Memoria di Shakespeare

A Journal of Shakespearean Studies

5/2018

Shakespeariana

edited by
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Editor's Foreword

Maria Valentini

This issue of *Memoria di Shakespeare. A Journal of Shakespearean Studies*, the fifth in its new online, open access life, proposes an assortment of contributions which are not linked by a single theme, but rather offer miscellaneous approaches to Shakespeare ranging from close readings and philological analyses, to source studies and comparative investigations. The choice of opening the issue with an article concerning Shakespeare's influence on Keats – which also led us to choose the protean chameleon as an apt image for our front cover – was aimed at highlighting the idea of Shakespeare as a "Presider", presiding over Keats, as the latter says himself, as a rousing and benevolent presence, but also presiding, in a sense, over this entire volume. Keats is primarily a 'reader' of Shakespeare, a poet who is powerfully affected and inspired by his works rather than a scholar who interprets. Traces and echoes – as well as direct references – appear throughout his poetry and inspire some of his most famous formulations. The article seeks to establish the modes of this poetic influence through Keats's creative responses.

Silvia Bigliazzi's paper, "Romeo before Romeo", takes into consideration the many possible sources of the Romeo and Juliet story which can themselves be examined as products of intertextuality, as multilayered fields of interpretation refashioned by Shakespeare. Central to this study is the assessment of the

process of transformation of Romeo's masculinity in the novella tradition, a masculinity which is often questioned in Shakespeare's play. The close textual analysis of passages in the various novellas exhibits pictures of Romeo composed of strength and aggressiveness but also of emotional weaknesses, thus putting Romeo's masculinity into perspective. The emerging gender structure may have provided the premises for Shakespeare's creation of his own Romeo.

The article which follows revisits the play-within-the-play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Here Marisa Sestito explores the contrast and blending of comic and tragic modes which also reflect those present in the play as a whole. A careful analysis of the rehearsals and the actual staging of *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe* put on by the workers brings out its Ovidian influence on many levels. Interestingly the Pyramus and Thisbe story shares elements present in *Romeo and Juliet* – such as the hostility of the parents, the secret encounters of the lovers and similarities in the death scenes – thus functioning as a kind of comic redefinition of its tragic ending.

The first of the two articles devoted to *Timon of Athens*, by Tommaso Continisio, tackles its polymorphic nature, and considers its complexity as mirroring the emerging cultural forms which were displacing the dominant ideology. The continuous game of refractions occurring in the play is seen as exemplifying the opposition between being and seeming, displayed mainly through social relationships, and notably based on hypocrisy, which governs interpersonal relationships. Davide Del Bello, in the second article, though acknowledging the primary role of money, gold and debt in *Timon*, shifts attention to the use of invective and vituperation and its political and rhetorical resonance. Invective is illustrated as a rhetorical mode in the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth century and is exhaustively analysed within the play, especially through the language of abuse adopted by Apemantus, Alcibiades and Timon himself. The rhetorical patterns which emerge, interestingly, serve also to reflect on the "relentless exercise of Protestant scatological invective against Roman rites" (p. 99).

The two following contributions involve the figure of Fletcher. Roger Holdsworth's article, "Anti-Comedy in *The Two Noble*

Kinsmen", highlights the shift in critical attention towards this play which has occurred in recent years. In the author's view the claim that Shakespeare and Fletcher's play may be read as a political allegory, given also its clear historical parallels and their current relevance, does not contribute much to a satisfactory interpretation. Similarly, the idea of the play as a comedy which ought to foster the notion of a "transcendental power of good" (p. 105) has now been superseded by a view which rather evaluates the work as darker and more skeptical; more inclined, in fact, to pointing to the futility of action. Further, the paper convincingly demonstrates that gender relations too are problematical and go against the standard practice of comedy; though there is no cross-dressing, the constant shifts in the protagonists' self-presentations point towards a fluidity of sexual identities and desires. The play, then, escapes traditional reassurances commonly granted by comedy.

Gary Taylor's article, delving further into Fletcher's work, reconsiders the evidence for the dating of *The Tamer Tamed: or, The Woman's Prize*, a subject which had not been dealt with since the late 1930s. The play is commonly linked to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, as a reply or a counterpart to it, and is therefore of particular interest to Shakespearean scholars, but is also related to Jonson's *The Silent Women*, representing, as the article proves, a response to both of these, considered by the author as two of the most misogynistic plays in the English canon. An unprecedented, meticulous analysis of references to historical and political events, plague outbreaks, and, particularly, to sea voyages and oceanic explorations, allows the inclusion or exclusion of certain dates for its composition and at the same time gives convincing evidence as to where it was first performed and by which company.

The paper which closes this issue gives a current picture of the global popularity of Shakespeare through an analysis of Shakespeare entries in the worldwide online encyclopedia Wikipedia, the fifth most visited website in the world. Statistics derived from the number of viewings of certain authors and their works contribute to the assessment of canonicity of world authors, and the article examines both the number of consultations of biographical entries on Shakespeare and the viewings of the articles concerning single plays in the year 2017.

We are shown, for instance, which play is the most accessed, and in what countries; whether non-English speaking countries have different preferences, which plays have travelled best across the languages. The author does not aim at establishing reasons behind the popularity of certain plays as opposed to others, or specific motives for success in different cultures, but provides important empirical evidence upon which to reflect and which can serve as a basis for further research.

From Keats as a 'reader' of Shakespeare, examined in the first article, to the anonymous and inevitably amorphous world of online 'readers' tackled in the last one, this issue continues to consider, and to discuss, Shakespeare as our Presider.

Shakespeare the Presider

Maria Valentini

In Keats's 1815 *Ode to Apollo* Shakespeare occupies a place alongside Milton and Spenser, Homer and Tasso as one of his poetic forefathers:

> Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his hand,
> And quickly forward spring
> The Passions – a terrific band –
> And each vibrates the string
> That with its tyrant temper best accords,
> While from their Master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.
> (ll. 24-29)[1]

It was only two years later that Shakespeare's role was to become central to Keats's poetic development, though the main features of Shakespearean power are already expressed in this poem. It is well known that Keats had a large number of 'inspirers', but his

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[1]   John Keats, *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard, London, Penguin, 2006 [1973], p. 44. All quotations of Keats's poems are form this edition. Henceforth only the lines of the poems will be indicated in the text.

relationship with Shakespeare, as this brief study aims to show, was of a very specific nature.

In 1987 Robert White wrote the book *Keats as a Reader of Shakespeare*[2], which remains, in my view, the most exhaustive and convincing study on the topic, and this definition seems to me the most appropriate way to define such a connection, since Keats appears to be most of all a reader, a reader who is powerfully affected and inspired by his contact with Shakespeare's works, and not one who attempts interpretations. This does not mean that Keats does not offer what we could define as critical comments; in his letters, in reviews or even in some of the annotations on his own copy of Shakespeare's plays – particularly interesting I believe are, for instance, his reactions to Dr Johnson's commentaries on the plays which appeared in one of the editions owned by Keats, to which we will return. But he is not a Hazlitt or even a Coleridge; we can certainly speak of reactions rather than analyses.

Goethe maintained that "a dramatic talent of any importance could not forbear to notice Shakespeare's works and […] must be aware that [he] has already exhausted the whole of human nature in all its tendencies, in all its heights and depths"[3] and therefore there is nothing left for him to do. He is, in Goethe's words, *der Nachkömmlich*, the 'aftercomer'. This could lead one to think that those who chronologically follow Shakespeare may be (unconscious) victims of what Harold Bloom termed the "anxiety of influence"[4], a sense which implies an often aggressive or defensive confrontation with precursors, a sense of inadequacy[5]. But, as Jonathan Bate points out, the German word implies not just he who comes later, but also the descendant, one who may accept the precursor and in fact feel him as a benevolent presence[6]. Rather

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[2]   Robert White, *Keats as a Reader of Shakespeare*, London, The Athlone Press, 1987.

[3]   Johan Peter Eckermann, *Conversations with Goethe*, trans. John Oxenford, Cambridge, Mass., Da Capo Press, 1998 [1836 in German], 2 January 1824, p. 31.

[4]   Cf. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*: *A Theory of Poetry*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1997 [1973].

[5]   For the problem of influence and intertextuality see Marco Canani, "Reweaving the Tapestry of Intertextuality: Keats's Dialogue with Shakespeare and the Italian Translations of *When I Have Fears*", *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 28:2 (2014), pp. 117-32.

[6]   Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and the English Romantic Imagination*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1989, p. 2.

than producing anxiety then, it may create confidence, as when Keats famously said in his letter to the painter Haydon that he had felt a "good genius" presiding over him – and asks himself whether it is too daring to "fancy Shakespeare this presider"[7]. There are moments when Keats appears to associate with Goethe's stance, such as when he asserts that Shakespeare "has left nothing to say about nothing or anything" (letter to Reynolds, 22 November 1817, about the *Sonnets*), or when in *Endymion* he states that "the count / Of mighty poets is made up" and "the sun of poesy is set"[8], but quotations, allusions and, mostly, Shakespearean echoes privilege the munificent inspirer or even more, as we shall see, witness to a Shakespeare who is something akin to nature itself. In a letter to Jane Reynolds, in fact, after having said that the ocean's music is an enjoyment not to be put into words, he asks, "Which is the best of Shakespeare's plays? I mean in what mood and with what accompaniment do you like the sea best?" (14 September 1817). A further indication of Shakespeare as a 'natural experience' occurs in a letter to his brother George who is living in America and to whom he feels the need to be close:

> You will remember me in the same manner – and the more when I tell you that I shall read a passage of Shakespeare every Sunday at ten o Clock – you read one at the same time and we shall be as near each other as blind bodies can be in the same room (22, 29, 31 December 1818)

Shakespeare is also a consolation: he writes to his brothers that, feeling lonely on his way to the Isle of Wight, he unboxed a Shakespeare and thought "There's my comfort" (15 April 1817), quoting Caliban when he expressed his desire to seek refuge in alcohol (*The Tempest*, II.ii.55[9]). In the same letter where he mentions the "presider" he says "I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare" (10 May 1817).

