Mack, Peter. "Logic and Narrative in Shakespeare and Montaigne." *Reading and Rhetoric in Montaigne and Shakespeare*. : Bloomsbury Academic, 2010. 74–105. The WISH List. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544902.ch-004>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 12:53 UTC.

Copyright © Peter Mack 2010. You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

4. Logic and Narrative in Shakespeare and Montaigne

In this chapter I shall first consider the role of logic and argument in the composition of some of Shakespeare's speeches. This will prepare the way for a comparison between Shakespeare's logic and Montaigne's. Then I shall compare the approach of both authors to the crucial rhetorical question of the relationship between argument and narrative. Where the rhetorical tradition established *narratio*, and proof and refutation as the two central sections of the four-part oration, Rudolph Agricola generalized this analysis in presenting exposition and argumentation as the two registers governing all kinds of persuasive discourse.¹

Shakespeare took the great majority of his plots and many details of fact and expression in the plays from his reading.² For each play there are generally one or two sources which provide the main outline and sometimes also structure and phrases for particular scenes:³ for example Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 2nd edition (London, 1587), for the plays concerned with British history (including *Macbeth* and *Cymbeline* as well as the history plays); Plutarch's *The lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (London, 1579) for the Roman plays; prose romances, such as Lodge's *Rosalynde* and Greene's *Pandosto*; and earlier plays. Shakespeare may have used some of these books over a long period; others he may have turned to strictly for a single subject. For many plays he read other books for more information on the subject (*e.g.*, further historical accounts of the same period) or for local flavour (*e.g.*, the treatises on witchcraft and demonic possession which helped him with the language of *Macbeth* and *King Lear*).⁴ Beyond this reading undertaken to write a particular play there were other books which Shakespeare frequently returned to for small details and which he probably owned, for example Chaucer, Spenser, Virgil, Ovid and some of Cicero's philosophical works.⁵ Shakespeare probably also retained and reused a good deal of material from oral conversation: moral axioms, proverbs, stories, striking expressions, even perhaps images or arguments which we can trace to classical texts but which came to him indirectly rather than through reading.⁶

In some cases Shakespeare worked very closely from his sources. An example of this type from *Coriolanus* V.3 gives us a place to start. First, to demonstrate the closeness with which Shakespeare sometimes dramatized his source, here is the beginning of Volumnia's first speech from North's

translation of Plutarch and the corresponding passage from *Coriolanus* (1608), in which italicized phrases represent changes.⁷

If we held our peace, my son, and determined not to speak, the state of our poor bodies and the present sight of our raiment would easily bewray to thee what life we have led at home, since thy exile and abode abroad. But think now with thyself how much more unfortunately than all the women living we are come hither, considering that the sight which should be most pleasant to all other to behold, spiteful fortune hath made most fearful to us; making myself to see my son, and my daughter here her husband, besieging the walls of his native country; so as that which is the only comfort to all other in their adversity and misery, to pray unto the gods and call them for aid, is the only thing which plungeth us into most deep perplexity.⁸

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment
And state of our bodies would bewray what life
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself
How much more unfortunate than all living women
Are we come hither; since that thy sight, which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,
Constrains them *to weep, and shake with fear and sorrow,*
Making the mother, wife and child to see
The son, the husband and the father, *tearing*
His country's *bowels out*. And to poor we
Thine enmity's most capital. *Thou barr'st us*
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort
That all but we enjoy. (V.3.94–106)

In the first sentence Shakespeare slightly rephrases the opening, reverses the order of bodies and raiment and omits some of Plutarch's doubling, but in essence and in most of its words the sentence is taken directly from North. Shakespeare's second sentence amplifies Plutarch's contrast by describing physical embodiments (topic of adjuncts) for his more abstract 'most pleasant/most fearful'. For North's 'besieging the walls', Shakespeare substitutes the more metaphorical and more emotive 'tearing the bowels out'. Shakespeare's final two sentences rephrase and shorten Plutarch's idea, retaining the key words but emphasizing Coriolanus's special enmity to his

family and his personal responsibility ("Thou barr'st us": topic of subject) for their missing the comfort of prayer. Shakespeare takes over the main ideas, their sequence and the key words in which they are expressed directly from Plutarch. For the most part he is simply versifying North's prose.

At the climax of the same dialogue, Shakespeare continues to draw arguments and ideas from Plutarch but he makes a series of substitutions and additions. In both these texts I have italicized the phrases Shakespeare takes from his source.

My son, why dost thou not answer me? Dost thou think it good altogether to give place unto thy choler and desire of revenge? And thinkest thou it not honesty for thou to grant the mother's request in so weighty a cause? Dost thou take it honourable for a nobleman to remember the wrongs and injuries done him, and dost not in like case think it a nobleman's part to be thankful for the goodness that parents do show to their children, acknowledging the duty and reverence they ought to bear unto them? No man living is more bound to show himself thankful in all parts and respects than thyself, who so unnaturally showeth all ingratitude. Moreover, my son, thou hast sorely taken of thy country, exacting grievous payments upon them, in revenge of the injuries offered thee. Besides, *thou hast not hitherto showed thy poor mother any courtesy.* And therefore it is not only *honest, but due unto me*, that without compulsion I should obtain my so *just and reasonable request* of thee. But, since by reason I cannot persuade thee to it, *to what purpose do I defer my last hope?* And with these words *herself, his wife and children fell down upon their knees* before him. Martius, seeing that, could refrain no longer, but went straight and lift her up, crying out:

'Oh, mother, what have you done to me?'
And holding her hard by the right hand,
'Oh, mother,' said he, 'you have won a happy victory for your country,
but mortal and unhappy for your son. For I see myself vanquished by you alone.'⁹

VOL *Why dost not speak?*
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs? Daughter, speak you:
He cares not for your weeping. Speak thou, boy:

Perhaps thy childishness will move him more
 Than can our reasons. *There's no man in the world
 More bound to's mother, yet here he lets me prate
 Like one i'th'stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
 Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,*
 When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
 Has cluck'd thee to the wars, and safely home,
 Loaden with honour. Say my *request's* unjust,
 And spurn me back; but if it be not so,
 Thou art not *honest*, and the gods will plague thee
*That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
 To a mother's part belongs.* He turns away.
Down, ladies: let us shame him with our knees.
 To his surname Coriolanus longs more pride
 Than pity to our prayers. *Down! an end:
 This is the last.* So, we will home to Rome
 And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold's,
 This boy that cannot tell what he would have,
 But kneels, and holds up hands for fellowship,
 Does reason our petition with more strength
 Than thou hast to deny't. Come, let us go:
 This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
 His wife is in Corioles, and his child
 Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch:
 I am husht until our city be afire,
 And then I'll speak a little.
 COR (*Holds her by the hand silent.*) *O mother, mother!*
What have you done? Behold the heavens do ope,
 The gods look down, and this unnatural scene
 They laugh at. *O my mother, mother! O!*
You have won a happy victory to Rome;
But for your son, Believe it, O, Believe it,
Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,
If not most mortal to him. (V.3.153–89)

Shakespeare composes the first part of Volumnia's speech by simplifying and reducing Plutarch before adding new arguments. Volumnia's first two points are taken directly from Plutarch. Then Shakespeare directs her words

to the stage context (topic of circumstances), begging for support from Virgilia and suggesting that if young Martius were to speak, his childish expressions would be more effective than adult reason. Shakespeare reverses the order of the next argument. Where Plutarch's Volumnia had sought to balance Coriolanus's anger and desire for revenge against his duty to honour his parents, Shakespeare begins with Coriolanus's obligation to his mother, contrasted (using North's words but amplifying them with the more descriptive 'prate like one i'th'stocks') with his ill-treatment of her. This is contrasted with her devotion to him, amplified both from its cause ('fond of no second brood') and from its success ('safely home, loaden with honour').

