.
> (*King John*, 3.1.152–155)[1]

This passage appears to describe a formulaic, utopian kind of ‘conjunction’ in marriage, an ideal oneness of sympathies. The words suggest that there can be conjunctions of hands, of bodies, of souls, spirits and feelings, of vows, and even of stars, and words in a sentence, each representing an act of knitting, marrying, coupling, linking, and mingling. However, the irony in its context is that despite the apparent concord which Philip is describing, he confesses himself in the situation to be ‘perplexed’—‘I am perplexed, and know not what to say’ (3.1.147)—a word derived from the vocabulary of knitting (which perhaps suggests to Shakespeare his metaphor in ‘newly knit’) with conflicting meanings of entangled on the one hand, plaited or interwoven on the other. The discrepancy in the image provides a very precise description of the situation, which is both interwoven and entangled. The occasion is a coerced, arranged marriage along expedient, political lines, ‘joining’, in the formal sense, the son of the King of France and the daughter of King John. This event gives new power and property to the respective fathers, but bewilders the couple and angers Constance, widow of John’s elder brother, whose son Arthur had been

[1] All reference to Shakespeare’s works are taken from Shakespeare (2005).

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promised to John's daughter. Philip offers the metaphor of fulsome 'conjunction' in a disingenuous spirit but inadvertently it incorporates a different kind of conjunction, the simultaneous existence of feelings of anger and hostility. The reference to harmony is, then, only one element of what is in fact an emotionally fraught state representing both public harmony and private disaffection. It is a moment of 'mixed emotions' paraded uneasily as concord. The moment is one of 'conjunction' but in almost opposite ways since although the marriage is a 'knitting' of souls and bodies in intended concord, yet it comes dramatically as the cause and result of underlying conflict. Affective 'conjunctions' need not be simple, nor singular.

Another, initial example of the same phenomenon emerges when we consider the word 'confusion', which is etymologically speaking a near neighbour of 'conjunction' though one that signals more clearly a potential for diverse feelings:

> Perfect friendship, which is a very free, plain, and universal confusion of two souls … A confusion, not only a conjunction, & joining together.
> (*Charon* 1608, III.vii.434)

'Confuse' comes ultimately from Latin *confundere* which in its more neutral sense means simply 'to mix, mingle, join'. However, as inspection of the modern use of the word reveals, there is also a meaning turning on 'con' (against)—'fusion' which suggests a state which is more negative, 'mixed up, thrown into disorder, perplexed, bewildered', to paraphrase the *Oxford English Dictionary*. It entered English from French after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Originally in English 'confusion' could describe a simple 'mingling' but also a situation of things thrown into disorder, destruction or ruin. By the fourteenth century it had come also to be applied to a person's condition of being 'overthrown' as in an argument (still available as a meaning) and from there to a mental condition in which the mind is thrown into disorder. It could be applied to disorder of ideas or emotions, the latter usually signalled by an excitable commotion, a meaning in turn linked to disordered sounds as in the 'confusion of tongues' at the Tower of Babel. Shakespeare, writing from the 1590s onwards, uses 'confusion' in all these different senses, ranging from situations—'A rout, confusion thick; forthwith they fly [like] Chickens …' (*Cymbeline* 5.5.42–43), 'Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!' and 'confused events', both in *Macbeth*), through sounds ('And mark the musical confusion Of hounds and echo in conjunction' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [4.1.107–108]), through ideas to emotions (tears of sorrow are said to be 'Like perspectives, which, rightly gazed upon, Show nothing but confusion' in *Richard II* (2.2.18–19). When, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Bassanio falls in love with Portia at first sight, his emotions, words, body, and his mental state are all disordered:

> Madam, you have bereft me of all words,
> Only my blood speaks to you in my veins,
> And there is such confusion in my powers
> As after some oration fairly spoke
> By a beloved prince there doth appear
> Among the buzzing pleased multitude,
> Where every something, being blent together
> Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy,

> Expressed and not expressed.
> (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.2.175–183)

Is confusion an emotion? Yes, but it does not need to be and it is not a self-contained or unitary 'passion'. Invariably by its nature it is not a single emotion (like grief, sadness, anger, or joy) but an amalgam of different feelings 'mingling and conjoining' and yet also disordering each other—if it is a single emotion then it is unified by the very disunity but immediacy of its component parts—what we would call a state of 'mixed emotions'.