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[7] References are from *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. Hyder E. Rollins, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1958, rpt. 2002, 2 vols, vol. I, 10 May 1817, p. 128. Henceforth only the date of the letters will be indicated in the text.

[8] *Endymion*, Book II, ll. 723-24, 729, p. 153.

[9] All quotations from Shakespeare are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.

Keats's fascination with Shakespeare emerges almost everywhere in his work, from precise references in the letters to direct and indirect allusions in his poetry. The markings on his copy of the plays have been carefully examined in Caroline Spurgeon's 1928 book titled *Keats's Shakespeare*[10], though there are unmarked passages which appear in Keats and marked ones which do not. If, as has frequently been observed, the rise of Romanticism and the growth of Shakespearean idolatry occur together, it is not surprising that plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* have a privileged place for the poet given the pivotal role played by imagination, although, as Robert White notes, by March 1818 Keats had quoted from all the plays but four[11]. It is mostly images, rhythm, poetic expressiveness, single words, the relationship between sound and sense, which appeal to Keats and, like Hazlitt, who had provided the first guidelines to Keats's growing interest for Shakespeare, he views characters as having a life beyond the plays[12]. Shakespeare becomes for Keats an archetype of the power of imagination and at the same time indistinguishable from Nature itself: "Things real", he writes to Bailey, "such as existences of Sun Moon and Stars and passages from Shakespeare" (13 March 1818). Significantly he speaks of passages rather than scenes or plays as a whole; similarly he exclaims, with reference also to Milton, "I look upon fine Phrases like a lover" (15 August 1819), phrases rather than poems. Single striking images or groups of words are soaked up by the poet and emerge, modified, in the poems. Shakespearean references and allusions in Keats's works are numberless and the choice made here is aimed at highlighting instances which exemplify in what manner this relationship emerges through the poems.

One of the plays which haunts Keats and is the most marked in Keats's folio edition, is *King Lear*; in most of Lear's speeches every line is underlined, as are similes, metaphors and epithets. Keats also adds a long note in which he states "self-will and pride and wrath are taken at a rebound by his giant hand and mounted to the Clouds

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[10]   Caroline Spurgeon, *Keats's Shakespeare: A Descriptive Study Based on New Material*, Redditch, Worcestershire, Read Books, 2011 [1928].

[11]   See Robert White, p. 16.

[12]   Keats himself identifies with them, with Falstaff (letter to Reynolds, 17 March 1817), with Troilus (letter to Fanny Brawne, July 1820).

– there to remain and thunder eve[r]more"[13]. Furthermore, in a letter to his brothers, he claims: "The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. Examine 'King Lear' and you will find this exemplified throughout" (26 December 1817); this conflation of aesthetics and ethics was of course to mark Keats' poetics. Shelley too was to define *Lear* as the "most perfect specimen of the dramatic art existing in the world"[14], but Keats is again struck mostly by "passages" and images. He feels the need to write "a prologue" to the play as he tells his brothers, and produces the sonnet *On Sitting Down to Dead* King Lear *Once Again* (1818). The reading of the play has made the poet aware of the fact that suffering must be endured in order to gain a new impulse towards action rather than abandoning himself to the world of romance; he must taste "The bitter-sweet of this Shakespearean fruit" (l. 8). The bitter/sweet opposition marks Keats's interest in contrasts, in dualities and in oppositions, which he identifies and admires in Shakespeare, here defined as "Chief Poet" (l. 9), as well as his need to absorb experiences in their entirety, their negative aspects together with the positive ones. The understanding of the play has, however, given the poet new strength, and he wishes to have "new Phoenix wings to fly" (l. 14) at his desire: it has spurred him to forge a new identity. The sonnet inspired by the reading of *Lear* is one of the typical examples of Keats's reactions to Shakespeare, who is perceived as 'an experience', a liberating one which allows the poet to regain spiritual wholeness and renewed hope. The writing of the sonnet is in itself an act of creation and refashioning of the material he has read, and re-read, and has affected him as do "Sun Moon and Stars".

   One of the "passages" which most enchanted Keats in *King Lear* is that of Edgar's description of the invented cliff to his blinded father Gloucester (he had described himself as "one who gathers samphire – dreadful trade"[15] in a letter to Haydon, 10/11 May 1817, indicating his own insignificance compared to the poets of the past)

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[13]   Spurgeon, p. 50.

[14]   Percy B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments*, ed. Mrs. Shelley, London, Edward Moxon, 1840, 2 vols, vol. I, p. 6.

[15]   The quotation is from *King Lear* (IV.vi.15).

which begins with the Shakespearean quote "Do you hear the sea?" (IV.vi.3). These lines, combined with his own vivid experience of nature (he was staying on the Isle of Wight, enjoying walks down to the sea and admiring the cliffs), gave rise to the sonnet *On the Sea* (1817) which contains references, or rather echoes, of this passage and of other instances in the play: the "eternal whisperings" with which the sonnet opens that hark back to the "murmuring surge" (IV. Vi. 20) described by Edgar and the "smallest shell" which "scarcely will […] Be moved" (ll. 6-7) recalls "the idle pebble" (IV.vi.21). The reference to "ye! who have your eyeballs vexed and tired" (l. 9) calls forth the figure of Gloucester, the recipient of Edgar's words who has had his eyeballs ripped out, whilst "vexed" may evoke the word used by Cordelia earlier, when describing Lear as "as mad as the vex'd sea" (IV.iv.2). All these lines are underlined in Keats's edition of Shakespeare, as are those concerning "poor Tom" which clearly remind him of his suffering brother. Like Edgar's description, the sonnet evokes an imaginary landscape displayed through "Shakespeare's own sea-music"[16]. In his copy of Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* the references to the analogies of Lear's mind and the tempestuous sea are also marked; the sonnet then, though not Shakespearean in form, may also be seen as a response to *King Lear* as a whole – as previously pointed out, the whole of Shakespeare, one may say, was identified with the sea. Middleton Murry writes: "At this moment of intense creative excitement Shakespeare, poetry and sea become knit together in a single thought and feeling"[17]. The Shakespearean debt becomes formal as well as thematic in *When I Have Fears That I Might Cease to Be* (1818), in this case inspired by Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. As Bate remarks, it can only be described as "an imitation or highly accomplished pastiche of a Shakespearean sonnet"[18]. We find here a rumination on the themes of love, fame and time; as in Shakespeare's sonnet 12 ("When I do count the clock that tells the time") and 64 ("When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced"), each Keatsian quatrain begins with the same temporal clause –

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16   White, p. 190.
17   John Middleton Murry, *Keats and Shakespeare*, London, Oxford University Press, 1926, p. 35.
18   Bate, p. 182.

"When I have fears that I might cease to be" (l. 1), "When I behold upon the night's starred face" (l. 5) etc. From sonnet 12 (one he had quoted in a letter to Reynolds just a few months earlier) he also takes the main cluster of images, "rich garners", "full ripen'd grain" (l. 4), which will emerge again when writing *To Autumn.* The connection then occurs in subject, vocabulary and rhetorical structure, but the whole poem is 'Shakespearean' with regard to patterns of alliteration, assonance, repetition and antithesis.

It is not surprising that some key phrases from *Hamlet* were marked in Keats' pocket edition, though markings in general are fewer than those in other plays; after falling in love with Fanny Brawn late in 1818, his love for Shakespeare appears heightened by the feeling that they are undergoing the pain of a similar experience, a passionate and all-consuming love to which parts of themselves must react, and so Shakespeare becomes not only the supreme artist, a source of magical language and images, but also the "miserable and mighty poet of the human heart" (letter to Miss Jeffrey, 9 June 1819), one who has felt Keats' same pain but has come out of it regenerated. In the same letter he writes: "The middle age of Shakespeare was all clouded over; his days were not more happy than Hamlet's who is perhaps more like Shakespeare himself in his common everyday life than any other of his characters". And it is to Shakespeare and to Hamlet once more that he turns when, anguished by jealousy and uncertainty, he writes to Fanny again: "Shakespeare always sums up matters in the most sovereign manner. Hamlet's heart was full of such misery as mine is when he said to Ophelia 'Go to a nunnery, go, go'"[19] (8 August 1820). *Hamlet* occupies an important place in Keats's life; he frequently mentions the play in his letters, mostly whilst building up ideas and often during his discussions on everyday affairs: he believes the Danish prince is the result of personal experiences, and it is only by going through the same experiences that one can hope to fully understand the character. But *Hamlet* appears in some form also in a poem such as *Ode to a Nightingale* (1819); there are more than a dozen phrases reminiscent of *Hamlet* here, and we might say the poem is literally haunted by the language of the play. From the very first "My heart aches" we are brought into the atmosphere of

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[19]   *Hamlet*, II.i.149.

the play with the "The heartache and the thousand natural shocks / That flesh is heir to" (III.i.61-62) of the 'To be' soliloquy. "Lethe-wards"(l. 4) may recall the "Lethe wharf"(I.v.34) evoked by the ghost in the first act, and the poisonous hemlock echoes the poison poured in Hamlet senior's ear. The desire to "fade away" (l. 20) with the nightingale at the end of the second stanza reminds us of the ghost who "faded on the crowing of the cock" (I.i.157), and when it is picked up again at the beginning of the third "Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget" (l. 21), we are immersed in Hamlet's desire for his flesh to "melt / Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew" (I.ii.129-30). Many more examples occur throughout the ode, closing with the "Adieu! Adieu!" (l. 75) to the bird, echoing the triple "adieu" and "remember me" (I.v.91) of the ghost to Hamlet. According to Bate, we can interpret the farewell "to be that of Shakespeare, leaving Keats to face the waking world […] however, with the implied injunction 'Remember me'. Keats is left enriched by the voice of Shakespeare, the 'immortal bird'"[20]. As at the end of the *Lear* sonnet the poet returns from Shakespeare refreshed – with "new phoenix wings" (l. 14) – we can say that *Hamlet* and *King Lear* represent two related aspects of Keats' absorption in Shakespearean poetry.