The next new logical move is a dilemma. Either he must state that her request is unjust or if it is not he must accept that the gods will punish him for dishonourably refusing to perform his duty (drawing here on an idea which Plutarch had used a little earlier). Coriolanus's action in turning away then prompts her response of urging her companions to kneel. Where Plutarch had ended Volumnia's speech with the conclusion that since he was refusing her honourable request her only recourse was to give up reason and silently implore compassion by kneeling, Shakespeare adds angry taunts and verbal underlinings of their physical gestures. She pretends to explain the reason for his failure to respond compassionately first out of pride and later by allotting him a Volscian mother, wife and child. These bitter accusations are derived from the topics of causes and opposites. In describing her grandson's actions (in effect making speak the picture the audience sees) she amplifies by describing circumstances and by comparison ('with more strength than thou has't to deny't') and she ends her speech by declaring that she will speak no more words until she sees the city burning.

Where Plutarch described Coriolanus responding immediately, overcome by his mother's gesture of kneeling, Shakespeare not only gives Volumnia further words on her knees but also allows for a period of silence in which Coriolanus's face and body can depict the struggle between contrary impulses before giving way in words which amplify North's mainly through repetition and assurance of sincerity. When Shakespeare adds to Coriolanus's reply the comment on the unnatural scene he places the scene in a broader context (the heavens looking down but also the play audience looking on) and responds to the unnaturalness both of the mother kneeling to the son and of the destruction of the son which is implicit in the mother's demand of compassion. Plutarch provides Shakespeare with the main stages of this dialogue but Shakespeare sometimes compresses

North's expression and adds arguments to intensify the emotional impact of the scene.

Two examples from the second scene of *Hamlet* show Shakespeare using his logical and rhetorical inheritance to elaborate a speech from a relatively simple outline.

KING Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
 The memory be green, and that it us befitted
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature 5
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.
 Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
 Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, 10
 With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
 With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
 Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barr'd
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 15
 With this affair along. For all, our thanks.

The logical outline for this speech runs something like this: though we mourn Hamlet's recent death, yet we also remember ourselves, therefore, balancing sorrow and joy, we have married his widow. R. W. Dent suggests that two of the basic elements of this outline are adapted from proverbs: He is not wise that will forget himself (W532) and To Cry with one eye and laugh with the other (E248).¹⁰ Shakespeare amplifies the first clause by stressing the closeness of the friendship and the relationship, by a metaphor for the freshness of the loss and by explaining the expected effect of that event first on the court ('our hearts') and then on the whole kingdom. The fourth line plays on 'contracted' to combine the unity of the kingdom contracted in grief with the bodily picture of the contracted brow conventionally signifying unhappiness.

Shakespeare organizes the second clause around a series of contrasts. Claudius remembers himself as well as his brother (remembrance/memory) but he does so combining wisdom and sorrow ('wisest sorrow'). This

combination is the outcome of a psychomachia between the personifications discretion and nature (nature here causes sorrow; when Claudius speaks to Hamlet later nature will imply the limitation of sorrow and the continuation of life). Claudius here presents himself as a man divided between wisdom and the natural emotion (or conventional display) of sadness. This represents a logical move from the action to its performer (topic of subject) and its cause.

He amplifies the third part of his argument through copia of words, finding three phrases to describe Gertrude and five to express the manner in which he marries her. Each of these five phrases couples contraries in an attempt to present himself as a man of experience who can give due weight to the conflicting emotions of life, though perhaps there is an element of incongruity in the contrast between the two eyes, one looking upwards in hope, the other down in tears. Later in the scene Hamlet will make a joke out of applying the same ambivalences to the food which physically sustains both these attitudes ('the funeral bak'd meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables'). Having described and justified his actions, Claudius turns to the court, recalling that he has consulted them and that they have freely consented to these arrangements and thanking them. He presents himself as their leader but takes care to implicate them in the decisions which will form the basis for the regime he now wishes to defend.

Claudius's ceremonial presentation to the court is contrasted once the court departs with Hamlet's self-presentation to the audience.

HAM O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew, 130
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden 135
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two –
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother 140
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him

As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on; and yet within a month – 145
 Let me not think on't – Frailty, thy name is woman –
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old
 With which she follow'd my poor father's body,
 Like Niobe, all tears – why, she –
 O, God, a beast that wants discourse of reason 150
 Would have mourn'd longer – married with my uncle,
 My father's brother – but no more like my father
 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
 Ere yet the salt of most ungracious tears
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes, 155
 She married – O most wicked speed! To post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good.

Hamlet's first soliloquy can be thought of as having four main sections: a wish for death and oblivion (129–32), an exclamation against the rottenness of the world (132–7), a narrative of Hamlet's family history (137–57) and a conclusion (158). The narrative can be further subdivided between comments on his father and mother (137–45) and segment by segment amplification (with commentary exclamations) of the sentence, within a month she married my uncle (145–57). The first three sections are placed sequentially without explicit logical connections but the clear implication is that each one explains its predecessor: Hamlet wants to die because the world is rotten and the world seems to him rotten because shortly after the death of his admired father his mother has married his hated uncle.

Shakespeare amplifies the second section through *copia* of words with a masterfully exhausting group of epithets ('weary, stale, flat and unprofitable') for the effect the world has on him. Here 'uses' alludes to the world of profit but also implies the impact of the wear and tear of the practical world on the sensitive young man (almost in the sense of *Macbeth's* 'hard use'). Then, drawing on the proverb 'Weeds grow on fertile soil if it is untilled' (W241),¹¹ he imagines the world as an untended garden, formerly ordered but now luxuriating in unchecked growth, reproduction and decay, given over to the elements of nature which are rank and gross. The topics are comparison and effect.

The first part of the family history includes arguments from time (with *correctio* and an implied argument from lesser to greater: if remarrying

within two months is bad, then doing the same within one month is worse), from comparison when the difference between the two brothers is likened to that between the classical god of the sun and a half-beast, and from effects, arguing for his father's excellence by describing the protective actions which arise from and demonstrate his love. This returns Hamlet momentarily to the exclamatory tone of the start of the speech, as if even the act of remembering worsens the torment he feels. Then he describes the reciprocation of this love by his mother. Through a sort of cornucopian paradox the more she feeds on him the more her appetite towards him increases, with an implied contrast with the ordinary workings of appetite which is gradually weakened by feeding. The unusualness of this effect acts as a sign of the extraordinary quality of the love he inspires and she feels.

