5-1989

Feste & the Fool

Alban Dennis

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

Follow this and additional works at: http://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/uhp_theses

FESTE & THE FOOL

by

Alban Dennis

Honors Thesis
May, 1989

Author's Note

    The concept, form and theme of the play are all experimental,
so let me preface this note by saying that experimental works are
volatile, they work or they don't. Part of the process of this
play is to see how it works for the camara. What you will see is the
result, judge this work based on the value of experimentation.

    I created this play to see if I could create a character whose
source is Feste, from Twelfth Night, and the Fool, from King Lear, and
put him in an abstract almost metaphysical world to see how he deals
with reality. Both characters in their plays seem to have different
world views from that of the rest of the characters. I believe the
two to be identical characters in different genres. I've place the
Fool inside Feste so as to create a personna that has the potential
for conflict or resolution in one mind. To allow for freedom with-
in this character I needed to eliminate a couple of overwhelming
personality traits or abilities and let the base character work his
own way out. To destroy these characters' economic realities, which
are very similar, was relatively simple. Creating a life or death
situation, however oblique, raises the dramatic stakes for the charac-
ter and forces him to dig deeper inside himself, which, in turn,
erases anything except the basest of emotions. The most common at-
tribute of these characters is the power of their language. Isolat-
ing this language and placing it in the mind of this character allows
a certain "informalcy." The two voices may then speak before the audi-
ence in common, unadultered speech. The important idea to concen-
trate on is what effect does a change of realities have on this charac-
ter. How willing is he to accept an alternative? How does freedom
and his view of it effect his decision? How does he perceive him-

self?

I want to make this play say something or nothing, depending on your feelings after having seen the play, about the condition of man that hasn't been said this way before. I tried to ignore tactics used by absurdists, existentialists, and the like (not ignoring their message, however). To draw a conclusion that I feel is useful, at least to myself, that gives an alternative to a so called substantive existence, then I've accomplished something.

Alan Dennis

FESTE & THE FOOL

Robert Feste enters from right wearing jeans and a sweatshirt, carry-
ing a backpack. He looks to have been travelling for some time. His
destination and starting point are unknown. He is calm but seems
worried about something. The stage is a small clearing surrounded by
trees. It is secluded. Robert sits on a stump and pulls out a
thermos full of water. He relaxes.

(pause)
R: (to himself) What am I doing? I don't know.
V: (offstage, sounding as if coming from all directions) You should.
   You are the one doing it.
R: What the...
V: Its alright, I'm not exactly a stranger you know.
R: Where are you then?
V: Look up.
R: (looks up)
V: No.No. Inside. Yes, your head.
R: What is your name?
V: Not important. Now, what are you doing?
R: Shouldn't we start more formally? Let me introduce myself.
V: Don't bother I know you.
R: Then may I know your name.
V: I've already told you that it's not important.
R: It is. I must know if you're real.
V: Isn't that obvious.
R: (getting irritated) No, it's not.
V: Define reality then.
R: If I could then I certainly wouldn't be here, now would I. Listen.
   I don't know how you got up here but I want to know why?
V: (silence)
R: Please.
V: (pause) I am your future, past, and present. I am your predecessor
   and your child...
R: Don't give me that.

V: Please, I haven't said it for such a long time.

R: Oh, alright.

V: (pause) I've forgotten.

R: Damn it.

V: I'm a ghost trapped inside a void that you've created. I used to
   be like you. Respectable, with a proper master who cared for me.

R: She didn't care for me. She used me. I kept her sane and what does
   she do, marry my other master. She mourned for seven years. What
   for? She loved a woman as a man. I straightened her out. I gave
   her laughter and she gave me nothing.

V: Was she pretty?

R: A goddess.

V: How glorious, why ever did you leave?

R: I don't know. I was...unhappy.

V: Does freedom make you happy.

R: Yes, occasionally.

V: How right you are. Are you happy now?

R: No.

V: Why?

   (pause)

R: I feel empty.

V: Yes

R: Incomplete.

V: What's missing?

R: I don't know.

V: Let me tell you a story about an old fool I once knew. He was a
   kind man inside but he was stubborn. Kindness had to be pulled from
   him like a bribe. He had three daughters, this man. Two were
   greedy and mean and one was beauty herself. Honest. (chuckle) That's
   certain. This man, when the time came to settle down and finish
   business, devided his estate into three. One for each daughter.
   To get her part each had to describe her love for the father.
   The two elder and evil children lied and exaggerated their feelings
   to get the largest portion. The last said nothing. What was she
   to say, she loved her father as a father no farther. He gave her
   nothing but pain. As he did me...

R: This isn't a story is it. It's truth.

V: (sarcastically) You're so bright.

R: Seriously. How did you fit in?

V: I was that old fool's fool.

R: (giggle)

V: He killed me. I loved him and he killed me.

R: I'm sorry I laughed.

V: I don't care. Do you understand my point?

R: Well, not really.

V: He expected too much. Your dreams will never come true if you
   expect them to.

R: What does that have to do with me.

V: Don't you see. You expect happiness. It's not a gift to you.
   Reality is harsh, dangerous. Happiness is rare.

R: Are you happy?
   (pause)

V: I don't know, but I'm not in a position to know.

R: How's that?

V: I'm not living, you are.

(pause)

R: Is happiness not possible up there?

V: It depends.

R: On what?
   (pause)

V: You.
   (pause)

R: Me.

V: You have chosen me to show you.

R: Chose you? for what?

V: Shouldn't I be asking you that?

R: No.
   (pause)

V: Doing. What are you doing?

R: Nothing.

V: Exactly.

R: What should I be doing then?

V: Nothing.

R: Exactly.

V: (giggles)

R: STOP THIS! I want some answers.

V: Now you want to know something. That will cost you.

R: Cost me? What the...

V: Loosen up. Just a joke.

R: Well, it wasn't funny.

V: What kind of answers would you like?

R: Alright, for starters. Why am I here?

V: Shh. Listen.

(pause)

V: What do you hear?

R: Nothing.

V: Come on now...

R: Alright. Birds, the wind, life...

V: There you are, next question.

R: What about the answer?

V: You have it.

R: What?

V: If you weren't here to listen then what would there be to listen to?

(pause)

R: Everything would still be here.

V: I wouldn't.

(pause)

R: So.

V: If that's how you feel. I'll just be on my...

R: No! Don't go.

V: Why not?

R: I prefer company than loneliness.

V: What is loneliness?

R: Well... silence is loneliness.

V: Nonsense. What is loneliness?

(pause)

R: Nothing?

V: Precisely, and what is nothing?

(pause)

R: Everything?

V: Excellent you're getting better. Now this is the difficult one.
What is everything?

(pause)

(pause)

R: I don't know.

V: Amazing?

R: I said, I don't know?

V: Neither do I. Are we supposed to?

(pause)

R: I suppose not.

V: You suppose? Of course not. Listen

(pause)

V: What do you know now?

(pause)

R: Nothing.

V: Good.

(pause)

R: I'm scared...

V: Shh. (soothingly) Shh.

(pause)

R: (growing sleepy) I can't leave yet.

V: Don't fight it. Relax.

(pause)

R: Nothing.

(pause)

R: Nothing.

(pause)

V: Everything.

R: (slowly and peacefully falls into deep sleep)