In a review written on the 28th of December 1817 in *The Champion* about the actor Kean in *Richard Duke of York* (a play which included the three parts of *Henry VI*) we find an important distinction. Keats writes that historical dramas (like the one he has seen) are written "with infinite vigour, but their regularity tied the hand of Shakespeare […] the poetry is for the most part ironed and manacled with a chain of facts, and cannot get free […] the poetry of Shakespeare is generally free as is the wind – a perfect thing of the elements, winged and sweetly coloured. Poetry must be free". Then he continues stating that the poetry of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* is the poetry of Shakespeare's "soul – full of love and divine romance. […] The poetry of *Lear*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline* etc. is the poetry of human passions and affections, made almost ethereal by the power of the poet". Once again, the emphasis is on a need for freedom of verse, which is necessarily limited by adherence to historical facts; a play like *Hamlet* comes from the soul, a play like

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[20]   See Bate, pp. 195-97.

Lear is more the expression of limitless passion revealing the power of the poet. Kean who, as Bate notes, can be seen as one of the three 'intermediaries' (with Hazlitt and Haydon) between Keats and Shakespeare, expresses through his acting something similar to what Keats feels as a 'reader': "Other actors are continually thinking of their sum-total effect throughout the play", Keats observes, "Kean delivers himself up to the instant feeling, without a shadow of a thought about anything else"[21] – the "instant feeling", the spontaneous expression of particular moments are elements which Keats finds in himself and which he learned to appreciate through Hazlitt. The admiration for the vitality and imaginative interpretation of the actor is in a sense the counterpart of Keats's condemnation of Johnsonian criticism; as mentioned, his Shakespeare edition contained some commentaries by Johnson to which Keats would append thoughts of his own, often in the form of adaptations from quotations of the play (as well as scribbling over the words), as if to say that it is only through a true impressionistic reading and in the same language that one can intervene; in fact after Johnson's analysis of *As You Like It* he writes "is criticism a true thing?"[22] – a denigration of the classical, rationalistic attitude, from a poet who is not searching for universal truths but rather for moments of heightened sensation. Kean instead had a natural, spontaneous self-awareness which led Keats to say that Kean's acting was "Shakespearean", and his reviving of Shakespeare, combined with some of Hazlitt's ideas, may have determined a response which contributed to the formulation of the idea of Negative Capability. As Stephen Hebron notes[23], it is characteristic that Keats should come up with the expression without lengthy theorizations but rather in a letter to his brothers recalling a conversation with his friends Charles Wentworth Dilke and Charles Brown (he was never to repeat the expression in other letters): Keats famously affirms that the main quality that went into forming a "Man of Achievement […] and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously" is Negative Capability, that is being

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[21]   *The Champion*, 21 December 1817.

[22]   Spurgeon, p. 29.

[23]   Stephen Hebron, "John Keats and 'negative capability'" (publ. 15 May 2014), https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/john-keats-and-negative-capability

capable of remaining in uncertainty and doubt without "any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (21 December 1817), something Coleridge, for instance, lacked. Clearly, for Keats, central to poetic talent is an intuitive appreciation of the beautiful rather than a conjecture reached through reason. This idea was possibly prefigured in a letter to Bailey in which Keats asserts that he cannot imagine how anything can be known through reasoning, concluding with his renowned "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts" (22 November 1817). An annotation in Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespear* alongside *Lear* can also be seen as prefiguring this idea, in some ways explaining it: "If we compare the passions to different tuns and hogsheads of wine in a vast cellar – thus it is – the poet by one cup should know the scope of any particular wine without getting intoxicated"[24]; the poet then must be satisfied with a taste of the passions, so as to know their extent without becoming inebriated. Shakespeare presented characters who find themselves in a position of doubt, who are not comforted by certainties and are brought to life without interference from their author. This idea of humility and impersonality of course leads to Keats's other famous formulation, that of the chameleon poet, an empty vessel which absorbs and is filled by different emotions: the poetical character has "no self, it has everything and nothing. It has no character […] it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor […] it has as much delight in conceiving a Iago as an Imogen […] A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no identity he is continually filling some other body" (letter to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818). 'Gusto' is borrowed from Hazlitt to explain artistic power and passion; identity and personal opinions would impede complete freedom for the characters created. This evidently applies supremely to the protean-like Shakespeare, whose creations are famously autonomous and whose opinion can never be discerned. I would however agree with Bate who maintains that the impersonality afforded to Shakespeare is rarely available to Keats, both because he is a lyrical poet and because of his own self-consciousness[25]. The

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[24]   H. B. Forman, ed., *The Poetical Works and Other Writings of John Keats*, New York, Scribner's, 1938-39, vol. V, p. 286.

[25]   Cf. Bate, p. 173.

idea of impersonality, I think, is implied also in Keats's reflections on allegory: he claims that it is "shallow people who take everything literally" and "Man's life of any worth is a continual allegory, and very few eyes can see the Mystery of his life […] Shakespeare led a life of Allegory: his works are the comments on it" (letter to George Keats, 14 February 1819). In a 1995 article by William Flesch on Keats and Shakespeare, the critic notes that "allegorical figures are what they are, rather than experiencing what they are"[26]; resorting to Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* he gives, amongst others, the example of Eros, observing that he alone is not *in* love because he *is* love. Similarly, Shakespeare as an allegory once again brings us back to the idea of Shakespeare as natural verity: the sea, the sun and moon, the chameleon poet having no identity but filling in other bodies other selves. A presider and an arouser to whom Keats turns at crucial points in his life and whose works emerge at times 'unintentionally', not necessarily through borrowings but as moods or atmospheres.

The question of impersonality in artistic creation was, as is known, explored by T. S. Eliot who in the second part of his famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent"[27] provides an analogy of the ideal poet's mind with a platinum filament, a catalyst whose presence enables a chemical reaction, in fact whose presence is the condition upon which that reaction can occur, but which not only remains unaffected itself but also leaves no trace in the newly formed acid. The mind of the poet, Eliot says, is the shred of platinum operating on the experience of man: "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material"[28]. Eliot's idea – which has had its detractors – is of course that the ideal poet's mind should take in experiences and transform them into poetry without leaving any trace of himself. If I may stretch the analogy, it seems to me that in some way Shakespeare, for Keats, represents *both* the raw material and the catalyst mentioned in

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[26] William Flesch, "The Ambivalence of Generosity: Keats Reading Shakespeare", *ELH*, 62:1 (1995), pp. 149-69: 154.

[27] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), in *Selected* Essays, London, Faber & Faber, 1953.

[28] Eliot, p. 18.

Eliot's correlation. He provoked in Keats's mind certain 'reactions' which indeed transmuted the fabric of his own experience into his poetry, but at the same time Shakespeare was for Keats an experience, one in which he was steeped: his mind created also thanks to the absorption of Shakespearean poetry. Unlike the platinum filament however, which being a surface catalyst leaves no traces in the new substance, Shakespeare functions instead like some organic catalysts which indeed enable the reaction to take place but inevitably leave some trace in the new product. Unlike Prospero's unsubstantial pageant, Shakespeare in Keats has indeed left more than a rack behind.

Romeo before Romeo: Notes on Shakespeare Source Study

Silvia Bigliazzi

Palimpsests

After decades of critical suspicion about source studies, most famously triggered by Greenblatt's trenchant label ("the elephant's graveyard of literary history"[1]), new attention has increasingly been devoted to 'what a source is'[2] and to the circulation, transmission, transformation and function of Shakespeare's sources. Dennis Austin Britton and Melissa Walter have very recently argued in favour of "new models for bringing together what might be considered an 'old source study' and more

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[1] Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare and the Exorcists", in *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory*, eds Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman, New York-London, Methuen, 1985, pp. 163-86: 163.

[2] See Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith, "What Is a Source? Or, How Shakespeare Read His Marlowe", *Shakespeare Survey*, 68 (2015), pp. 15-31. See also Laurie Maguire, ed., *How to Do Things with Shakespeare: New Approaches, New Essays*, Malden-Oxford-Victoria, Blackwell, 2008, especially Part I: "How to Do Things with Sources".

contemporary approaches to textual and cultural analysis"[3]. Acknowledging a variety of different perspectives that transcend linear transmission, the authors of this new collection include audience response and oral culture as crucial factors in the exploration of the transformative processes and transactions, eventually advocating a non-positivist stance with regard to "sources for which there is no evidence of textual transmission"[4].