Shakespeare amplifies the outline sentence ('within a month she married my uncle') mainly through descriptive detail (the shoes, the funeral, the tears, the bed) latterly elaborated with loaded descriptive epithet (unrighteous, galled, incestuous), comparison (Niobe, the irrational beast which would have mourned longer, Hercules) and exclaimed comment (Frailty,¹² wicked speed). Hamlet twice exclaims the wish not to remember or not to think of the details of the subject he explores.¹³ His intense absorption in the visual and narrative details which explain his disgust is interrupted (and to some extent opposed) by exclamations of the personal discomfort caused by these memories. Not remembering at all would lead back to the wish for death with which he began the speech, but remembering less intensely might assist a return to a more balanced perspective on the world. For Hamlet at this stage any such balance or perspective is to be rejected because it represents Claudius's outlook on the world.

Some of Shakespeare's speeches involve a kind of internal dialogue, in which the character tries out an expression, and which he or she then comments in order to reject or change it. This form of expression clearly resembles Montaigne's portrayals of the mind in motion and of the changeability of human character. Hamlet reacts to and comments on his own thoughts in his second soliloquy ('O what a rogue and peasant slave am I', II.2.544–601). The main plan of this speech is a comparison between the player and himself. First he describes the intense emotion with which the player reacts to imagining the death of Hecuba (545–54); then he imagines what the player would do if he had Hamlet's reasons for grief (554–60) and contrasts this with a disparaging depiction of his own reaction (561–6). Thinking of a reason for this he asks himself if he is a coward and then

imagines himself defying someone whose provocative insults he describes in physical detail.

Am I a coward?
 Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
 Tweaks me by the nose, gives me the lie I'th' throat
 As deep as to the lungs – who does me this?
 Ha!
 'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be
 But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this
 I should ha' fatted all the region kites
 With this slave's offal. (566–76)

But further reflection prompts him to abandon the implied defiant response to the insult to his honour and instead to depict the faint-heart he must be if he has not already exposed Claudius's dead body to the local birds of prey. The dominant mode here is reasoning by contraries. He proves his cowardice by contrasting the bloody revenge he has failed to carry out. To reject that weakness therefore involves imitating the Senecan defiance which earlier in the speech he considered more appropriate to the situation he finds himself in. But no sooner has he spoken a few well-chosen words of defiance than he turns on himself, decisively rejecting any such display as a sort of prostitution.

Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
 That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must like a whore unpack my heart with words
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
 A scullion! Fie upon't! Foh!
 About, my brains. (576–84)

This speech is full of turns. He moves from a detailed description of the actor as an exemplary embodiment of a fully adequate emotional response

to questioning himself, imagining words he might say and then commenting on those words. More than simply stating positions and then reacting to those statements, the soliloquy tries on different voices and comments on their value and appropriateness. But the speech is also notable for the vehemence of his condemnatory language and the vividness and detail of its descriptions. Each element of the comparison and each imagined voice is skilfully amplified from cause, subject, attendant circumstances, effect and consequence, to name only a few of the topics employed in the speech. The speech is especially rich in detailed descriptions of facial expressions and in persistent naming of parts of the body.

These elaborately crafted speeches suggest some categories for Shakespeare's methods of composition, starting from outlines or from speeches in his source. There is a strong preference for detailed physical description, especially description of the body, used both to develop metaphors and for amplification through description of circumstances. Shakespeare favours techniques of *copia* of words, both for substitutions and to produce moderate-length series of epithets.

In elaborating an idea he makes frequent use of the topics of comparison, causes, effects, consequences, circumstances (used both to describe the manner in which something is done and as evidence of underlying motives or significances) and contraries. He makes special use of the topic of subject, moving from an idea to thinking about the person expressing it, considering the audience to which it is addressed and discussing the broader circumstances in which a speech or action takes place. Sometimes the soliloquy encapsulates the expression of different voices, one commenting on the experience the speaker is describing or one voice responding to another. Shakespeare makes smaller use of topics like time, place, greater and lesser and the figure of personification. He usually avoids (or when working from a source even suppresses) the logical connectives which explain the links between ideas or seek to force the listener's assent to particular conclusions, though we shall see that sometimes in comedy he draws attention to the logical characteristics of some forms of verbal play.

In the speeches I have analysed Shakespeare makes relatively little use of the forms of argumentation. His appreciation of these forms is more apparent in comedy, for example in Feste's catechistic proof that Olivia is a fool to mourn her brother since she knows he is in heaven.¹⁴ In *As You Like It* (c.1599) characters often joke about the forms of argumentation. Celia

teases Rosalind by pointing out that because her father loved Orlando's father it does not follow that Rosalind must love Orlando and that if it were so Celia would be equally bound to hate him (I.3.24–7), but later in the scene Rosalind makes serious use of a hypothetical syllogism to protest her loyalty to Duke Frederick (I.3.39–46).

Ros I do beseech your grace
 Let me the knowledge of my fault bear with me.
 If with myself I hold intelligence,
 Or have acquaintance with mine own desires,
 If that I do not dream, or be not frantic –
 As I do trust I am not – then, dear uncle,
 Never so much as in a thought unborn
 Did I offend your highness.

Rosalind copiously doubles her condition (the if-clause, the first part of the hypothetical syllogism), and then expresses it negatively, confirming that part of the condition before she states the consequence, but the form is set out in full and the inference is clear. Celia uses the same form to argue that she must be as guilty as Rosalind.

CELIA If she be a traitor,
 Why so am I. We still have slept together,
 Rose at an instant, learned, played, eat together
 And wheresoe'er we went, like Juno's swans
 Still we went coupled and inseparable. (66–70)

Having stated the argument, Celia provides evidence to support the connection between condition and inference. The force of the hypothetical syllogism depends on the similarity between us. We must be very similar because of all the things we do together. Once she has failed to persuade her father of the negative inference from the hypothetical syllogism (since I am not a traitor, therefore she cannot be) she follows its positive logic by declaring that if Rosalind is banished, then so is she (79–80, 88–94). The dénouement of the play depends on the conditions which Rosalind extorts from the mystified lovers (V.4.6–16).¹⁵ The passage of comedy which depends most heavily on exploitation and parody of logic is the dialogue between Corin and Touchstone in Act III in which Touchstone, in answering

Corin's innocent question about the shepherd's life, imitates the distinctions between the meanings of terms characteristic of a university disputation.

TOUCH Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a vile life. Now in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well, but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. (III.2.13–18)

The parody appears to make distinctions where none really exist and exaggerates their number. When Touchstone declares that those who have not been in the court are damned, Corin challenges him for his reason and Touchstone replies with a chain of inferences.

TOUCH Why, if thou was't never at the court thou never sawest good manners. If thou never sawest good manners, then thy manners must be wicked, and wickedness is sin, and sin is damnation. Thou art in a parlous state, shepherd.

CORIN Not a whit, Touchstone. Those that are good manners at court are as ridiculous in the country as the behaviour of the country is most mockable at court. You told me you salute not at the court but you kiss your hands. That courtesy would be uncleanly if courtiers were shepherds. (III.2.36–44)

Touchstone's sophistic inferences are answered by Corin's argument from context and comparison. Touchstone then asks Corin for a series of instances (45, 50, 57, 60), which he refutes in turn. The parody of logical disputation is the funnier because this is the last in a series of scenes presenting the courtiers' views of the country.

Where Shakespeare sets out forms of argumentation in full, or when he alludes to institutions of logic, his intention is often comic. Nonetheless the expectations of logic and the topics of invention provide his characters with resources for amplification, debate and play.

