

SHAKESPEARE'S ASIDES

A Power Point Presentation Based On My Dissertation

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SHAKESPEARE'S ORIGINAL ASIDES

*All examples on this page come from the Shax Annex:
Internet Shakespeare Editions

- The word aside appears only 4 times in Shakespeare's work, as well as two vocal directions for lines being spoken to one's self*, this is compared to the roughly 600 marked asides that appear in the *New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*.

In the first quarto of *Pericles* published in 1609 and printed by William White and Thomas Creede, there are two marked asides:

King. Ile tame you; Ile bring you in subiection. *Aside.*
...
May be (nor can I thinke the contrary) *Aside.*

The 1602 first quarto of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, published by Thomas Creede:

Mis. Pa. Fie sir lohn is this your loue? Go too. (*Aside.*)

The only aside to appear in the first folio is marked in *Titus Andronicus*:

Tamo.
Hight Witted *Tamora* to glose with all: *Aside.*

The first folio also includes a vocal stage in *Richard III*:

Rich. So do I euer, being well aduis'd.
Speakes to himselfe.
For had I curst now, I had curst my selfe.

This vocal stage direction appears in the First Folio and the first quarto (1600) of *The Merchant of Venice*:

*A song the whilst Bassanio comments on the
Caskets to himself.*

Modern Edition Aside Variations

(Including the Stage Direction "Aside to")

	Merry Wives	Richard III	Titus Andronicus	Merchant of Venice
Norton 3 rd Edition	38	21	15	2
NOS: Modern Critical	36	32	18	13
Arden 3 rd Series	24	20	14	10

For my dissertation I'm looking specifically at the texts of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Richard III*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *The Merchant of Venice*.

MODERN EDITIONS

- Except for the asides previously mentioned, all modern editions that mark lines as asides are determined by the editor.
- Each edition/publisher has different guidelines that help them determine which lines are asides, these differing guidelines are how we get aside variants among editions. For my dissertation I'm looking at the *Norton Third Edition*, the *New Oxford Shakespeare: Modern Critical Edition*, and the *Arden Third Series*.

DEFINITIONS

Oxford English Dictionary's Definition of Aside

- Words spoken aside or in an undertone, so as to be inaudible to some person present; words spoken by an actor, which the other performers on the stage are supposed not to hear
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My Definitions

- “Generally Recognized Asides” : For the purpose of this dissertation “generally recognized asides” are asides that have been marked the same in the *Oxford*, *Norton*, and *Arden* editions.
- “Ambiguous Asides” : are unmarked lines that contain aside indicators or lines that are marked as asides in some editions but left unmarked in others, both situations allowing a performer the choice of a public or aside delivery.

OVERALL ASIDE INDICATORS

Lack of Response

We know the definition of an aside states that the line is supposed to be inaudible to surrounding characters, its inaudibility is what prevents characters from responding, so one way to determine if a line is an aside is to see if surrounding lines respond (Jowett Private Correspondence).

Rhyming couplets

When there are no other rhyming lines in a scene, rhyming couplets can interrupt the dialogue and call attention to specific lines. Audibly we notice that the lines are different, and we wonder why. E.A. Abbott suggests that rhyming couplets amongst non-rhyming dialogue was one convention to, "...mark an aside, which otherwise the audience might have great difficulty in knowing to be an aside" (428-429).

Midline Switch

From the beginning of Shakespeare's career the midline switch has been available to direct the actor to move from addressing others to speaking 'asides' (381 Palfrey and Stern). Sometimes marked in editions with a "—" to show a switch.

SELF-ADDRESSED INDICATORS

Rhyming Couplets

Not only do rhyming couplets indicate asides, but when delivered in the presence of others and not overtly directed to someone else they indicate self-address. Rhyming couplets can be especially suggestive for an actor when they are rare. When couplet lines are unprompted by previous couplets and then go unanswered, this signals self-address (344 Palfrey and Stern).

Enter Duchess and Queen

10 QUEEN Ah my poor princes! Ah my tender babes,
My unblown flowers, new-appearing sweets,
If yet your gentle souls fly in the air
And be not fixed in doom perpetual,
Hover about me with your airy wings,
And hear your mother's lamentation.

15 MARGARET *[aside]* Hover about her, say that right for right
Hath dimmed your infant morn to aged night.

DUCHESS So many miseries have crazed my voice
That my woe-wearied tongue is still and mute.
Edward Plantagenet, why art thou dead?

20 MARGARET *[aside]* Plantagenet doth quite Plantagenet;
Edward for Edward pays a dying debt.

QUEEN Wilt thou, O God, fly from such gentle lambs,
And throw them in the entrails of the wolf?
When didst thou sleep when such a deed was done?

25 MARGARET *[aside]* When holy Harry died, and my sweet son.

Richard The Third (4.4.15-21)

Stage Directions

As previously mentioned only a few of Shakespeare's early texts contain stage directions that explicitly indicate when a line is "self-addressed." Both of these examples happen in the presence of others, with no responses, indicating their aside nature.