All this calls into question the idea of intertextuality which appears, at least in its narrow meaning, insufficient to explain complex processes, often difficult to pin down. Not coincidentally, already in the early 1980s, Cesare Segre felt the need to distinguish that notion from both earlier ideas of source studies, by stressing its intrinsic dynamism, and what he called "interdiscursivity", i.e. the relation between a written or oral text and all the cultural discourses ordered ideologically as well as by register and textual level[5]. More recently, Robert S. Miola has acknowledged this distinction and offered a broad understanding of the concept by drawing seven categories divided into three typologies, including "the degree to which the trace of an earlier text is tagged by verbal echo", "audience recognition", and "the degree to which the appropriation is eristic"[6]. In turn, Janet Clare, among others, has stressed the need to locate more Shakespeare's writing within theatrical culture, "focussing on the exchange of theatrical energy"[7]. What the overall discussion suggests is a need to re-

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[3]   Dennis Austin Britton and Melissa Walter, eds, *Rethinking Shakespeare Source Study: Audiences, Authors, and Digital Technologie*s, New York-London, Routledge, 2018, p. 1.

[4]   Britton and Walter, p. 6. For a critical reappraisal, see John Drakakis, "Afterword", in the same volume.

[5]   Cesare Segre, *Teatro e romanzo*, Torino, Einaudi, 1984, p. ix. See also chapter 7: "Intertestualità e interdiscorsività nel romanzo e nella poesia", pp. 102-18, already published in Costanzo Di Girolamo and Ivano Paccagnella, eds, *La parola ritrovata. Fonti e analisi letteraria*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1982, pp. 15-28. Alessandro Serpieri *et al.*, *Nel laboratorio di Shakespeare: dalle fonti ai drammi*, Parma, Pratiche Editrice, 1988, 4 vols, remains an invaluable contribution to the analysis of linear transmission and transformation; see especially vol. I: *Il quadro teorico*.

[6]   Robert S. Miola, "Seven Types of Intertextuality", in *Shakespeare, Italy, and Intertextuality*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004, pp. 13-25: 13.

[7]   Janet Clare, *Shakespeare's Stage Traffic: Imitation, Borrowing and Competition in Renaissance Theatre*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 1.

establish source study as relevant while questioning older assumptions. Problematizing linear criteria means viewing relations and knowledge of sources more dynamically[8], without leaving them "inert in the process of interpretation, dead bones uncovered in the living text but with few implications for its final shape"[9]; it also means considering, as Drakakis does, "the dilemma of Shakespeare's own 'reading' and our reading Shakespeare", that is, the question of whether "Shakespeare *read* in the way that we read"[10].

My concern in the following pages is not to assess this point with regard to Shakespeare, but to raise questions on how reading may affect linear transmission in its various stages of reception and reinterpretation of the Romeo and Juliet story before Shakespeare, and how, in turn, we read those stages. I will consider linearity as an inevitable paradigm in this case, rooted in the peculiar line of translations and adaptations of the story behind the play, and will regard it in terms of a dynamic and complex process embedded in the larger cultural context in which translation is grounded. Each stage will be viewed as a palimpsest of readings, stratified with successive processes of selection and inclusion of material derived from each immediate source, but also from other contemporary cultural models and influences, as well as interdiscursive material. While not entirely adhering to an idea of "amorphous" and "boundless heterogenous intertextuality", suggesting, as Drakakis notes, an "apparently free circulation of texts [that] resembles Greenblatt's circulation of social energy"[11], I agree with Lynch that

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8   See Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 30.

9   Catherine Belsey, "The Elephant's Graveyards Revisited: Shakespeare at Work in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *All's Well That Ends Well*", *Shakespeare Survey*, 68 (2015), pp. 62-72: 64.

10 Drakakis, p. 322. In this respect, practices of *aemulatio*, or competitive imitation, should also be taken into account: see Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1982; Mariangela Tempera, "Shakespearean Outdoings: *Titus Andronicus* and Italian Renaissance Tragedy", in *Shakespeare and Renaissance Literary Theory: Anglo-Italian Transactions*, ed. Michele Marrapodi, Farnham, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 75-88.

11 Drakakis, p. 322. My resistance to this idea is to the possibility it opens of indiscriminate and endless suggestions very much arguable on subjective and variable intuitions.

"the sources themselves can be reexamined as products of intertextuality – endlessly complex, mutilayered fields of interpretation that Shakespeare refashioned and reconfigured into alternative fields of interpretations"[12]. If, as Lynch remarks, this poses a contradiction, it is to reconcile authorial intentionality with the idea of "forces beyond authorial control"[13], a fact that may be true, in various degrees, for Shakespeare and for the authors of his more immediate sources alike.

According to Bullough, the main or perhaps the one source that Shakespeare followed, while also knowing William Painter's twenty-fifth novella in the second book of his *Palace of Pleasure* (1567), was Arthur Brooke's long poem in poulter's measure *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562)[14]. Kenneth Muir and Stuart Gillespie agree with him, although Muir suggests that "there are some slight indications that Shakespeare may have read besides Brooke, Painter, Da Porto, and Groto"[15]. And yet, the two evidences Muir brings about Groto are so tenuous that he himself dismisses them. Then he claims that "Romeo goes in disguise to the Cappelletti house in the hope of seeing a woman who has scorned him"[16], but in fact what Da Porto says is that Romeo goes to the feast to follow his woman – not a scornful one. Bullough also affirms that "Romeo goes, disguised as a nymph, to a Carnival ball at his enemies house in hope of seeing a lady who has scorned his love", and that "he soon abandons pursuit of his cruel fair one" – a

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[12] Stephen Lynch, *Shakespearean Intertextuality: Studies in Select Sources and Plays*, Westport-London, Greenwood Press, 1998, p. 1.

[13] "Shakespeare certainly made deliberate and intentional choices: to begin with, he chose (or accepted) particular texts to rewrite and refashion the stage. Yet virtually all of Shakespeare's revisionary strategies were shaped and influenced by multiple forces beyond authorial control – not only the historical, political, and religious contexts of early modern England, but also the more particular forces that would bear upon a professional playwright, such as contemporary stage practices, generic decorum, audience expectations, the number and qualities of available actors, state censorship, and even the geographical locus and marginal cultural status of the theater itself" (Lynch, p. 2).

[14] Geoffrey Bullough, ed., *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966, 8 vols, vol. I, p. 274.

[15] Kenneth Muir, *The Sources of Shakespeare's Plays*, London-New York, Routledge, 1977, p. 38.

[16] Muir, p. 38. For the discussion of Groto, see Muir, pp. 38-39.

detail which is never mentioned in Da Porto[17]. Is perhaps Da Porto being read through Shakespeare? In turn, Muir argues that "Shakespeare agrees with Boaistuau, and not with Bandello, Painter and Brooke, in making Romeo go to the Capulet's ball in the hope of meeting his cruel mistress"[18]. If the Da Porto detail mentioned above were correct, Shakespeare would also agree with him, or, better, only with him, since no other novella in the transmission of the story has Romeo follow his cruel mistress to the feast, Boaistuau's included. Except that his woman is not cruel, Da Porto's is the only case in which Romeo goes to the ball to follow her. It may also be recalled that Bullough further claims that "some of [Boaistuau's] variants are noteworthy since they were passed on to Shakespeare. Thus, whereas Bandello's hero went to the ball with the idea of distracting his mind from his cruel lady by taking part in social gaieties, the French Romeo goes in hope of seeing her"[19]. The French writer, however, follows Bandello closely here and has Romeo attend all the feasts in town "pensant par ce moyen esteindre les estincelles de ses anciennes flammes"[20]. In turn, Gillespie remarks that proof that Brooke would be Shakespeare's immediate source is that "some very specific incidents in the play (such as Juliet's asking the name of the masquers, with Romeo's coming last, I.v.126-36) are found exclusively in Brooke"[21]. But as a matter of fact, in both Bandello and Boaistuau, too, Romeo's name is the last to be revealed, a detail introduced precisely by Bandello, as, in Da Porto, Juliet already knows Romeo and, at the feast, calls him by his name. Apart from these plot details, there are also interpretative questions which bring more prominently to the table the problem of how we read what those writers read – and rewrote. Gillespie's agrees with Muir's interpretation of Brooke's Romeo as being engaged in "the sexual pursuit of a virtuous maid" before falling in love with Juliet; thus, Shakespeare's making it "the typical

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[17] Bullough, p. 270.

[18] Muir, p. 39.

[19] Bullough, p. 273.

[20] Pierre Boaistuau, "Histoire troisiesme, De deux amans, dont l'un mourut de venin, l'autre de tristesse", in *Histoires Tragiques*, ed. Richard A. Carr, Paris, Champion, 1977, pp. 63-119: 67.

[21] Stuart Gillespie, *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sources*, London-New York, Continuum, 2004, p. 67.

romantic love of the sonneteers for a cruel beauty" produces "a more effective contrast with Romeo's love for Juliet"[22]. And yet, as will be seen, Brooke follows Boaistuau, who, in turn, follows Bandello, in depicting Romeo's despondency in ways clearly remindful of the disconsolate male lover of lyrical poetry, or, as Perocco notices, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 5.9 ("Federigo degli Alberighi ama e non è amato e in cortesia spendendo si consuma"). Here is Bandello:

> Si trovava Romeo alora fieramente innamorato d'una gentildonna a la quale passavano circa dui anni che s'era dato in preda, ed ancor che tutto il dì ove ella a chiese od altrove andava, sempre la seguitasse, nondimeno ella d'un solo sguardo mai non gli era stata cortese. Avevale più e più volte scritto lettere, ed ambasciate mandato, ma troppa era la rigida durezza de la donna che non sofferiva di far un buon viso a l'appassionato giovine. Il che a lui era tanto grave e molesto a poter comportare che per l'estremo dolore che ne pativa, dopo l'essersi infinite volte lamentato, deliberò da Verona partirsi, e star fuori uno o dui anni, e con varii viaggi per l'Italia macerar questo suo sfrenato appetito. Vinto poi dal fervente amore che le portava, biasimava se stesso che in così folle pensiero fosse caduto e a modo veruno partirsi non sapeva. Tal hora tra sé diceva: "Non sia già vero che io costei più ami, poi che chiaramente a mille effetti conosco la servitù mia non l'esser cara. A che seguirla ovunque va, se il vagheggiarla nulla mi giova? Egli mi conviene non andar né a chiesa né a luogo ov'ella si sia, che forse non la veggendo, questo mio fuoco che dai suoi begli occhi l'esca e l'alimento prende, si scemerà à poco à poco". Ma che! tutti i suoi pensieri riuscivano vani, perciò che pareva, quanto più ella ritrosa si mostrava, e che ei meno di speranza aveva, che tanto più l'amor verso lei crescesse, e che quel dì che non la vedeva non potesse aver bene.[23]

Shakespeare accentuates this aspect, but the model is already there.