In the speeches which we have examined Shakespeare undertakes two types of logical operation, sometimes separately, sometimes sequentially, sometimes simultaneously. One type of operation enlarges a brief outline into a fully developed speech; the other takes a statement and reacts to it. In both

types Shakespeare uses the topics of invention to generate new arguments and employs techniques for generating *copia* of words and things.

In transforming an outline into an elaborate speech (as in Claudius's and Hamlet's speeches from *Hamlet* I.2), Shakespeare employs *copia* of words (especially additional epithets and rephrasings which express abstract ideas in physical terms), descriptive detail (especially of the circumstances of an event and of parts of the body, sometimes employed as metaphors), investigation of effects, comparisons and examples. He sometimes uses the form of dilemma (in which the consequences of two alternative answers are explored) to organize a speech. In reacting to a statement Shakespeare makes considerable use of exclamation and apostrophe, makes distinctions, states consequences and looks into causes. He often reflects on the motivation of or the impression given by the speaker (topic of subject) and on the reaction to the words of an audience. In both types of operation he makes considerable use of the topics of opposition and contraries. He employs many comparisons and metaphors.

Shakespeare's favourite topics seem to be description, causes, effects, subject, adjuncts, circumstances, contraries and comparisons. He employs forms of argumentation, such as syllogism and hypothetical syllogism and techniques of disputation, such as making distinctions and offering far-fetched comparisons mainly for comic effect, but he takes an interest in arguments which go beyond the normal possibilities of logic: juxtaposing images which the audience must connect, investigating paradoxes, consequences of equality of opposites and problems of limit. He is interested in the contribution of spoken context to the effect of an argument, for example in *The Winter's Tale* when Hermione points out that since Leontes regards her as false, her statements of innocence can immediately be reinterpreted as further examples of her falsehood (III.2.22–8)¹⁶ and Leontes confirms this (III.2.84–6), or when she points out that having accused her in public of such a great wrong he will scarcely be able to make amends to her later by admitting his error (II.1.96–100).

These remarks on Shakespeare's logical techniques are all based on relatively full single speeches; it would be very interesting for someone to investigate the logical procedures Shakespeare employs in other places and at different levels: in writing dialogue, in constructing scenes and in organizing the relationships between scenes both as sequences and in an entire play.

While Montaigne and Shakespeare inherit and make use of broadly the same topics of invention and resources of argument there are some large

differences between their practices. Most of Montaigne's lines of argument set out from ethical maxims, which may be justified, explored or opposed. Shakespeare's characters use moral axioms more to explain their conduct or to hide behind than for the purpose of opening questions. Within the words of the characters moral axioms are rarely questioned or exemplified. However, the training in reading provided by the grammar school would encourage members of the audience to compare the axioms presented by different characters and to ask whether the events narrated in the play tended to confirm or question particular axioms. On the other hand, both Montaigne and Shakespeare make use of the idea of different voices, when one person states a point of view and another opposes it, or when an individual comments on what he or she has just said.

Shakespeare's logical originality appears most strongly in his interest in what one might call middle forms, territories in which two contradictory things may temporarily both be true or in which one of a pair of opposites may pass over into the other.¹⁷ Hamlet found that in the case of his mother's love for his father increase of appetite grew from what it fed on, while Richard II argued that the cares which he had given away nevertheless remained with him (IV.1.190–8). In *The Winter's Tale* the statue expresses the contradictions between death and life with such equal intensity that they appear to be equivalents and death can transform into life (V.3.14–42).

Shakespeare makes his arguments mainly from the narrative situation of his characters, while Montaigne's originality mainly results from the way he uses logical methods to interrogate moral axioms. Nevertheless Montaigne makes strong arguments questioning the fundamental assumptions and normal procedures of logic.

[B] Comme nul evenement et nulle forme ressemble entierement à une autre, aussi ne differe l'une de l'autre entierement. [C] Ingenieux meslange de nature. Si nos faces n'estoient semblables, on ne sçauroit discerner l'homme de la beste; si elles n'estoient dissemblables, on ne sçauroit discerner l'homme de l'homme. [B] Toutes choses se tiennent par quelque similitude, tout exemple cloche, et la relation qui se tire de l'experiance est tousjours defaillante et imparfaicte; on joint toutesfois les comparaisons par quelque bout. Ainsi servent les loix, et s'assortissent ainsin à chacun de nos affaires, par quelque interpretation [C] destournée, [B] contrainte et biaise. (III, 13, V1070, P1116)¹⁸

[B] Just as no event and no form completely resembles another, neither does any completely differ. [C] What an ingenious medley is Nature's: if our faces were not alike we could not tell man from beast: if they were not unlike we could not tell man from man. [B] All things are connected by some similarity; yet every example limps and any correspondence which we draw from experience is always feeble and imperfect; we can nevertheless find some corner or other by which to link our comparisons. And that is how laws serve us: they can be adapted to each one of our concerns by means of some [C] twisted, [B] forced or oblique interpretation. (S1213)

At the same time as denying the logical basis for making distinctions and analogies Montaigne insists that our minds will find ways of making connections. Like Shakespeare, Montaigne is especially concerned with problems associated with contradiction and paradox. Often he insists on the importance of both sides of a contradiction, real or apparent. So, in *De l'expérience* pleasure is vanity but like vanity it is also an essential part of being human;¹⁹ in *De l'incommodité de la grandeur* (III, 7) high rank is said to be over-rated and so is rejecting it;²⁰ in *De l'art de conferer* (III, 8) Montaigne presents his generalized judgement of Tacitus only to declare that all generalized judgements are defective;²¹ in the same chapter the human addiction to exterior forms is presented as both laughable and important;²² and in *De la phisionomie* (III, 12), opposed conclusions of Plutarch are acknowledged as equally true.²³

Montaigne also provides us with ways of moving beyond contradictions. In *De l'art de conferer* he solves the contradiction by placing it within the larger rhetorical perspective in which the writer or speaker is attempting to benefit others, and also himself. The discovery that most judgments are hypocritical because the judge is as guilty as the judged leads him not to reject the habit of passing judgement on others but to insist that one must investigate oneself according to the same criteria.²⁴ Rather than cautioning himself about notes and beams Montaigne argues that it is a work of charity to try to weed out a defect in another which one cannot eradicate in oneself.²⁵

De la coustume (I, 23) explores a double contradiction. Montaigne begins by insisting on the power and treachery of habits. Custom makes us misrecognize nature. It is so powerful that things which seem to us very strange can be accepted by other people as natural. Custom can do anything. Although it distorts our understanding, the power of custom makes it hard for us to break free of it.

[A] Le principal effect de sa puissance, c'est de nous saisir et empieter de telle sorte, qu'à peine soit-il en nous de nous r'avoir de sa prinse et de r'entrer en nous, pour discourir et raisonner de ses ordonnances. (V115, P119)

[A] The principal activity of custom is so to seize us and to grip us in her claws that it is hardly in our power to struggle free and to come back into ourselves where we can reason and argue about her ordinances. (S130)

So both nature and reason are envisaged as opposed to custom. Having urged us to set aside custom, while acknowledging the difficulty of doing so, Montaigne sets out the opposite side of the question, the many advantages which follow from observing custom. Having done this he transposes to the sphere of law, which he here treats as a form of practice. He gives many examples to prove that great difficulties attend attempts to change laws, even when they are wrong, but he ends, now reverting to the other side of the contradiction, with instances in which a law had to be changed and was changed successfully. Thinking about the force of laws and the necessity of breaking them sometimes enables Montaigne to allow a space for resisting and overthrowing custom, even as he acknowledges the difficulty of so doing and the opposed convenience of observing custom. The practice of discovering examples supporting both sides of a question can lead him to insist, under certain circumstances, on rejecting even a principle which he normally holds strongly (the obligation to follow the customs and laws of one's country).