I will argue in this essay that in Shakespeare's plays there can be conjunctions of emotional states that are not benignly unified but disparate, complex, sometimes in conflict, and rooted in context, experienced by an audience as experiential fullness. These kinds of 'mixed emotions', I shall argue, lie at the very heart of the Shakespearean dramatic experience. Such states tend to fall through cracks in studies of emotion whether these are conducted from a scientific, psychological, or historical perspective, mainly because in these areas the emotions regularly studied are singular rather than plural: love, desire, amusement, pity, grief, jealousy, melancholy, guilt, shame, and so on: each is given a little box quarantined from the others. I believe there may be a similar danger of oversimplifying in the recent 'affective turn' which rediscovers and re-applies early modern bodily, humoral and physiological explanations for states of the mind, and a temptation to assume that emotions will be 'pure' and fit neatly into a unitary taxonomical slot derived from Aristotle, Augustine, Galen, or some other early authority. Such discrete emotions can be complex enough when studied in isolation, but how much more complex they become when 'conjoined': love *and* jealousy, pity *and* anger, desire *and* grief, amusement *and* melancholy? It is striking and unexpected that such a field of 'conjunctive' emotions has been neglected when it seems to have a more recognisable application to what our emotional lives are like than the unitary emotions, certainly in responding to drama and literature. Furthermore, proposing the idea of mixed emotions is not an anachronism but was recognised in Shakespeare's world, as we see from the writer in his times most associated with the study of affections, Robert Burton:

> I did for my recreation now and then walk abroad, look into the world, and could not choose but make some little observation,—*non tam sagax observator ac simplex recitator*—not as they did, to scoff or laugh at all, but with a mixed passion…This I daily hear, and such like, both private and public news, amidst the gallantry and misery of the world; jollity, pride, perplexities and cares, simplicity and villainy; subtlety, knavery, candour and integrity, mutually mixed …
> (Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1624), 'Democritus Junior to the Reader', and Section I, Memb.II, Subsection VIII, 'Of the Moving Faculty')

And again:

> The bad are simple or mixed: simple for some bad object present, as sorrow, which contracts the heart, macerates the soul, subverts the good estate of the body, hindering all the operations of it, causing melancholy, and many times death itself; or future, as fear. Out of these two arise those mixed affections and passions of anger, which is a desire of revenge; hatred, which is inveterate anger; zeal, which is offended with him who hurts that he loves; and [Greek: *epikairekakia*], a compound affection of joy and hate, when we rejoice at

> other men's mischief, and are grieved at their prosperity; pride, self-love, emulation, envy, shame, &c., of which elsewhere.
> (Burton 1624)

The purpose of this short essay is not to analyse the area in any depth, but to establish through some examples that mixed emotions, understood as intermingled but not always opposite states of feeling arising from context, mind and body, exist in Shakespeare's works, and are central to their effects on audiences and readers.

It is surprising that the occurrences in the plays have escaped critical attention as a subject to be reflected on for its own sake, since the overall concept of mixed emotions is surely not new to Shakespearean criticism in its practice. When we carry out close criticism of the plays we frequently notice in both individual characters and collectively in audiences many liminal, complex, or paradoxical states. Where the phenomenon has been critically studied is often when a rather simple binary applies in the form of an oxymoron, such as body and soul, appearance and reality, and in the insertion of comic relief into a tragedy, Such 'conjunctions' of opposite feelings are no doubt sometimes a legacy of the binary thinking that emerged as part of the classical revival, noticeable for example in Catullus's '*odi et amo*' (*Carmen* 85), a phrase which was so influential over Renaissance poetry that it could be said to have virtually initiated a genre in its own right. However, what interests me here in Shakespeare's works are the occasions when the mixed emotions are not necessarily opposite but diverse and unrelated emotional states which often fuse into new and often strange, affective territories. So far as I can discover there has been little attention paid to the subject in this sense. Consequently, there doesn't seem much available by way of theoretical models to work with.