This short list of 'misreadings' is meant to introduce the topic of the present article, which will be concerned with some examples of

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[22]   Gillespie, p. 68; Muir, p. 42.

[23]   Matteo Bandello, "La sfortunata morte di dui infelicissimi amanti che l'uno di veleno e l'altro di dolore morirono. Con varii accidenti", in Daria Perocco, ed., *La prima Giulietta: Edizione critica e commentata delle novelle* Giulietta e Romeo *di Luigi Da Porto e di Matteo Maria Bandello*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2017, pp. 83-125; pp. 87-88. On Boccaccio, see Bandello, p. 88, n. 37.

the processes of transformation of Romeo's masculinity in the novella tradition. A discussion of what Shakespeare made of it would constitute a chapter apart in the analysis of sources. Here it can only be recalled that one question criticism has often lingered on, at least since Coppélia Kahn's study of what coming of age meant in Verona[24], is the role gender has in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is perhaps not coincidental that, before contemporary critical attention to this issue increasingly underlined the construction – and subversion – of male and female identities in this play[25], difficulties in casting Romeo on stage were long lamented, inevitably raising a gender case. All the greatest English nineteenth-century actors apparently failed to offer convincing interpretations. Both Edmund Kean and, later, his son Charles were notorious examples of glaring flops, and, apparently, Macready, Phelps and Irving did not have better success, all of them being suited to less youthful tragic parts. In brief, "Romeo became a role actors sought to avoid"[26]. But while nearly all major male actors failed as Romeo, women proved to fit the part. One famous case is Ellen Tree, who, in 1829, at Covent Garden, played opposite Fanny Kemble, who described the play as the "only occasion on which I ever acted Juliet to a Romeo who looked the part"[27]. An even more famous instance is American actress Charlotte Cushman, who, on her 1845 tour, was an enormously successful Romeo opposite her sister Susan as Juliet in a performance which was perceived as passionately lesbian. Loehlin reports a few telling comments: "Miss

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[24] Coppélia Kahn, "Coming of Age in Verona", *Modern Language Studies*, 8:1 (1977-1978), pp. 5-22.

[25] On the complication of male sexual identity and homosocial bonds, with particular, yet not exclusive, regard to Mercutio, see Joseph A. Porter, *Shakespeare's Mercutio: His History and Dram*a, Chapel Hill-London, University of North Carolina Press, 1988; Jonathan Goldberg, "Romeo and Juliet Open Rs", in *Queering the Renaissance*, ed. Jonathan Goldberg, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 1994, pp. 218-35; Robert Appelbaum, "'Standing to the Wall': The Pressures of Masculinity in *Romeo and Juliet*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 48:3 (1997), pp. 251-72. On gender boundaries and their representation in early modern English theatre and culture, see Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

[26] James N. Loehlin, "Introduction", in William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. James N. Loehlin, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 1-85: 22.

[27] Loehlin, p. 27.

Cushman has suddenly placed a living, breathing, burning Italian upon boards where we have hitherto had an unfortunate and somewhat energetic Englishman" (one review); "Miss Cushman took the part of Romeo, and no one would ever have imagined she was a woman, her figure and her voice being so masculine, but her face was very plain" (Queen Victoria); "just *man* enough to be a *boy*!" (one witness)[28]. The case was made unequivocal in an article in *Britannia*: "It is open to question whether Romeo may not best be impersonated by a woman, for it is thus only that in actual representation can we view the passionate love of this play made real and palpable"[29].

Victorian ideas of masculinity aside, allusions to Romeo's own ambiguous manliness are frequent in the play, most clearly in III.i, when he blames Juliet's beauty for having made him "effeminate":

> This gentleman, the Prince's near ally,
> My very friend, hath got this mortal hurt
> In my behalf; my reputation stained
> With Tybalt's slander – Tybalt, that an hour
> Hath been my cousin. O sweet Juliet,
> Thy beauty hath made me effeminate
> And in my temper softened valour's steel! (III.i.111-17)[30]

As Bruce R. Smith remarks in his study of masculinity in Shakespeare, "To love a woman was, or so it could feel, to *become* a woman"[31], a point Romeo proves to be very anxious about, re-establishing male friendship and masculine vengeful aggressiveness as essential qualifiers of his own male identity. But when soon afterwards he bursts into tears and threatens to commit suicide because of the ban, that same virile identity vacillates and it is to the Friar to sanction his weakness as beastly womanish:

> Hold thy desperate hand!

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[28]   Loehlin, pp. 29-31.
[29]   Loehlin, p. 31.
[30]   All quotations from the play refer to the third edition of the Arden series: William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. René Weiss, London, Bloomsbury, 2012.
[31]   Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 107.

> Art thou a man? Thy form cries out thou art.
> Thy tears are womanish; thy wild acts denote
> The unreasonable fury of a beast.
> Unseemly woman in a seeming man,
> And ill-beseeming beast in seeming both.
> Thou hast amazed me. (III.iii.107-13)

As Lynch remarks with regard to *As You Like It*, "Shakespeare does not merely undermine the Petrarchan and pastoral traditions of the romance, but also undermines and refutes the implicit gender structures of the source texts"[32]. My concern here is not to demonstrate the same with regard to *Romeo and Juliet*, but to offer textual comparison of selected passages of the novella tradition to lay the basis for further inquiry into a broader intertextual field and finally allow a new approach to Shakespeare. This can be done once the processes of transformation of that particular aspect in the novellas have been clarified as to how that transmission took place, whether variation was by regular focal shifts or by abrupt and radical innovation or unexpected restoration of previous variants, and what those options possibly imply. This will also clarify which gender structures informed the various novellas and how they were mutually related; in short, how Romeo appeared before 'Romeo' and what this may have suggested to Shakespeare.

As beautiful or more beautiful?

When we first hear Romeo speak at Capulet's feast in Shakespeare's play, we hear lines on Juliet. In a famous cascade of five couplets, he praises her splendour that "doth teach the torches to burn bright" (I.v.43) and describes her unique beauty as the precious ornament of the night, or as an incomparable snowy dove within a flock of crows, before voicing his wish to touch her hand. All we hear about him is that he is "a portly gentleman" (l. 65) and "a virtuous and well-governed youth" (l. 67): Capulet wants to restrain the aggressiveness of bilious Tybalt and gives him valid reasons, which the audience also hear. This is not the first time we encounter Romeo: he has already made his entrance in I.i and we

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[32]   Lynch, p. 2.

have seen him pose as the melancholy lover of the Petrarchan tradition. Now he is masked and Tybalt recognizes him by his voice, which tells us nothing about his appearance, except it underlines that he is wearing a visor.

Being narratives, it is no surprise that the novellas provide more information about his aspect and his general demeanour. Interestingly, the first novella in the narrative chain raises textual questions that have an effect upon Romeo's characterisation. Da Porto's text was first published in 1530, then reprinted in 1535 and finally published in 1539 in an edition generally considered spurious. Recently, two later manuscripts have also been discussed, but they follow the print editions[33]. The 1530 one contains a curious editorial variant, which was expunged from the 1539 one and apparently not replicated in the later manuscripts. In this passage, which describes Romeo's physical looks, his beauty is said to be like that of the women at the feast, but, before printing the word "agguagliava" (was like), the edition incongruously also prints the word "avanzava" (surpassed):

> Era costui *giovane e molto bellissimo*, *grande della persona*, *leggiadro e accostumato assai*: perché trattasi la maschera, come ogni altro facea, et in *habito di ninfa* trovandosi, non fu occhio che a rimirarlo non volgesse, sì per *la sua bellezza*, *che quella d'ogni donna {avanzava} che ivi fosse agguagliava*, come per meraviglia ch'in quella massimamente la notte fosse venuto, ma con più efficacia.[34]

Is Romeo as beautiful as the women or more beautiful? In her recent edition, Perocco chooses the variant "agguagliava", but, in a note, she adds this comment: "it is Carnival and Romeo is donning a whole costume (which also makes him change sex) and therefore

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[33] One contained in a sixteenth-century in-quarto codex (but Perocco suggests seventeenth-century handwriting) kept in the Biblioteca Governativa dei Gerolamini (Napoli) and the other one in an in-folio codex kept in the Biblioteca Universitaria Estense (Modena), possibly donated to the library in the late eighteenth century. See Perocco, "Nota al testo", in *La prima Giulietta*, pp. 37-38.