Montaigne himself discusses the question of the relationship between argument and narrative in *De la force de l'imagination* (I, 21). He starts from a concern about the reliability of stories taken over from his reading of authors, adding in 1588 and after reflections on the force of exemplary stories.

[A] Car les Histoires que j'emprunte, je les renvoye sur la conscience de ceux de qui je les prens. [B] Les discours sont à moy, et se tiennent par la preuve de la raison, non de l'expérience: chacun y peut joindre ses exemples: et qui n'en a point, qu'il ne laisse pas de croire qu'il en est assez, veu le nombre et varieté des accidens. [C] Si je ne comme bien, qu'un autre comme pour moy. Aussi en l'estude que je traite de noz moeurs et mouvements, les tesmoignages fabuleux, pourveu qu'ils soient possibles, y servent comme les vrais. Advenu ou non advenu, à Paris ou à

Rome, à Jean ou à Pierre, c'est tousjours un tour de l'humaine capacité, duquel je suis utilement advisé par ce recit. (V105, P108)

[A] When I borrow *exempla* I commit them to the consciences of those I took them from. [B] The discursive reflexions are my own and depend on rational proof not on experience: everyone can add his own examples; if anyone has none of his own he should not stop believing that such *exempla* exist, given the number and variety of human occurrences. [C] If my *exempla* do not fit, supply your own for me. In the study I am making of our manners and motives, fabulous testimonies – provided they remain possible – can do service as well as true ones. Whether it happened or not, to Peter or John, in Rome or in Paris, it still remains within the compass of what human beings are capable of; it tells me something useful about that. (S119)

Montaigne treats his arguments as both more reliable and more fully his own than the exemplary narratives (just after this passage he insists on the reliability of the stories he tells about his own life) but he explains that the latter provide important information about human behaviour. In *De la praesumption* (II, 17) he finds that arguments based on experience (and perhaps especially political and ethical observations) can always be contested because 'the diversity of events offers an infinity of examples of every kind of type'.²⁶

In most of the chapters the stories amplify, justify and provide greater human significance to the positions outlined by reason. Thus in *Divers evenemens de mesme conseil* (I, 24) the proposition that the same plan of action may have different results is illustrated by two stories told at length in which first the Duc de Guise and second Augustus showed clemency towards noblemen who had plotted to kill them. After Cinna, no further assassination plots were laid against Augustus, but in contrast the Duc de Guise was murdered the following year.²⁷ Montaigne attributes this difference in results to the role of fortune in human affairs, which he illustrates with examples from medicine, poetry and warfare. Since the consequences of our choices are in doubt he argues that it is always preferable to choose the more honourable course of action, which he then supports with stories showing the advantages of forgiveness and the disadvantages of suspicion. Two stories from his own experience (told in detail) lead him to make a condition to this proposition: the act of bravery or forgiveness must always

be carried out with a great show of confidence. This leads on to further stories in which Caesar and Dionysius overcame plots against them by publicizing their discovery and a corollary story in which a high-ranking Roman became so wearied by the anxiety caused by hiding from his pursuers that he gave himself up.²⁸ The argument that forgiveness of treachery is better than revenge, illustrated by a series of thorough narrations, leads to a conclusion which reaches a little further.

[A] D'appeller les mains ennemies, c'est un conseil un peu gaillard; si croy-je qu'encore vaudroit-il mieux le prendre que de demeurer en la fievre continuelle d'un accident qui n'a point de remede. Mais, puis que les provisions qu'on y peut apporter sont pleines d'inquietitude et d'incertitude, il vaut mieux d'une belle assurance se preparer à tout ce qui en pourra advenir, et tirer quelque consolation de ce qu'on n'est pas assuré qu'il advienne. (V132, P137)

[A] Issuing invitations to the hands of an enemy is a rather rash decision, yet I believe it would be better to take it than to remain in a continual sweat over an outcome which cannot be remedied. But since such provisions as we can make are full of uncertainty and anguish, it is better to be ready with fair assurance that anything *can* happen, while drawing some consolation from not being sure that it will. (S149)

Thinking back over all the stories (and particularly the last) Montaigne draws the preliminary conclusion that the dangers of forgiveness and openness are less than the consequences of continual anxiety. But then he reconsiders the uncertainty of all outcomes and finds that this puts in doubt both positive and negative consequences. The uncertainty of human affairs means that any decision taken on the basis of a rational calculation of its consequences and risks may turn out badly (thus in effect negating the value of rational consideration). But, on the other hand, it need not turn out badly and therefore it is preferable to act on the basis of rational consideration.

The longer narratives of *Que le goust des biens ...* (I, 14) are firmly linked to the logical structure of the essay but they also contribute something distinct and important to the effect of the chapter and of the whole book. The chapter departs from a saying attributed to Epictetus, 'that men are tormented not by things themselves but by what they think about them'.²⁹ Montaigne outlines

the consequences of this opinion, arguing that if it could be proved to be true it would be a considerable comfort against the wretchedness of the human condition. He asks himself whether a case can be made for the idea that what we call evil depends on our opinions rather than on external reality.³⁰ He decides to consider the idea in relation to three recognized evils: death, pain and poverty. If he can show that humans take very different views of these three then he will have established his case. His arguments and stories about attitudes to death certainly show a wide range of reactions. He especially focuses on the nonchalant heroism of common people threatened with death.

[A] Combien voit-on de personnes populaires, conduictes à la mort, et non à une mort simple, mais meslée de honte et quelque fois de griefs tourmens, y apporter une telle assurance, qui par opiniatreté, qui par simplesse naturelle, qu'on n'y apperçoit rien de changé de leur estat ordinaire: establisans leurs affaires domestiques, se recommandans à leurs amis, chantans, preschans et entretenans le peuple: voire y meslans quelque-fois des mots pour rire, et beuvans à leurs cognoissans, aussi bien que Socrates? (V51–2, P259)

[A] And how many of the common ordinary people can we see, led forth not merely to die, but to die a death mixed with disgrace and grievous torments, yet showing such assurance (some out of stubbornness, others from a natural simplicity) that we may perceive no change in their normal behaviour: they settle their family affairs and commend themselves to those they love, singing their hymns, preaching and addressing the crowd – indeed even including a few jests and drinking the health of their acquaintances every bit as well as Socrates did. (S53)

Montaigne amplifies this idea with a few jokes taken from Henri Estienne's *Apologie pour Herodote* and Des Périers's *Nouvelles récréations et joyeux devis* (V52–3, P259–60, S53–5). As well as making Montaigne's point about different attitudes to death, these stories show a fierce gaiety and a sardonic defiance which make a lasting impression. Perhaps this behaviour is bolder and freer than one could expect to imitate but whatever degree of shock one registers it is nonetheless admirable and entertaining.