One point of entrance is through cognitive psychology where the subject of emotions has long been a 'hot topic', alongside its applied and cognate research area, Market Research, which has generated quite a sizable literature on mixed emotions. It is somehow both symptomatic and sad that a sustained and intensive mode of research into our emotions should be motivated by a desire to control, manipulate and even deceive us into buying a product. Whatever its motivations and underlying purposes, this research provides a scaffolding methodology through two interesting and fully documented articles in the *Journal of Consumer Research*. The first, 'Recalling Mixed Emotions' (Aaker et al. 2008), examines how situations which at the time inspire conflicting feelings are remembered later, concluding that memory is more of a construction than a reconstruction, and that it tends to emphasise one or other of the emotions rather than accommodating both (O'Shaugnessy 2003; Chaudhuri 2006). (Being a parent of a young child is a good example—in recollection it is very different from the actual experience.) The second article directly on the subject, 'Can Mixed Emotions Peacefully Coexist?' (Williams and Aaker 2002), begins by providing an invaluable survey of scholarly work done in Psychology which debates 'the degree to which conflicting emotions can be simultaneously experienced', and 'the degree to which positive and negative emotions have a bipolar versus independent relationship', both of which I believe are questions raised also in Shakespeare's drama at certain points though they are by no means the only ones. The provisional conclusions which I believe are also useful to us, seem to be that

such questions can be answered only with regard to context. In particular, for example, what market researchers call 'duality' or 'the ongoing process of accepting and synthesizing contradiction in elements or forms' can be shown through empirical research to be age-specific, in coming more naturally to the old than the young; and to those who have grown up in East Asian cultures which have a religious heritage from Buddhism and Confucianism with their emphasis on holism and integration, rather than in Western cultures dominated by an Aristotelian emphasis on binary logic which tends to think in terms of 'either—or' categories and is more inclined to see conflict rather than harmony. In each of the former cases (the aged and Asian), people are more predisposed to value positively situations which raise 'mixed emotions', whereas those in the latter groups (the young and Western) find such experiences much more confusing and potentially alienating and internally divisive.

Even while conceding the utility and intrinsic interest in these psychological approaches, I have to record some caveats before moving on to Shakespeare. My scepticism arises from the fact that the methodology itself inescapably and unconsciously exemplifies Western binary thought, shepherding potential shoppers into groups on the basis of young/old, Asian/European, and those who feel positive about mixed emotions distinguished from those who feel threatened. (One wonders also about the influence of gender differences, and I suspect this is another way that the research in psychology can group people like animals coming to the ark two-by-two.) Such conclusions are also underpinned by questionable assumptions that in a moment of 'mixed feelings' there are only two emotions present and in conflict, and that 'accepting and synthesizing contradictions' implies simple acceptance of a necessary dualism, a coming to terms with contradiction, rather than a third, unified paradox like Blake's view of a state beyond innocence and experience as the inception of reflective social conscience, an understanding which genuinely incorporates and transcends opposites in a new vision. In itself, this approach seems to skew the field and ignores a different kind of contextualisation which I will suggest underlies Shakespeare's depictions. Finally, such conclusions are based on research which quantifies tendencies within large aggregations of subjects as statistical units and does not account for individuals, let alone the volatility of their emotions, without attending to the fact that emotional responses are individual and situationally unique.

In Shakespeare's plays we find a different kind of contextualization of mixed emotions, one which in fact cannot easily be generalized since it hinges on uniquely individuated characters placed in specific situations that arouse often unexpected combinations of feelings. He discovered early in his career the possibilities in dramatizing mixed emotions, or at least sudden switches in mood, as we see in this quite strange exchange between brothers:

> TITUS
> When will this fearful slumber have an end?
> MARCUS
> Now, farewell, flatt'ry, die, Andronicus.
> Thou dost not slumber. See thy two sons' heads,
> Thy warlike hand, thy mangled daughter here.