[34] Luigi Da Porto, "Historia novellamente ritrovata di due nobili amanti, con la loro pietosa morte intervenuta già nella città di Verona nel tempo del Signor Bartolomeo della Scala", in Perocco, pp. 47-75: 50-51, my emphasis. My use of curly brackets reflects Perocco's choice to expunge "avanzava". The 1539 edition has "donna" in place of "ninfa".

he becomes more beautiful than all the women at the feast"[35]. If this remark is correct, as I believe, the obvious lexical choice would be "avanzava", not "agguagliava", even if this would contradict both the 1539 edition and the two later manuscripts. That this is likely the correct choice is suggested by the immediate follow-up of the story, when Giulietta finally addresses Romeo by expressing her amazement at his incomparable beauty, surpassing that of all women at the feast[36]:

> La donna doppo un breve sorriso schifando d'essere con lui veduta, o udita ragionare, ancora gli disse: "Io vi giuro, Romeo, per mia fé, che *non è qui donna, la quale come voi siete, agli occhi miei bella paia*". Alla quale il giovane già tutto di lei acceso rispose: "Qual io mi sia sarò alla vostra beltade, s'a quella non spiacerà, fedel servo".[37]

Bandello places the story within a different time-frame, which antedates the feast to sometime after Christmas. Accordingly, Romeo does not wear a female costume but a mask with no implication of cross-dressing and femaleness. Here Romeo is "di venti in ventun anni" and "forse il più bello e cortese di tutta la gioventù di Verona"[38]. Likewise, in Boaistuau, he is "aagé de vingt à vingt et un ans, le plus beau et mieux accomply gentilhomme qui fust en toute la jeunesse de Veronne"[39]; when he goes to the feast, the narrator qualifies him as a "jeune adolescent" endowed with a "naïfve beauté"[40]. Brooke introduces "Romeus" as one

> who was of race a Montague,
> Upon whose tender chin, as yet, no manlike beard there grew,

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[35] Perocco, p. 50, n. 19, my translation.

[36] Robert Henke confirms this reading while not pursuing the topic further: "the women are overcome by his dazzling, hermaphroditic beauty, said to surpass that of any other woman in attendance (a thought later seconded by Giulietta when she first encounters him)" (Robert Henke, "Public and Private Spheres and 'the Civic' Turn in Da Porto, Bandello, and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*", in *Shakespeare,* Romeo and Juliet, *and Civic Life: The Boundaries of Civic Space*, eds Silvia Bigliazzi and Lisanna Calvi, London-New York, Routledge, 2016, pp. 66-81: 70).

[37] Da Porto, p. 52, my emphasis.

[38] Bandello, p. 87.

[39] Boaistuau, p. 64.

[40] Boaistuau, p. 68.

> Whose beauty and whose shape so far the rest did stain,
> That from the chief of Verona youth he greatest fame did gain.
> (ll. 53-56)

Painter chimes in: being "of the age of. xx. or. xxi. yeres", he is "the fairest and best conditioned Gentleman that was amongs the Veronian youth"[41]. All novellas underline his beauty and youthful age (albeit already in his early twenties) without suggesting femininity as Da Porto does. Only Brooke mentions his lack of physical signs of manliness (such as a beard), with a vague hint of androgyny within a context pervaded by complimentary comments on his excellence reminiscent of the language of contemporary amorous poetry (his beauty 'eclipses' that of all other youths: 'stain', *OED*, 1.b).

All novellas also underline that all women marvel at his being there once they see his face unmasked, amazed at his audacity for being in the house of his enemy; if reference to masculine attraction is meant, it is only implied[42]. Boaistuau and Painter clarify that the women were 'also' astounded by his looks, with a shift in the order of the causes that refocuses the attention on his courage[43]. Brooke recuperates Da Porto's order foregrounding their wonderment at his beauty before his audacity:

> But of the women chief, their gazing eyes that threw,
> To wonder at his sightly shape and beauty's spotless hue,
> With which the heavens him had and nature so bedecked,
> *That ladies thought the fairest dames were foul in his respect.*
> And in their head beside, another wonder rose,
> How he durst put himself in throng among so many foes.
> (ll. 177-80; my emphasis)

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[41] William Painter, "The goodly Historie of the true and constant Loue betwene Rhomeo and Ivlietta, the one of whom died of poison, and the other of sorrow and heuiness", in *The second tome of the Palace of pleasure*, imprinted at London, by Henry Bynneman, for Nicholas England, 1567, pp. 218v-247r: 219v.

[42] "Ciascuno guardava Romeo e massimamente le donne, e tutti si meravigliavano ch'egli sì liberamente in quella casa dimorasse" (Bandello, p. 89).

[43] "car outre la naïfve beauté de laquelle nature l'avoit doué, encores s'esmerveilloient-elles d'avantage de son asseurance" (Boaistuau, p. 68); "for bisides his natiue beautie wherewith nature had adorned him, they maruelled at his audacitie" (Painter, p. 221r).

Is it a coincidence that not only the order of the narrator's comments but also the qualification of Romeo's beauty as surpassing that of women is present in Da Porto and Brooke only? For the time being, it can be noticed that physical effeminateness is a trait shared, in different degrees and ways, by both the most distant and the closest sources of Shakespeare's play, as Bandello was the first to downplay feminine traits and refocalize the praise on Romeo's moral qualities (his being well-mannered, amiable and courteous), initiating a line that was then followed by Boaistuau and Painter.

Da Porto's and Brooke's convergence, however, stops here, as the tale of Romeo's falling in love with Juliet aligns Brooke more with the Bandello-Boaistuau tradition. In all the post-Da Porto novellas, Romeo is transfixed by Juliet's beauty at first sight, and, in Boaistuau, Brooke and Painter, he soon feels as if in a "new tempest tossed"[44] ("agité de ceste nouvelle tempeste"[45]; "tossed with this new tempest"[46]). Da Porto shifts the focus on Juliet's own apprehension of his beauty and shapes Romeo's own getting inflamed with her as a response to her expression of passionate amazement at his sight:

> Era dall'altro canto di lei un nobile giovane, Marcuccio Guercio nominato; il quale per natura così il luglio come il genaio, le mani sempre freddissime havea. Perché, giunto Romeo Montechi, che così era il giovane chiamato, al manco lato della donna, e come in tal ballo s'usa la bella sua mano in mano presa, disse a lui quasi subito la giovane forse vaga d'udirlo favellare: "Benedetta sia la vostra venuta qui presso me, messer Romeo", alla quale il giovane, che già *del suo mirare* accorto s'era, maravigliato del parlar di costei, disse: "Come, madonna[47], benedetta la mia venuta?" Et ella rispose: "Sì, benedetto il vostro venire qui appo me; perciochè voi almeno questa stanca mano calda mi terrete, onde Marcuccio la destra mi agghiaccia". Costui preso alquanto d'ardire seguì: "Se io a voi con la mia mano la vostra riscaldo, *voi co' begli occhi il mio core accendete*".[48]

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[44]   Arthur Brooke, "The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet", l. 210, in Bullough, p. 291.

[45]   Boaistuau, p. 68.

[46]   Painter, p. 221v.

[47]   "madonna" in the 1539 edition.

[48]   Da Porto, pp. 51-52, my emphasis.

Juliet already knows who Romeo is, and her insistent gaze, not her beauty, makes him aware of her presence. Her daring address to him with a blessing for his coming is reminiscent of the "Benedictus, qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna" addressed to Jesus by the crowd on his entrance in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21.9, Marc 11.11, Luke 19.38, John 12.13), a line incorporated in the Roman Liturgy after the Sanctus hymn. Not coincidentally, this is also the angels' address to Beatrice in *Purgatory*, 30.19: "Tutti dicean: *Benedictus qui venis*!"[49]. Romeo is taken aback and prompted to enquire why his arrival should be so blessed. What follows is a courteous exchange in which he praises her eyes for kindling his heart with passion. But what is it that makes him burn with desire so suddenly, after her long gazing had only attracted his attention, not provoked erotic longing? Bullough is correct when he notices that "Giulietta falls in love with him at first sight and is sad to see him holding himself aloof"[50], but he does not push the argument any further, nor asks why or what this may imply. What does he see in those eyes? Is it not her own desire for him? One wonders whether Da Porto chooses to reiterate an amorous topos or instead wishes to hint at a peculiar erotic dynamic, triggered by narcissistic desire and, as such, functional to the construction of Romeo's character. For one, John Donne was to operate a subtle distinction between the lovers' mutual reflection in each other's eyes and/or interchange of their "ocular rays" or "eye-beams", leading to their unity[51], on the one hand, and, on the other, the woman's fundamentally solipsistic love for her own image borne in the poet's heart, like a King enamoured of the coin bearing

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[49]   Other echoes may also be heard, such as the "benedicta tu in mulieribus" pronounced by Elizabeth when Mary goes to her house (Luke 1.42-3). It also refers to the greeting of the Angel Gabriel in Luke 1.28 and is contained in the Hail Mary.

[50]   Bullough, p. 270.

[51]   As famously in *The Good Morrow* ("My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares, / And true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest", ll. 15-16) and in *The Extasie* ("Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread / Our eyes upon one double string; / So to'intergraft our hands, as yet / Was all the means to make us one, / And pictures in our eyes to get / Was all our propagation", ll. 7-12). All quotations are from John Donne, *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*, ed. C. A. Patrides, London, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1985.

his own imprint[52]. The unfolding of Da Porto's narrative does not develop this point any further, but, albeit embryonic, the ambiguity of Romeo's love remains peculiar to this novella. The following narratives, too, have Juliet bless Romeo's arrival and his final praise of her eyes, but only after their long mutual gaze and after Romeo proves to be the first to fall in love with her beauty. This line, initiated by Bandello[53], clearly swerves from Da Porto. It was passed down to Brooke and Painter before being done away with by Shakespeare, whose Romeo is the one who falls in love with Juliet at first sight and is not the object of her stare, apparently remaining masked to the end of the feast.