After 1588 Montaigne adds a story shortened and sharpened from Osorio's *On the Deeds of King Emmanuel of Portugal* which shocks and moves his readers in a different way.

[C] Les Roys de Castille ayants banni de leur terre les Juifs, le Roy Jehan de Portugal leur vendit à huict escus pour teste la retraicte aux siennes pour un certain temps, à condition que iceluy venu, ils auroient à les vuidier: et leur promettoit fournir de vaisseaux à les trajecter en Afrique. Le jour arrive, lequel passé il estoit dict que ceux qui n'auroient obeï demeuroient esclaves, les vaisseaux leur furent fournis escharcement et ceux qui s'y embarquerent, rudement et villainement traittez par les passagers, qui, outre plusieurs autres indignitez, les amuserent sur mer, tantost avant, tantost arriere, jusques à ce qu'ils eussent consumé leurs victuailles et contreints d'en acheter d'eux si chèrement et si longuement qu'on ne les mit à bord, qu'ils ne fussent du tout en chemise. (P261, V53)³¹

[C] When the Kings of Castile banished the Jews from their lands, King John of Portugal sold them sanctuary in his territories at eight crowns a head, on condition that they would have to leave by a particular day when he would provide transport to Africa. The day duly arrived after which they were to remain as slaves if they had not obeyed: but too few ships were provided; those who did get aboard were treated harshly and villainously by the sailors who, apart from many other indignities, delayed them at sea, sailing this way and that until they had used up all their provisions and were forced to buy others from them at so high a price and over so long a period that they were set ashore with the shirts they stood up in. (S553)

John's successor Emmanuel tried to win the remaining Jews to Christianity at first with kindness and later with the fear of a difficult sea journey and the loss of their homes and possessions.

[C] Mais, se voyant decheu de son esperance, et eux tous deliberez au passage, il retrancha deux des ports qu'il leur avoit promis, affin que la longueur et incommodité du trajet en reduisist aucuns: ou qu'il eust moien de les amonceller tous à un lieu, pour une plus grande commodité de l'exécution qu'il avoit destinée. Ce fut qu'il ordonna qu'on arrachast d'entre les mains des peres et des meres tous les enfans au dessous de quatorze ans, pour les transporter hors de leur veue et conversation, en lieu où ils fussent instruits à nostre religion. Il dit que cet effect produisit un horrible spectacle: la naturelle affection d'entre les peres et enfans et

de plus le zele à leur ancienne creance, combattant à l'encontre de cette violente ordonnance. Il fut veu communement des peres et meres se deffaisants eux mesmes: et, d'un plus rude exemple encore, precipitants par amour et compassion leurs jeunes enfans dans des puits pour fuir à la loy. (P262, V53–4)³²

[C] But finding his hopes deceived and the Jews determined to make the crossing, he withdrew two of the ports he had promised in order that the length and difficulty of the voyage would make them think again – or perhaps it was to pile them all together in one place so as the more easily to carry out his design, which was to tear all the children under fourteen from their parents and to transport them out of sight and out of contact, where they could be taught our religion. This deed is said to have produced a dreadful spectacle, as the natural love of parents and children together with their zeal for their ancient faith rebelled against this harsh decree: it was common to see fathers and mothers killing themselves or – an even harsher example – throwing their babes down wells out of love and compassion in order to evade that law. (S56)

This narrative works on its readers far beyond its place in the argument of the essay. It forces them to reflect on the appalling consequences of rational schemes based on assumptions of superiority. Admiration for the defiance of the (presumably protestant) martyrs in the first narrative here gives way to appalled despair (amplified by registering more of the details) at the King's treatment of his Jewish subjects.

Later in the same chapter much of Montaigne's reflection on the third of his recognized evils, poverty, takes the form of autobiography, comparing his attitudes to money at different stages of his life. In the second stage, he tells us, he practised economy and always made sure that he had savings. He relates his experience almost as a character description, imagining appropriate circumstances and feelings rather than describing actual ones.

[B] Allois-je en voyage? il ne me sembloit estre jamais suffisamment pourveu. Et plus je m'estois chargé de monnoye, plus aussi je m'estois chargé de crainte: tantost de la seurté des chemins, tantost de la fidelité de ceux qui conduisoient mon bagage: duquel, comme d'autres que je cognois, je ne m'asseurois jamais assez si je ne l'avois devant mes yeux. Laissoy-je ma boyte chez moy? combien de soubçons et pensements

espineux, et, qui pis est, incommunicables? J'avois tousjours l'esprit de ce costé. [C] Tout compté, il y a plus de peine à garder l'argent qu'à l'acquérir. [B] Si je n'en faisois du tout tant que j'en dis, au moins il me coustoit à m'empescher de le faire. De commodité, j'en tirois peu ou rien ... Au paravant j'engageois mes hardes, et vendois un cheval avec bien moins de contrainte, et moins envys, que lors je ne faisois bresche à cette bource favorie, que je tenois à part. (V64–5, P274)

[B] Was I setting out on a journey? I never thought I had made adequate provision. The heavier my money the heavier my worries, wondering as I did whether the roads were safe and then about the trustworthiness of the men in charge of my baggage; like others that I know I was only happy about it when I had it before my eyes. When I left my strong-box at home, what thoughts and suspicions I had, sharp thorny ones and, what is worse, ones I could tell nobody about. My mind forever dwelt on it. [C] When you tot it all up, there is more trouble in keeping money than in acquiring it. [B] And even if I did not actually do all I have just said, stopping myself from doing so cost me dear. I got little profit out of my savings ... Formerly I would pawn my furniture and sell my horse far less unwillingly and with less regret than I would ever have made a breach in that beloved purse which I kept in reserve. (S68–9)

This story takes the essay in a wholly different direction to the previous one. Here he is amplifying a character which will serve as a negative model, giving the well-off practical and partly unexpected advice about the most advantageous attitude to money. Montaigne's dismaying self-portrait, exaggerated for effect in both aspects of the comparison, arouses his readers' amusement rather than their pity but it provides teaching which is directed to situations they might find themselves in rather than arousing a deeper but more remote compassion for the great wrongs of the world. These narratives contribute to the argumentative aim of the chapter but they make their deeper effects, so different as to be almost incompatible with each other, independently from the chapter to which they belong. It seems to me that an adequate reading of this chapter must be a reading in fragments, separating the emotional responses called up by these very different narratives from the overarching argument of the chapter.

The contribution which narrative techniques make to the realization of Montaigne's argumentative aims can be illustrated from *De mesnager sa*

volonté (III, 10). At the beginning and end of this extract he describes two pairs of characters (two apparently selfless men, a soldier and an observer of the wars), three of whom he treats as having made mistaken choices. The purpose of the character evaluations is to support his own advocacy of a partly disengaged engagement with public life.