> Thy other banished son, with this dear sight
> Struck pale and bloodless, and thy brother, I,
> Even like a stony image, cold and numb.
> Ah, now no more will I control thy griefs.
> Rend off thy silver hair, thy other hand
> Gnawing with thy teeth, and be this dismal sight
> The closing up of our most wretched eyes.
> Now is a time to storm. Why art thou still?
> TITUS
> Ha, ha, ha!
> MARCUS
> Why dost thou laugh? It fits not with this hour.
> TITUS
> Why, I have not another tear to shed.
> Besides, this sorrow is an enemy,
> And would usurp upon my wat'ry eyes
> And make them blind with tributary tears.
> Then which way shall I find Revenge's cave?
> (*Titus Andronicus*, 3.1.250–269)

Marcus is describing in a dramatic set piece the kind of staged behaviour we could expect from Marlowe's more predictable protagonists, or the one Hamlet reflects upon in the Player's lament over Hecuba, but Titus unexpectedly does not oblige. Instead, he laughs. When questioned, he offers two explanations for his unexpected laughter in the face of overwhelming grief, a response which 'fits not with this hour', and both inform the emotional design of the play as a whole. First, he laughs perhaps in the state of emotional numbness or even denial which we would recognize as a first response to grief. In modern parlance we might explain it as a moment of psychological overload that triggers a switch of emotions from one extreme to the other, comparable to the experience of manic depression or bipolar disorder. Then, he has 'not another tear to shed'. Driven to psychic extremity, the sheer lack of rational or emotional control makes almost arbitrary which predominates of the two equally powerful but opposite emotional drives, sorrow and detached, existential hilarity, in a moment anticipating Beckett or even Kafka. This seems to be the strange pitch that *Titus Andronicus* as a play strikes, since modern critics have wrestled with the macabre sense of *grand guignol*, some describing its effect as 'horrid laughter', others as moral revulsion, alongside moments of profound pathos involving Lavinia as 'map of woe'. Secondly, Titus suggests that 'tributary tears' at this stage would distract him from the task he sees as primary, revenging the deaths of his children. Again, this has a larger function in the play since it provides an explanatory image for the process by which suffering hardens into a desire for revenge, a dehumanizing impulse that subverts morality and conscience. It is at this point that Titus begins to lose audience sympathy since he goes on to kill the defiled Lavinia in a misguided gesture of Roman 'honour', and Shakespeare marks the moment by representing him as an emotionally and morally cauterized visitor to the pagan 'Revenge's cave'.

Where does 'reason' fit into this emotional landscape? Titus's description of his feelings in suffering as 'bottomless' spurs his more stoical brother Marcus to advise,

'But yet let reason govern thy lament' only to be met with a retort that such a word or concept is completely inadequate to contain feelings so powerful that they have an elemental force of nature:

> TITUS
> If there were reason for these miseries,
> Then into limits could I bind my woes.
> When heaven doth weep, doth not the earth o'erflow?
> If the winds rage, doth not the sea wax mad,
> Threat'ning the welkin with his big-swoll'n face?
> And wilt thou have a reason for this coil?
> I am the sea. Hark, how her sighs doth blow.
> She is the weeping welkin, I the earth.
> Then must my sea be moved with her sighs,
> Then must my earth with her continual tears
> Become a deluge, overflowed and drowned,
> Forwhy my bowels cannot hide her woes,
> But like a drunkard must I vomit them.
> Then give me leave, for losers will have leave
> To ease their stomachs with their bitter tongues.
> *[Enter a MESSENGER with two heads and a hand]*
> (*Titus Andronicus*, 3.1.218–232)

The phrase ' … like a drunkard must I vomit them' is explosive and emotionally intrusive, talking about the soul in bodily terms. But even more pertinent than the expression of rage is Titus's alignment of his feelings with the elemental powers of wind and sea, followed by the wordless but shocking aftermath. The stage direction in its mute spectacle underlines the dismaying recognition that the sheer power of the flood of emotions 'overflows' and 'drowns' the very notion that reason can control it.