Masculine ambiguities

But what of Romeo's masculinity? Da Porto's first hint is right at the beginning, when, before Romeo appears cross-dressed as a nymph, he depicts him as young, handsome, big, graceful, and well-mannered ("Era costui giovane molto e bellissimo, grande della persona, leggiadro e accostumato assai"[54]). His physical massiveness prepares the narrator's final mention of his physical potency when, with great vigour ("nerbo"), he opens the tomb by himself ("come huomo di gran nerbo ch'egli era, per forza il coperchio levatogli"[55]). Less keen on his corporeal strength, Bandello foregrounds his sexual energy instead ("Et essendo Romeo giovine di forte nerbo e molto innamorato, più e più volte à diletto con la sua bella sposa si ridusse"[56]), a topic which Da Porto

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[52] "Image of her whom I love, more then she, / Whose faire impression in my faithfull heart, / Makes mee her *Medall*, and makes her love mee, / As Kings do coynes, to which their stamps impart / The value: goe, and take my heart from hence, / Which now is growne too great and good for me" (*Elegie* X, ll. 1-6).

[53] "Tutto il suo studio era in vagheggiar la bella giovanetta e quella ad altro non metteva il pensiero che a mirar lui; e di tal maniera si guardavano che riscontrandosi talora gli occhi loro ed insieme mescolandosi i focosi raggi de la vista de l'uno e de l'altra, di leggero s'avvidero che amorosamente si miravano, perciò che ogni volta che le viste si scontravano, tutti dui empivano l'aria d'amorosi sospiri, e pareva che per alora altro non desiderassero che di poter, insieme parlando, il loro nuovo fuoco scoprire" (Bandello, p. 91).

[54] Da Porto, p. 50.

[55] Da Porto, p. 68.

[56] Bandello, p. 99.

mentions only to emphasize the mutual enjoyment of the two lovers ("più notti del loro amore felicemente goderono"[57]). Elaborating on Bandello's image of manly love-making, Boaistuau casts Romeo as the amorous fighter who "rompant les saincts liens de virginité, print possession de la place, laquelle n'avoit encores esté assiegée"[58] – a metaphor maintained by both Brooke and Painter[59]. Once again, Da Porto seems to be on a slightly different track.

A more interesting detail connected with Shakespeare's own questioning of gender roles is Romeo's emotional reaction to the news of his ban. Not surprisingly, his self-accusation of effeminacy in III.i is absent from all the novellas, as it is strictly intertwined with Romeo's relation with Mercutio, a character who, in the sources, only appears at Capulet's feast and is then completely forgotten. Thus, the brawl leading to Romeo's banishment has Romeo fight and kill Tybalt in response to his attacks after his own repeated attempts to assuage him. In all the novellas but one (Da Porto's), his reaction to Tybalt is not motivated by his sense of guilt for the death of a friend he feels his own 'feminacy' responsible for – as in Shakespeare; it is, in different degrees, an expression of 'virile' aggressiveness and self-defence. Da Porto's is a case apart, as Romeo is no peace-maker and he kills Tybalt with no excuse but straight out of wrath at seeing many of his household wounded[60];

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[57]   Da Porto, p. 56.

[58]   Boaistuau, pp. 81-82.

[59]   "And now the virgin's fort hath warlike Romeus got, / In which as yet no breach was made by force of cannon shot, / And now in ease he doth possess the hopéd place" (Brooke, ll. 921-23). "Rhomeo vnloosing the holy lines of virginity, tooke possession of the place, which was not yet besieged" (Painter, p. 227v).

[60]   "in modo che le cose sottosopra andando, né Montecchi a Cappelletti, né Cappelletti a Montecchi ceder volendo, nella via del Corso se attaccarono una volta insieme; ove combattendo Romeo, et alla sua donna rispetto havendo, di percuotere alcuno della sua casa si guardava; pur alla fine sendo molti di suoi feriti, e quasi tutti della strada cacciati, vinto dall'ira sopra Thebaldo Capelletti corso, che 'l più fiero de' suoi nemici pareva, d'un solo colpo in terra morto lo distese; e gli altri che già per la morte di costui erano smariti, in grandissima fuga rivolse" (Da Porto, p. 57). Curiously, mention of a fight sparked off by a contention over ceding the way in the street, a topic mentioned by Sampson and Gregory in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, I.i.10-17, occurs only in this novella at this point, where all the narratives following Bandello talk about the Capulets' assault on a group of Montagues near "Porta dei Borsari" towards "Castelvecchio": "molti di quelli de i Capelletti incontrarono alcuni de i Montecchi e con l'arme fieramente gli assalirono" (Bandello, p. 100).

this is the only version which has Romeo kill Tybalt for revenge rather than self-defence as in Shakespeare.

Alongside signs of physical strength, sexual energy, and manly aggressiveness, these novellas contain hints of Romeo's emotional weakness which put his 'masculinity' into perspective. In all of them, Romeo meets Juliet before leaving Verona (at the Friar's cell in Da Porto[61], in her garden in Bandello[62]), and the two lovers cry bitterly over their parting. Romeo is as desperate as Juliet, yet resolute in opposing her plan to follow him disguised as a servant. He claims that he is confident that the ban will shortly be cancelled and he will be able to be back soon. When in Mantua, Romeo is informed (by Pietro in Da Porto and via the Friar in Bandello) about the arranged marriage of Juliet with Paris, and he writes back to her recommending that she should not worry, as he will soon return and take her away from her father's house. Not surprisingly, in both Da Porto and Bandello, the news of her death plunges him into despair and self-accusation, as he holds his own indolence responsible for it[63]. Why did he not hurry back to Verona to free her

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[61] "al giovane per lei sola abbandonare il partirsi dalla sua patria dolea, né volendosene per cosa alcuna partire senza torre da lei lagrimevole comiato, et in casa sua andare non potendo, al frate ricorse […] Et andati amendue nel confessore assai la loro sciagura insieme piansero" (Da Porto, p. 57).

[62] Where they commingle despair with the enjoyment of love-making: "Entrato nel giardino fu da Giulietta con infinite lagrime raccolto. Stettero buona pezza tutti dui senza poter formar parola, bevendo, insieme basciandosi, l'un de l'altro le stillanti lagrime che in abbondanza grandissima distillavano. Poi condolendosi che sì tosto divider si devessero, altro non sapevano fare che lagrimare e lamentarsi de la contraria fortuna ai lor amori, ed abbracciandosi e basciandosi insieme, più volte amorosamente insieme presero piacere" (Bandello, p. 102). In Boaistuau, Brooke and Painter, they meet in her chamber.

[63] As usual, Bandello enlarges Da Porto's more succinct version ("io solo sono stato della tua morte cagione, perché, come scrissi, a levarti dal padre non venni", Da Porto, p. 67): "Ahi traditor Romeo, disleale, perfido e di tutti gli ingrati ingratissimo! Non è il dolore che abbia la tua donna morta, che non si muor di doglia; ma tu, crudele, sei stato il manigoldo, sei stato il micidiale. Tu quello sei che morta l'hai. Ella ti scriveva pure che prima voleva morire che lasciarsi da nessun altro sposare e che tu andassi per ogni modo a levarla de la casa del padre. E tu sconoscente, tu pigro, tu poco amorevole, tu can mastino, le davi parole che ben anderesti, che faresti, e che stesse di buona voglia, e andavi indugiando di dì in dì, non ti sapendo risolvere a quanto ella voleva" (Bandello, p. 117).

from home? Was he really indolent or not passionate enough or, perhaps, not 'man' enough?

No such explanation is offered in those two novellas, but an indirect comment may be evinced in Boaistuau's getting rid of the whole episode, perhaps sensing ambiguity or inconsistency or narrative inefficacy. The result is that Romeo remains unaware of the marriage plan with Paris, he does not promise to return to Verona soon to free her from home, and, at the news of her death, he does not accuse himself but despairs and plans his own death:

> Au son de ce triste message, Rhomeo commença à mener tel dueil qu'il sembloit que ses esprits, ennuyez du martyre de sa passion, deussent à l'instant abandonner son corps. Mais forte amour, qui ne le peut permettre faillir jusques à l'extremité, luy meist en sa fantasie que s'il pouvoit mourir aupres d'elle, sa mort seroit plus glorieuse, et elle (ce luy sembloit) mieux satisfaicte.[64]

Both Brooke and Painter followed his lead, the former expanding this passage to cover nine lines (2545-54) and both sticking to a line of action in which Romeo never communicates with Juliet while in Mantua. But whereas Painter never swerves from this line, mentioning Romeo's recovery to the Friar's cell after the brawl and following step by step Boaistuau's narrative stages to the end, Brooke makes one interesting change, providing the model for the Friar's rebuke of Romeo in Shakespeare's play (III.iii):

> "Art thou," quoth he, "a man? Thy shape saith, so thou art;
> Thy crying, and thy weeping eyes denote a woman's heart.
> For manly reason is quite from off thy mind outchased,
> And in her stead affections lewd and fancies highly placed:
> So that I stood in doubt, this hour, at the least,
> If thou a man or woman wert, or else a brutish beast". (ll. 1353-58)

In Boaistuau, as later in Painter[65], all we are told about Romeo after he kills Tybalt is that he "voyant son desastre, s'en va

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[64] Boaistuau, p. 108.

[65] "Rhomeo, who séeing yl fortune at hand, in secrete wise conueyed him self to Frier Laurence, at the Friers Franciscanes. And the Frier vnderstanding of his facte, kept him in a cetaine secrete place of his Couent, vntil Fortune did otherwise prouide for his safe going abrode" (Painter, p. 229r).

secrettement vers frere Laurens à sainct François"[66]; we do not know what happens there. Why did Brooke feel the need to add a long section where Romeo first learns from the Friar that the Prince banished him from Verona and plunges into the depths of despair (ll. 1285-96), then he threatens to kill himself (ll. 1297-353) and eventually is reprimanded (ll. 1354-480), convinced to desist and reassured by the Friar (ll. 1481-96), before he is given instruction on how to leave Verona and gain the favour of the Mantuan Prince in order to appease Escalus (ll. 1497-506), and is finally told to pay a last visit to his wife (ll. 1507-10)? Overall, it is a 225-line long passage. Expansions are not unusual in Brooke, but this one is an entirely new extensive interpolation. What prompted Brooke to raise gender issues at this point by playing on Romeo's beastly female weakness after showing him like a furious animal, a boar or a lion, combating against Tybalt some two hundred lines earlier?