[B] Comme qui oublieroit de bien et saintement vivre, et penseroit estre quitte de son devoir en y acheminant et dressant les autres, ce seroit un sot; tout de mesme, qui abandonne en son propre le sainement et gayement vivre pour en servir autrui, prent à mon gré un mauvais et desnaturé parti. Je ne veux pas qu'on refuse aux charges qu'on prend l'attention, les pas, les parolles, et la sueur et le sang au besoing:

*non ipse pro charis amicis
Aut patria timidus perire.*³³

Mais c'est par emprunt et accidentalement, l'esprit se tenant tousjours en repos et en santé, non pas sans action, mais sans vexation, sans passion ... On faict pareilles choses avec divers efforts et differente contention de volonté. L'un va bien sans l'autre. Car combien de gens se hazardent tous les jours aux guerres, dequoy il ne leur chault, et se pressent aux dangers des batailles, desquelles la perte ne leur troublera pas le voisin sommeil? Tel en sa maison, hors de ce danger qu'il n'oseroit avoir regardé, est plus passionné de l'ysseue de cette guerre et en a l'ame plus travaillée que n'a le soldat, qui y employe son sang et sa vie. J'ay peu me mesler des charges publiques sans me despartir de moy de la largeur d'une ongle, [C] et me donner à autrui sans m'oster à moy. (V1007, P1052–3)

[B] For example, any man who forgot to live a good and holy life himself, but who thought that he had fulfilled his duties by guiding and training others to do so, would be stupid: in exactly the same way, any man who gives up a sane and happy life in order to provide one for others makes (in my opinion) a bad and unnatural decision. I have no wish that anyone should refuse to his tasks, when the need arises, his attention, his deeds, his words, or his sweat and blood:

*non ipse pro charis amicis
Aut patria timidus perire*

But it will be in the form of an incidental loan, his mind meanwhile remaining quiet and sane – not without activity but without distress, without passion ... With different efforts and different straining of our wills we achieve similar things. One thing does not imply the other: for how many soldiers put themselves at risk every day in wars which they care little about, rushing into danger in battles the loss of which will not make them lose a night's sleep: meanwhile another man in his own home and far from that danger (which he would never have dared to face) is more passionate about the outcome of the war, and has his soul in greater travail over it, than the soldier who is shedding his life-blood there. I have been able to engage in public duties without going even a nail's breadth from myself, [C] and to give myself to others without taking myself away from me. (S1138–9)

However logically paradoxical his own position at the end may seem, it is explained and justified by the contrast with the brief characterizations of examples to avoid. Living more like the soldier and less like the people who either disregard themselves or over-invest their anxieties in external events advocates an imagined way through the apparent contradiction between selfishness and altruism. *De l'art de conferer* offers some ideas on the effect of negative examples which explain Montaigne's use of stories of horror and torture in other chapters.³⁴

[B] Il en peut estre aucuns de ma complexion, qui m'instruis mieux par contrarieté que par similitude, et par fuite que par suite ... L'horreur de la cruauté me rejette plus avant en la clemence qu'aucun patron de clemence ne me sçauroit attirer. (V922, P966)

[B] There may be others of my complexion who learn better by counter-example than by example, by eschewing not pursuing ... My horror of cruelty drives me deeper into clemency than any example of clemency could ever draw me. (S1044–5)

Montaigne finds himself and others to be more strongly affected by negative examples partly because he believes that the emotions associated with horror and revulsion are stronger and partly because the times in which he lives (presumably he has in mind the wars of religion) provide examples which should be rejected rather than imitated. But in *De la phisionomie* he retells

two of his civil war experiences at length in support of principles of prudent conduct and therefore as examples worthy of imitation.

One of his neighbours had planned to seize Montaigne's manor house by asking for refuge from pretended attackers there, gradually admitting more and more of his men. Montaigne began to become suspicious of his neighbour's intentions but he decided to go through with the pretence of welcoming him, since it would have been impossible to resist without destroying everything. When the neighbour has placed enough men inside Montaigne's gates to execute his plan, he decides not to do so, moved, as he later tells Montaigne by his welcoming and honest behaviour (V1060–1, P1107–8, S1202–3).

In the second story, the leader of the band of armed men, who, after tracking his journey for three days, capture him and place him under guard, in response to Montaigne's determined arguing over the ransom to be asked, decides to set him free and restore his possessions. He explained that he had done so because of Montaigne's appearance and because of the honesty and firmness of his speech (V1061–2, P1108–10, S1204–5)

Montaigne suggests that in both cases well-laid plans were spontaneously abandoned because of the plotters' reaction to his honest face and frank manner. In 1595 he draws from the first story the moral that as a general principle we should be more willing to trust the outcome of events to Heaven.³⁵ But in fact the reader is bound to notice a gap between the calculation of Montaigne's response in the first story and the apparent frankness and warmth of his welcome. Describing events (including his own thoughts) in detail allows the reader to ask how well the moral drawn really sums up the story. At the same time such stories about his own life increase readers' feelings of closeness to a writer whose reading and arguments they have already come to admire. To some extent the possibility that reader and writer might understand a given story differently enhances the feeling of close contact and sincerity. We even know the ways he would like to deceive himself. The popularity of autobiographical readings of the *Essais* confirms that the stories Montaigne tells about himself have a resonance for readers outside the role which each plays in the argumentative context of the individual chapter.

Narratives within a play have different effects from narratives in an essay for two main reasons. In the first place the dramatist has the option of presenting an action on stage or providing a character to narrate an action, where the essayist can only tell stories. Secondly the dramatist must always assign a narrative to one of the actors (who may, however, be a prologue or

a chorus figure) and the narrative must usually be told to other characters, with the effect that questions are raised about the perspective from which a narrative is told and the character's motive for telling it to a particular audience. Essayists can raise some of these issues by attributing a narrative to someone else but often they tell a story in the same voice as the rest of the essay.

The narrative practices of Montaigne and Shakespeare may be compared in their approaches to atrocity stories. As we have seen, Montaigne sometimes tells stories involving cruelty or torture in great detail so as to arouse abhorrence in his readers and by a negative example to strengthen his own preference for compassion. Where cruelty forms an important part of the action Shakespeare usually places before the eyes of his audience either the events themselves or the disfigured bodies of their victims. This reflects a difference in the emotional economy of the two genres. In a play what you see is always more powerful than what is narrated, just as in a prose work events narrated in detail tend to be more affecting than examples simply referred to. But once an atrocity has taken place on stage (*e.g.*, the murders of Rutland and York in *Henry VI part three*, the murders of Macduff's family in *Macbeth*) it is often retold on stage by a character, usually with the aim of arousing the desire for revenge or of justifying a cruel act of revenge already committed. In *Titus Andronicus* Shakespeare shows that acts of cruelty can damage the moral judgement of the family member driven to take revenge (and so may induce a general hatred of cruelty in the audience) but in his plays the witnessing of cruelty rarely or never deters characters from inflicting it. This makes a very strong contrast with Montaigne where representations of cruelty are always a warning against man's inhumanity and a persuasion to restraint and compassion rather than revenge.

The connection between narrative and action can also be complicated or reversed. Actions in the play often present themselves as repetitions or variations of previous actions. In *The Tempest*, as Reuben Brower has shown, the plots against Ferdinand and Prospero can be regarded as re-enactments of the play's founding act of usurpation which Prospero narrates at the beginning of the play.³⁶ Characters in the history plays very often retell the events of previous plays in order to position themselves in the play's present or to draw conclusions about the most appropriate form of action. The theatre makes the audience question the understanding and motives of on-stage story-tellers. In the second scene of *The Tempest* Prospero delivers a long, interrupted narration of past events to enable Miranda and the

audience to understand the events of the play, but the language in which he tells the story reveals to the audience both his anger and his incomplete and biased comprehension of those past events.