Meanwhile, in apparently ironic counterpoint, a very different character exhibits an amalgam of equally conflicting emotions of which the guiding one is also aberrant, 'mischief':

> AARON
> …
> I played the cheater for thy father's hand,
> And, when I had it drew myself apart,
> And almost broke my heart with extreme laughter.
> I pried me through the crevice of a wall
> When for his hand he had his two sons' heads,
> Beheld his tears, and laughed so heartily
> That both mine eyes were rainy like to his;
> And when I told the Empress of this sport
> She swooned almost at my pleasing tale,
> And for my tidings gave me twenty kisses.
> (*Titus Andronicus*, 5.1.111–120)

The wording of 'broke my heart with extreme laughter' repeats and reflects upon Titus's anguished laughter as an extremity of emotional stretching though here the context is different, involving a consciously amoral character, barely aware of the other's grief. It seems to have been in this play that Shakespeare stretched to a

limit the theatrical power of conjoining conflicting emotions by repeating the same response with completely opposite effects and significance. He was never to forget the discovery and its startling possibilities, since we find the dramatic strategy repeated with variations in his later tragedies. He has already forged his unique gift for representing mixed emotions.

Shakespeare repeatedly demonstrates a belief in the possibility of feelings that are 'mingled' (a word he often repeats), sometimes in ways that confirm the psychological theories I have summarised which turn on juxtaposing opposites. For example, when the newly crowned Henry V in *2 Henry IV* says to the anxious onlookers 'Brothers, you mix your sadness with some fear' he encapsulates the political paradox, 'the king is dead, long live the king'. Kingly succession is conventionally associated with such a mixture of grief as an embodied man dies, and joy as another takes on the role of immortal divinity in kingship. Claudius in *Hamlet* turns the idea into a faintly grotesque and platitudinous image which may illuminate his own internally divided feelings on his wrongful accession, when he describes the almost simultaneous funeral and marriage rituals in the royal family:

> Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
> Th'imperial jointress of this warlike state,
> Have we as 'twere with a defeated joy,
> With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
> With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
> In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
> Taken to wife …
> (*Hamlet*, 1.2.8–14)

Guiderius notes of the disguised Innogen, 'That grief and patience, rooted in him both, /Mingle their spurs together' (*Cymbeline*, 4.258–259), while Henry IV generalises a similarly divided state of feelings:

> And wherefore should these good news -make me sick?
> Will fortune never come with both hands full,
> But write her fair words still in foulest letters?
> She either gives a stomach and no food;
> Such are the poor in health—or else a feast,
> And takes away the stomach—such are the rich,
> That have abundance and enjoy it not.
> I should rejoice now at this happy news,
> And now my sight fails, and my brain is giddy.
> O me! Come near me now; I am much ill.
> (*2 Henry IV*, 4.3.102–111)

The First Lord Dumaine in *All's Well That Ends Well* 'moralizes' such a double vision, elevating acceptance of mixed feelings to an ethical status in his rueful reflection:

> The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together. Our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not, and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.
> (*All's Well That Ends Well*, 4.3.69–72)

As we shall shortly see, Aristotle was one who pondered long on the paradoxes here. Such examples are binary in their basis, holding together two contrary or conflicting feelings in a sometimes uneasy and oxymoronic balance.

Shakespeare even provides some evidence for the different ways in which age is an important consideration in the analysis offered by the marketing research model to determine how mixed emotions are processed, in their case by consumers. On the one hand, we have in *Romeo and Juliet*, a play particularly rich in ambivalent emotional states, young people in love and susceptible to sudden switches of mood or simultaneous awareness of opposite feelings. The mixed emotions here operate first at the verbal level in phrases embracing the opposites: ‘Parting is such sweet sorrow’ (2.1.229), while Romeo when he is in love with Rosaline feels caught and helpless in the contradictions:

> Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
> O anything of nothing first create;
> O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
> Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
> Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
> Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
> This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, 1.1.69–75)

Romeo suspects Benvolio of laughing—‘Dost thou not laugh?’ but Benvolio replies ‘No, coz, I rather weep’, and we find differing emotional responses elsewhere in the play. For example, when we look at the divergent attitudes of the Friar, the Chorus, and the Prince, and also the grief-stricken death of Romeo’s mother, we observe attitudes to young love which are more distanced from the emotional mélange, and more integrative of experienced ‘long time’ over the ‘short time’ of young lovers (one explanation for the dramatic ‘double time’ scheme in the play as a whole[2]). A paradoxical rather than simple binary attitude is described in the Chorus’s lines, seeing love as a ‘third state’ which incorporates or ‘mingles’ warring feelings, rather than swinging from one extreme to the other:

> But passion lends them power, time means, to meet,
> Temp’ring extremities with extreme sweet.
> (*Romeo and Juliet*, II. Chorus.12–13)

This seems superficially comparable with the ways in which, for example, the undoubtedly mature Cleopatra constructs her own version of Antony, but in essence very different since she is a character so prone to swings of emotion that it does not express a consistent state of tolerating ambiguity:

> O well-divided disposition! Note him,
> Note him, good Charmian, ’tis the man; but note him.
> He was not sad, for he would shine on those
> That make their looks by his; he was not merry,

[2] “Double time” is Shakespeare’s dramatic technique in which events of a few days feel are made to feel like they have taken much longer. See Chapman (1949). Modern editions of the play invariably deal with this problem but Chapman provides the basic information.

Which seemed to tell them his remembrance lay
In Egypt with his joy; but between both.
O heavenly mingle! Be'st thou sad or merry,
The violence of either thee becomes,
So does it no man else. …
(*Antony and Cleopatra*, 1.5.52.60)

The 'heavenly mingle' lies not so much in Antony as an independent and sentient being but in Cleopatra's constructed and willed estimation going against the grain of her deeper feelings, reflecting only one side of her oscillating feelings. Immediately after her statement of apparent equilibrium, she swings into an uncontrolled rage, setting the tone for a scene of eruptive emotions and unpredictable behavior veering from quietude to explosive anger. However, at least in this passage she seems to give voice to a view that turns contradictions into paradox, and it perhaps could not have been spoken by a young lover like Juliet whose feelings for Romeo do not vary but are intensified into something which is 'extreme sweet' as an avoidance of the dangers raised by the public family feud. (Reeve 2005) Her hatred is externalized rather than being directed to her lover, unlike Cleopatra's emotive state.

Other examples are still more affectively complex. Cominius in *Coriolanus* imagines a scene,

Where senators shall mingle tears with smiles,
Where great patricians shall attend and shrug,
I' th' end admire; where ladies shall be frighted,
And, gladly quaked…
(*Coriolanus*, 1.10.3–6)

Hamlet asserts that he 'must be cruel to be kind' (3.4) in dealing with his mother, while in *Twelfth Night* love is described as a state of 'sweet pangs' (2.4) and Malvolio signs himself 'The Fortunate-Unhappy' (2.5). These again seem to visualise the mixed feelings involved as generating a third state which includes but transcends internal conflicts. It is the legacy which Venus, as goddess of love thwarted in her amatory pursuit of mortal beauty, leaves to the world after Adonis's death:

Variable passions throng her constant woe,
As striving who should best become her grief.
All entertained, each passion labours so,
That every present sorrow seemeth chief,
But none is best. Then join they all together,
Like many clouds consulting for foul weather.
(*Venus and Adonis*, lines 967–972)

In this myth of love, 'variable passions' are left as the ambiguous hallmark of love in Shakespeare's representation.

Nor need such examples exist only in contemplating serious or amatory subjects. Shakespeare the dramatist can, perhaps self-critically and certainly satirically, notice an audience's genuine evaluation of a risibly performed tragedy. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presents the interlude 'Pyramus and Thisbe as one whose emotive

effect is built on oxymorons but does not really contain contradictions at all, only a single, positive audience reaction of laughter that happens to be justified but inappropriate to the intended tragic decorum, juxtaposing as it does the tragic insert within a comedic frame:

> LEANDER [*reads*]
> 'A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus
> And his love Thisbe; very tragical mirth'
> THESEUS
> 'Merry' and 'tragical?' 'Tedious' and 'brief'?
> That is, hot ice and wondrous strange black snow.
> How shall we find the concord of this discord?
> (A Midsummer Night's Dream, 5.1.56–60)

The effect is incongruous in the strict sense of the word as Egeus comments:

> And 'tragical', my noble lord, it is,
> For Pyramus therein doth kill himself;
> Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
> Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
> The passion of loud laughter never shed.
> (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5.1.66–69)

Here the affective gap lies between the performers' intentions and the audience's very different response.