*A song the whilst Bassanio comments on the
Caskets to himself.
(Merchant of Venice)*

*Rich. So do I euer, being well aduis'd.
Speakes to himselfe.
For had I curst now, I had curst my selfe.
(Richard III)*

AUDIENCE-ADDRESSED INDICATORS

Words like; look, see, mark, etc..

The significant features of these asides are what linguists refer to as 'relational markers', which, "...address readers, either by selectively focusing their attention or by including them as participants in the text situation' (Hyland 444). When words like look and see are in an aside they instruct spectators to view something, as a way of getting them to pay close attention.

CATESBY The King is angry. See, he gnaws his lip.
KING RICHARD *[aside]* I will converse with iron-witted fools
30 And unrespective boys. None are for me
That look into me with considerate eyes.
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.—
Boy!

Richard The Third (4.2.27)

Characters providing information in an aside, that they would logically already know.

When characters share information that they themselves know only too well. Such as asides that contain information about themselves, what they've been up to recently, where they come from, or information about other characters.

SHYLOCK THE JEW *[aside]* How like a fawning publican he looks!
I hate him for he is a Christian;
35 But more, for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
40 He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest. Cursèd be my tribe
If I forgive him!

The Merchant of Venice (1.3.34-46)

DIALOGICAL-ADDRESS INDICATORS*

*Information on this page is a combination of Manfred Pfister and Roberta Mullini's research on dialogical asides.

Very Contextual

Depends mostly on the dramatic situations, with most dialogical address happening in conspiratorial/plotting dialogue or in eavesdropping scenarios. Often justified by the risky nature of a topic being discussed.

MISTRESS FORD How now, sweet Frank? Why art thou melancholy?
FORD I melancholy? I am not melancholy. Get you home, go.
120 MISTRESS FORD Faith, thou hast some crochets in thy head now. Will
you go, Mistress Page?
MISTRESS PAGE Have with you.—You'll come to dinner, George?
[Enter Mistress Quickly]
[Aside to Mistress Ford] Look who comes yonder. She shall be our
messenger to this paltry knight.
125 MISTRESS FORD *[aside to Mistress Page]* Trust me, I thought on her.
She'll fit it.

The Merry Wives of Windsor (2.1.118-125)

Grouping

Scenes where dialogical address typically happen involves scenarios where separate groups emerge and don't want to be overheard (Example: Dueling, one group already on stage when another enters, a group eavesdropping on another, etc.)

Involving Others

Others involved in an aside dialogue are often selected by the speaker or called into an aside by the use of a name.

ANTONIO Mark you this, Bassanio?
The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.
95 O, what a godly outside falsehood hath!

The Merchant of Venice (1.3.90-95)

INDISTINCT-ADDRESS/PERFORMERS CHOICE

- “Indistinct-addressed asides” lack the “address indicators” mentioned previously. These lines contain “overall aside indicators”, but not indicators for specific forms of address. This allows the performer to decide how the lines should be delivered.

30 KING RICHARD [*aside*] I will converse with iron-witted fools
And unrespectful boys. None are for me
That look into me with considerate eyes.
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.—
Boy!

Richard The Third (4.2.28-32)

RICHARD THE THIRD

ACT I, SCENE 3

RICHARD DUKE OF GLOUCESTER Yet you have all the vantage of her
wrong.

310 I was too hot to do somebody good
That is too cold in thinking of it now.
Marry, as for Clarence, he is well repaid:
He is franked up to fating for his pains.
God pardon them that are the cause thereof.

315 RIVERS A virtuous and a Christian-like conclusion,
To pray for them that have done scathe to us.

RICHARD DUKE OF GLOUCESTER So do I ever—

(speaks to himself) being well advised,
For had I cursed now, I had cursed myself.

Enter Catesby

CATESBY Madam, his majesty doth call for you—
320 And for your grace—and yours, my gracious lord.

(1.3.309-320)

THE *MERCHANT* *OF VENICE* ACT I, SCENE 3

ANTONIO This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for,
85 A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But swayed and fashioned by the hand of heaven.
Was this inserted to make interest good,
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

SHYLOCK THE JEW I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast.
90 But note me signor—

ANTONIO *Mark you this, Bassanio?*

The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.

95 O, what a godly outside falsehood hath!

SHYLOCK THE JEW Three thousand ducats, 'tis a good round sum.
Three months from twelve, then let me see the rate.

ANTONIO Well, Shylock, shall we be beholden to you?

1390-5 *Mark . . . hath!*
Antonio may deliver these words
aside to Bassanio; if spoken
publicly, they may further offend
Shylock, motivating the rate and
bond he sets.

(1.3.84-98)

WORKSHOP
VIDEO EXAMPLE:
*THE MERCHANT OF
VENICE*
ACT I, SCENE 3



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CONCLUSION

- Through the workshops, I determined asides contain various functions and forms of address, discovering further that each form of address functions in a specific way. Each form providing insight for both the actors and the audience.
- By applying these various forms of address to scenes, the participants were able to see how each form of address could alter the perception of a scene. Consequently, shaping an audience's understanding of a scene or character in a specific way.
- Performers no longer have to solely rely on editor marked asides to influence their performance choices. By analyzing the language used in and around asides, as well as the variations in marked asides among editions, performers are able to determine the performance choices available to them.

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