

Forum

Members of the Association are invited to submit letters, typed and double-spaced, commenting on articles published in *PMLA* or on matters of general scholarly or critical interest. Footnotes are discouraged, and letters of more than one thousand words will not be considered. Decision to publish and the right to edit are reserved to the Editor, and the authors of the articles discussed will be invited to reply.

Hendiadys

To the Editor:

Though it is hard to take anything away from an article as thorough and illuminating as George T. Wright's "Hendiadys and *Hamlet*" (*PMLA*, 96 [1981], 168–93), I think it important to call the attention of our members to an anticipation of his discussion that Wright unfortunately does not acknowledge. It precedes by roughly a quarter of a century Harley Granville-Barker's *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, about which Wright says: "Hendiadys is, of course, only a single feature of [Shakespearean] style, and only once, so far as I know, has any critic come close to discussing its effect. Granville-Barker, though he does not distinguish hendiadys from other doublets, accurately describes a style in which such word combinations play a prominent role" (p. 172).

Yet George Rylands, in his *Words and Poetry* (London: Hogarth, 1928), discusses hendiadys in Shakespeare (pp. 179–92) and, concentrating on *Hamlet*, labels Shakespeare's technique as such (p. 236). Rylands notes that a number of things "combine to make it seem in reading the richest of plays; but that richness is, as a matter of fact, exemplified yet further in the actual style" (p. 179). After listing twenty-seven instances of doublets, mostly hendiadys (pp. 179–80), he adds: "Here one must pause, for we have lighted upon one of the most unique and most important of characteristics in Shakespeare's style" (p. 180).

Rylands goes on to give further examples from *Hamlet* and other plays. Perhaps his most succinct comment is as follows: "Now it is the aim of the poet, in his word combinations, to make each one ring the clearest possible note, without destroying the harmony. And a familiar method—Sir Thomas Browne [also cited by Wright, p. 172] was a master of it—is the use of contrast, of putting concrete up against abstract, the native element beside the foreign and monosyllable to set off polysyllable. Shakespeare began quite early to favour the abstract and concrete combination amplifying one noun with

two others, employing a current and pictorial word, making his readers see as well as think" (pp. 180–81). While Rylands' view of the effect of hendiadys is somewhat different from Wright's, surely it deserves mention.

Wright's oversight is curious. It is especially curious that *Words and Poetry* is overlooked, since Wright does cite Rylands' edition of *Hamlet* (p. 184, n. 5) and two glosses of hendiadys from that edition (p. 184, n. 17; p. 185, n. 20).

The omission exemplifies how often, in humanistic scholarship, the work of the past gets buried, even though we train our graduate students in bibliographic searching and even though our editorial boards and committees try hard to be alert. Will the increased use of computers for bibliographic searching eventually preserve us from human error?

I cannot close this letter without saying that I join our editor in his enthusiasm over Wright's highly distinguished article; I shall be requiring it of my students in Shakespeare this coming year, and it is surely because of Wright's article—the most exciting one for me in many an issue—that I was alerted to Rylands' discussion in the first place. I doubt that Wright's discussion of the effects of hendiadys in Shakespeare will be surpassed in the future—but that is for the future to say.

Wright's suggestion that in *Hamlet* "hendiadys has the force of a trope" (p. 184, n. 15) calls our attention forcibly to the shining merits of old tools burnished by the right (no pun intended) hands.

Let us not forget scholars of the past, either.

KATHARINE T. LOESCH
University of Illinois, Chicago Circle

Mr. Wright replies:

I am grateful to Katharine T. Loesch for calling my attention to George Rylands' perceptive little book, which certainly deserved to be cited in my article and would have been if only I had known about it. Not many writers have inspected Shake-