Like psychology, philosophy too finds problems in mixed emotions, as they bear on the possibility of moral actions. Can virtue be maintained when one is divided by inner conflict? Or in the words of one article title, 'How good people do bad things' (Curzer 2005), how can virtue sometimes countenance vice? It was the usual suspect, Aristotle, who posed this kind of problem in *The Nichomachean Ethics* and elsewhere. Working up from his view that 'virtues are more or less equivalent to states of emotion, feeling or appetite' (Carr 2009), he realised that emotional ambivalence gives rise to moral dilemmas which may not be resolved either rationally or virtuously. David Carr calls one example of this 'The Ximene Problem', referring to a medieval romance in which a woman is deeply in love with a man until he kills her father, which arouses in her hatred for him even while she continues to love him. Although the philosophers do not refer to Shakespeare, my immediate thought is of Ophelia, who must face exactly this emotional and moral problem. The result of her divided emotional allegiances after Hamlet murders her father Polonius is madness, and her snatches of song reveal the psychic and moral rupture caused by ambivalent feelings. Her case would seem to confirm a part of Aristotle's conclusion that such violently mixed emotions have no rational resolution, and Ophelia's madness is a non-rational, but in some ways merciful escape. However, she is not the only one who faces such a problem of the moral implications surrounding mixed emotions. Hamlet himself, as a philosophy student, may even be aware of Aristotle's view and a large part of his mission in the play is to find some virtuous way to deal with the conflicting feelings aroused by love of his father and also of his mother, who appears to have married his father's slayer. His 'way out' is not so involuntary as

Ophelia's—madness does not work for him since it is at least arguably feigned as a stratagem of emotional self-concealment—and he recognises early that pursuit of personal revenge will violate dictates of virtue. However, late in the play his resigned and fatalistic attitude lies in accepting the need for non-reflective, spontaneous action as the situation requires:

> … There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now,
> 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?
> (*Hamlet*, 5.2.157–161)

Hamlet's acquiescence which marks his emotional state at this point of the play sidesteps the ethical problems rather than resolving them, since reacting to events will corrupt and incriminate him as guilty of murder, while paradoxically releasing his conscience from its burden of choice. The audience is not privy to what Gertrude knows, but she too may face the Ximenes problem in loving Claudius, who, she is told by her son, has killed her first husband. She may even be implicated in the murder, driven by her own emotions, though we never find out. Although I don't know of any analysis that focuses on these issues directly, and I don't have time to pursue them here, yet *Hamlet* as a play could be seen as in some ways Shakespeare's sustained examination of the philosophical problems created by extreme, mixed emotions.

Furthermore, these kinds of problems confront other characters. Cordelia, who feels simultaneously both love for her father and also a refusal to 'speak' her love, and her 'action' in these mixed feelings—silence—does seem to raise Aristotle's doubts about the impossibility of maintaining virtue in a state of divided allegiances where she is fully aware her silence will hurt her father's feelings; or Juliet who loves a man who is not only hated by her family—'My only love sprung from my only hate! … That I must love a loathed enemy' (1.5.138)—but also one who comes to kill her cousin Tybalt. Juliet's solution is simply to follow one of her conflicting emotion ('Love give me strength', 4.1.125) and relegate the other to a subsidiary level, even though her genuine grief for Tybalt is manifest. The perhaps inevitable result is the tragic suicides of both her and her lover, as though the dilemmas can end only in self-destruction for they cannot co-exist in their conflict-ridden context.

Measure for Measure raises in particularly acute terms the question of divided emotions following from ethical quandaries. Isabella is placed in a situation that one would assume creates in her an appalling and clear conflict of emotions, the decision whether to offer up her virginity to save her brother's life or remain inviolate and lose her brother. In this case, Shakespeare may adopt a philosophy based on something like 'character is destiny' since first, Isabella does not actually reveal that she has mixed feelings at all. Her mind is sealed from the very possibility of yielding her chastity. Secondly, as a young novitiate nun, this single-mindedness is perfectly in character and even appropriate. Oddly enough it is Claudio as her brother, and Angelo as would-be violator, who understand and confront the moral and emotional conflicts, and they are beset by the mixed emotions and divided consciences attending on the situation. Claudio hovers between a desire for self-preservation and

a sense of shame, while Angelo the puritan swings between self-loathing restraint and guilty lust. Isabella’s responses provide a different but consistent perspective on the problems, almost a corollary to Aristotle’s view, showing that pure virtue is a shield against being physically coerced or ethically compromised (more or less as Milton demonstrated in the fate of the Lady in *Comus*, her mind still beyond reach even as her body is paralysed), and therefore an unexpected protection against the severely mixed feelings felt by Claudio and Angelo.