PROSPERO ... Thy false uncle –
Dost thou attend me?

MIRANDA Sir, most heedfully.

PROSPERO Being once perfected how to grant suits,
How to deny them, who t'advance and who
To trash for over-topping, new created
The creatures that were mine, I say – or changed 'em
Or else new formed 'em; having both the key
Of officer and office, set all hearts i'th'state
To what tune pleased his ear, that now he was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk
And sucked my verdure out on't. Thou attend'st not!

MIRANDA O good sir, I do.

PROSPERO I pray thee mark me.
I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To closeness and to bettering of my mind
With that which but by being so retired
O'er-priced all popular rate, in my false brother
Awaked an evil nature; and my trust,
Like a good parent, did beget of him
A falsehood, in its contrary as great
As my trust was, which had indeed no limit,
A confidence sans bound. (I.2.77–97)

Prospero's anxiety is betrayed by his reiterations, false starts and self-interruptions. He means to say that his brother's evil nature causes him to take advantage of Prospero's trust but the expression he chooses ('I ... in my false brother, awaked an evil nature') admits the responsibility for the usurpation that he is not yet consciously willing to allow. The facts of the narrative prompt the audience to wonder how Prospero expected to remain Duke if he had passed all the responsibilities of rule to his brother in order to spend his time in study.³⁷ Theatre audiences are especially open to devices which enable them to believe that they understand what is happening better than the characters on-stage. Usually an on-stage narrator unconsciously reveals to the audience

his or her biases by the way he or she tells the story. Tubal's double narrative in *Merchant of Venice* (III.1.67–108) offers an interestingly self-conscious example of a narrative tailored to the reactions of its on-stage audience. Tubal interlaces stories about the disasters befalling Antonio's argosies, to which Shylock reacts with malicious satisfaction, with stories about Jessica's expenditure on her travels, which appal him. The audience soon realizes that Tubal enjoys pulling Shylock's emotions in opposite directions and this helps them temper their dislike of his joy in Antonio's misfortune with an understanding of Shylock as a victim of his own emotions.

In *Twelfth Night* II.4, Viola (as Cesario) tells Orsino two stories which the audience understands better than he does. Her avowal that her love (she allows Orsino to assume that this beloved is a woman) is of about Orsino's age and complexion draws from him first a conventional comment on age and then a more unexpected admission.

ORSINO Too old, by heaven. Let still the woman take
An elder than herself. So wears she to him;
So sways she level in her husband's heart.
For, boy, however we do praise ourselves
Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn
Than women's are. (II.4.28–34)

After the song, when Viola tries to make him understand Olivia's rejection by imagining his own reaction to the advances of a woman he was unable to love, he rejects any such comparison, proudly (as well as self-contradictingly) insisting that no woman could love as deeply as he does. To his claim that women's love lacks constancy since it is no more than an appetite, Viola responds with another story.

VIOLA Ay, but I know –
ORSINO What dost thou know?
VIOLA Too well what love women to men may owe.
In faith, they are as true of heart as we.
My father had a daughter loved a man
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman
I should your lordship.
ORSINO And what's her history?

VIOLA A blank, my lord. She never told her love,
 But let concealment, like a worm i'th'bud,
 Feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought,
 And with a green and yellow melancholy
 She sat like patience on a monument,
 Smiling at grief. Was not this love indeed?
 We men may say more, swear more, but indeed
 Our shows are more than will; for still we prove
 Much in our vows but little in our love.
 ORSINO But died thy sister of her love, my boy? (302–18)

One effect of narrative in this scene is the comic exposure (to the audience, though not to himself) of Orsino's egotistical self-confidence and lack of true understanding. More seriously Viola's second narrative expresses, as well as her constancy in love, her inability to communicate her feelings (neatly illustrated by Orsino's inability to understand her overwhelming hints) and her anxiety about her future under that restriction. But the mode of narrative offers also a pin-prick of hope. Her enigmatic expression and the power of story-telling prompt Orsino to ask her what happened to her sister. Narratives in Shakespeare's plays force us to reflect on the motives of the teller and the reactions of the characters listening. Our reflections on the narrative scene prompt us to thoughts about the people on stage and about human behaviour more widely which argument could scarcely convey to us.

The relationship between story-telling and persuasion is almost an overt topic of *Othello*. Iago's reinterpretations of events keep Rodrigo conspiring for Desdemona's affection long after his cause is lost; Othello shows the Venetian court how his stories about his life won Desdemona's heart and they find them almost equally persuasive. At the centre of the play Iago uses a detailed narration of Cassio's sleep-talk to convince Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful.³⁸ On discovering the depth of his error Othello reinterprets his story for another Venetian court, interrupting his narrative by re-enacting on himself the stab wound he tells them he inflicted on a Turk who maligned the Venetians.³⁹

Shakespeare sometimes uses poetic narrative to achieve effects beyond the means of argument or dramatic representation. In the fourth scene of *Richard III* Clarence's dream recounts his unexpected death at the hands of his brother Richard, the pain of dying and the bitterness of the accusations of the spirits in the underworld, the tempest of his soul, more painful than the struggle of bodily death. It is the most striking poetic passage in the whole

to amplify, to investigate, to question and to contradict. Both Montaigne's essays and Shakespeare's scenes (and even some speeches) can be understood as dialogues, often interior dialogues. The quality of the thinking (and the poetry) is a consequence of the skill and insistence with which Shakespeare and Montaigne ask questions, explore consequences, illuminate through comparisons and consider alternatives.

In Shakespeare the overall narrative of the play provides the starting point (and also the narrative end point) for the speeches of the characters, but even though his genre requires him to tell a story Shakespeare seriously engages other interests. He wants to explore the motives and feelings of different individuals. The force of his words is always visibly related to the person speaking and the on-stage listening audience. But the speaker's words are not only a representation of a character. Shakespeare also develops debates about ideas between individual voices with different experiences and intentions. His use of inset narratives allows the audience to think about stories, narrators and audiences. The different ways in which characters tell a story show the audience different responses to and uses of the same narrative. Sometimes the narrator's failure to communicate an implicit message reveals to the off-stage audience the limitations constraining teller and speaker. By comparing the words of different speakers the audience obtains food for reflection about particular characters and about human nature more generally.

For Montaigne narratives are usually subordinated to thought. Sometimes the narratives are examples to illustrate the truth of an already expressed moral axiom or conclusion from history or personal experience. At times the narrative supports the expression of a dissenting view; at times reflection on a narrative provokes new thoughts. But generally Montaigne regards his reflections on the implications of a narrative and the truth to experience of the derived lesson as more significant and more his own than the narrative, which is often drawn from his reading. At some important moments this scheme of values is reversed and the detailed re-telling of a story gives a special force to a chapter and to the whole book. While I tend to think of Montaigne's originality as expressed through his logical questioning and elaboration of expressed positions, the strongest emotional reactions and some of the most important lessons are provoked by narratives. Narratives (*e.g.*, about his attitudes to money) teach more vividly than precepts and sometimes the juxtaposition of narratives (as in his comparisons between different degrees of engagement) establishes and clarifies a position beyond the reach of logic.