Mentioning *Measure for Measure* in this context reminds us that in Shakespeare mixed emotions can be a matter of genre as well as of momentary dramatic effects. One ‘problem’ in the so-called ‘problem plays’ concerns exactly this matter of conflicting emotional tones and expectations, since, with apparently whimsical perversity the dramatist teases and compromises his characters by placing them in morally impossible situations and potentially tragic circumstances yet finally allows them to be saved by a comic ending. Comedy is stretched to its formal limits with the result that the ending cannot either sustain or give full closure to the sheer emotional and ethical complexity of what we have witnessed in Isabella’s predicament and the male awareness of vicious impulses. Similarly, though in a different way, the romances at the end of Shakespeare’s career are examples of what Sidney had earlier derided as ‘mungrell tragi-comedies’ and what Jonson later deprecated as ‘mouldy tales’ which cannot be accommodated within neat generic boundaries of comedy and tragedy. In these plays, as throughout Shakespeare’s *oeuvre*, emotional life exists on a borderland incorporating laughter and tears, in a more subtle manifestation of his abiding interest in ‘conjunctions’ of ‘mingled’ moods.

A next step in developing this train of thought might be to devise a mode of analysis subtle and flexible enough to allow us to understand how Shakespeare makes such emotional ‘conjunctions’ function on the stage. One possibility lies in retrieving and adapting an idea from a neglected critic, Bertrand Evans. In *Shakespeare’s Comedies*, (Evans 1960), augmented in a sequel, *Shakespeare’s Tragic Practice* (Evans 1979) he constructed a tool of analysis of Shakespeare’s theatrical craft which he called ‘discrepant awareness’, positing ‘exploitable gaps between awarenesses’ applying first between characters on stage and the observant audience, and secondly between characters themselves. The theory worked well for the comedies—almost too well, in fact, since it is presented as something of a repeated formula—not so well for the tragedies, perhaps because the device is intrinsically more relevant to comedy. A limitation is that the analysis focuses only on the differences between what each character (and audience) *knows* in terms of what the other characters know or are doing. The eavesdropping scene in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as the hypocrisy of each of the courtiers is revealed in turn, is one of the neatest examples. However, my suggestion is to shift the emphasis from knowledge to feeling, and to look more closely than we have so far done to ‘discrepant *emotional* awarenesses’ between characters at any one time in the action. Such an approach can help us to recognise and value, not only Shakespeare’s craftsmanship in plotting scenes, but the emotional complexity of situations in which a range of feeling states and experiences are aroused in different personages, leading to complexities of ‘mixed emotions’ in individual characters, the ensemble, and the audience alike.

Such ‘conjunctions’ of moods, precisely controlled by the dramatist, help to create effects in which the whole emotional impact of a scene is both a sum of, and greater than, each individual’s limited but strongly felt affective perspective.

There are many more problems and paradoxes arising from Shakespeare’s depiction of mixed emotions than I have mentioned, but in this short paper I have tried to open up questions rather than answer them. My conclusion lies in a set of contentions which might be resisted by psychologists, philosophers and market researchers alike, that in Shakespeare’s drama mixed emotions are not the product of simple contradictions between opposites, that they may have insoluble moral implications, and that they are generally unique and contextually specific rather than predictable or patterned. In Shakespeare’s plays, as perhaps in life, such problems are always *sui generis*, as a unique individual is pitched into an unexpected situation involving others who carry their own singular emotional responses and points of view. The encounter inevitably creates inner conflict which in turn opens up an apparently infinite range of possible resolutions and non-resolutions, providing the characteristic and sometimes problematical open-endedness of Shakespeare’s plays. The strategy of depicting a whole spectrum of mixed emotions stimulated by different situations provoking unexpected ‘conjunctions’ of diverse moods is, I suggest, one of Shakespeare’s signature traits, and a clue to the abiding affective power of his works.

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