> It was but lent to him that could repay again,
> And give him death for interest, a well forborne gain.
> Right as a forest boar, that lodgéd in the thick,
> Pinchéd with dog, or else with spear y-prickéd to the quick,
> His bristles stiff upright upon his back doth set,
> And in his foamy mouth his sharp and crooked tusks doth whet;
> Or as a lion wild that rampeth in his rage,
> His whelps bereft, whose fury can no weaker beast assuage;
> Such seeméd Romeus in every other's sight,
> When he him shope, of wrong received t'avenge himself by fight.
> Even as two thunderbolts thrown down out of the sky,
> That through the air, the massy earth, and seas, have power to fly;
> So met these two, and while they change a blow or twain,
> Our Romeus thrust him through the throat, and so is Tybalt slain.
> (ll. 1021-34)

(Dis)Continuities

The pamphlet entitled *HAEC-VIR Or The Womanish-Man*, which Lynch appropriately recalls in his discussion of *As You Like It*[67], tells

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[66]   Boaistuau, p. 84.
[67]   Lynch, pp. 6, 15, 29-31.

us something about how genders were qualified by dress codes and behavioural conventions, and how their subversion was perceived as the cause of monstrous disorder. The pamphlet dates from 1620, but, although following *Romeo and Juliet*, it recapitulates decades-old debates. After *Haec-Vir*, the Womanish-Man, and *Hic-Mulier*, the Man-Woman, defend their right to be subversive genderwise, the latter advocating freedom for women and labelling "Custome" an "Idiot"[68], both eventually relapse into an orthodox view summarized as follows. *Haec-Vir*, who will finally change his name into *Hic-Vir*, and all other men will be "men in shape, men in shew, men in words, men in actions, men in counsell, men in example". In turn, *Hic-Mulier*, henceforth to be called *Haec-Mulier*, and all other women will "loue and serue [men] then will […] heare and obey [them]; then will like rich Iewels hang at [men's] eares to take [their] Instructions, like true friends follow [men] through all dangers, and like carefull leeches powere oyle into [men's] wonds"[69]. Roles will thus be restored, gender differences re-established, and, while men will return to be armed once again "with Fortitude and Resolution", all women will "be all [men's] most excellent thoughts can desire", and finally "deformitie shall packe to Hell"[70]. The language of the conclusive part of the pamphlet resonates with the Friar's images of monstrous male-female disorder in Brooke and Shakespeare, while the characters of *Haec-Vir* suggests ideas of androgyny more famously, and subtly, ingrained in the Master-Mistress fair youth of *Sonnet 20*.

Pinpointing the relevance of this topic, the play foregrounds vigorous manliness from the initial scene preparing the first brawl, with Gregor and Sampson's tribal bawdiness against women and pumped-up virility prompting violence against men for the sake of violence. Within such a context based on clear-cut hierarchies of gender and power roles, Romeo makes his first appearance as an outstandingly delicate boy, all "for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in" (II.iv.38-39), strongly contrasting with Sampson's and

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68   Anon., *HAEC-VIR Or The Womanish-Man. Being an Answere to a late Booke intituled Hic-Mulier*. Exprest in a briefe Dialogue between *Haec-Vir* the Womanish-Man, and *Hic-Mulier* the Man-Woman, London, printed for I.T. and are to be sold at Christ Church gate, 1620, B2.

69   Anon., C3v.

70   Anon., C3v-C4r.

Gregory's flaunted obscene 'civility' directed at the Montague maids, including punning on violation of their maidenhood (I.i.21-22). In fact, Romeo and Juliet stand apart as unusual specimens of subversive youths within deeply gendered Verona[71]. When Romeo becomes aware of his own 'otherness', he accuses Juliet of making him effeminate and realigns himself with the code of masculinity prevalent in town, heating himself up into blind fury against Tybalt, before relapsing into crying and despairing 'like a woman' and being rebuked by the Friar. Juliet is outspoken against female custom with Romeo and obdurate with her father in ways that make her the opposite of woman as the Biblical "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7) insolently evoked by Sampson in I.i.4-15. She remains duntless 'like a man' to the end, promising not to be gripped by "womanish fear" when she takes the potion (IV.i.120), and finally commits suicide 'manly' with a sword.

The story as passed down to Shakespeare is not entirely linear nor fully consistent in the treatment of Romeo's and Juliet's gender-transgression. The Friar's invocation that Juliet demonstrate unflinching temper in the potion plot acquires glaring gender-oriented connotations from Boaistuau onward[72]. In this respect, the Italian narratives are less explicit, as they either use indirections and/or allude to the possibly weaker temper of a young girl[73]. Coherently, Boaistuau replaces Juliet's dying by breath-holding (in

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[71] See Silvia Bigliazzi, "Defiance and Denial: Paradigms of Civic Transgression in *Romeo and Juliet*", in Bigliazzi and Calvi, eds, pp. 115-46.

[72] Boaistuau has the Friar recommend that Juliet should "despouille ceste affection feminine, et prends un courage viril" (p. 100). Brooke translates the passage as follows: "Cast off from thee at once the weed of womanish dread, / With manly courage arm thyself from heel unto the head" (ll. 2145-46). And here is Painter: "and put of all feminine affection by taking vpon you a manly stomake" (p. 237r.).

[73] "'Ma dimmi, non temerai del corpo di Thebaldo tuo cugino, che poco è che ivi entro fue seppellito?' La giovane già già tutta lieta disse: "Padre, se per tal via pervenir dovessi a Romeo, senza tema ardirei di passare per l'inferno'" (Da Porto, p. 63). "Egli che assai difficilmente poteva credere ch'una fanciulla fosse sì sicura e tanto audace che in un avello tra morti si lasciasse chiudere, le disse: 'Dimmi, figliuola, non averai tu paura di tuo cugino Tebaldo, che è così poco tempo che fu ucciso, e ne l'arca, ove posta sarai, giace, e deve fieramente putire?' 'Padre mio,' rispose l'animosa giovane 'di questo non vi caglia, che se per passar per mezzo le penaci pene de l'inferno io credessi trovar Romeo, io nulla temerei quel fuoco eternale'" (Bandello, p. 111).

both Da Porto and Bandello) with self-stabbing, a change which remains untouched in Brooke and Painter, as well as in Shakespeare. But if, with regard to these specific aspects, the novella tradition swerves towards more pronounced 'virile' connotations of Juliet in concomitance with the French version, followed by the English ones, that same tradition appears less linear in the case of Romeo.

As we have seen, Da Porto's Romeo is a big, handsome and gentle youth whose first appearance is, incongruously, in the costume of a nymph. He is presented as the angel-like 'female' beauty celebrated in amorous poetry, making his extraordinary appearance at the feast in ways that strike Juliet with sudden love, pushing her to express her amazement in a language reminiscent of the 'Benedictus' of evangelical tradition. As in all the following novellas, in this one, too, Romeo loves an unnamed woman other than Juliet, but here no pining after her is mentioned and he goes to the feast in order to follow her, not to find another beauty[74]. His portrait as a melancholy lover of the sonnet tradition is first drawn by Bandello and then retained in all the subsequent versions of the story. Thus, Da Porto does not expatiate upon Romeo's feelings nor does he show him as the first of the two youths to fall in love. In the first part of this novella, Romeo makes his entrance crossed-dressed, looking very much self-centred and intrigued by Juliet's gaze upon him. But in the second part, his 'manliness' bursts out at the brawl, where he is no peace-maker and kills Tybalt out of sheer vengeful fury, finally showing resoluteness in preventing Juliet from following him in his exile, disguised as a page, because the only way he wants to have her at his side is as his wife[75]. But then he goes to Mantua as a 'dead man' ("come morto divenuto"[76]), hardly suggesting manly 'fortitude', and nothing is said about his permanence there. All we know is that he does not hurry back to Verona to rescue Juliet when he is informed about the marriage

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[74] "(come è degli amanti costume, che le lor donne, siccome col cuore, così anco col corpo, pur che possano, ovunque vanno, seguono) uno giovane delli Montechi la sua donna seguendo, si condusse" (Da Porto, p. 50).

[75] "'Non piaccia a Dio, anima mia cara, che quando meco venire doveste, in altra guisa che in luogo di mia signora vi menassi' disse a lei Romeo" (Da Porto, p. 57).

[76] Da Porto, p. 58.

plan with Paris[77] and later accuses himself of indolence. Compared to this narrative, which, genderwise, shows incompatible traits referable to both codes of femininity and masculinity, Bandello defeminizes Romeo by avoiding ambiguous cross-dressing and elaborates on his first love, on which Da Porto is silent, by creating a figure of pining lover after the chaste and distant mistress, cognate to images of love melancholy in contemporary lyrical poetry. Thus, the overtly conventional frame reinscribes him within a diffused paradigm of masculinity alternative to that dominant in the Veronese families, from the start presented as bloodily inimical and mutually mortal. Whatever its value here, be it an example of the "'recuperative narratives' in which perverse positions of failure or defeat are routinely turned around and re-interpreted as elements within a larger articulation of power", or instead an instance of what Bates calls "perverse *masculinities*"[78], the reinscription of Romeo within a familiar picture of plangent and despondent male passivity guarantees his recognizability. To circumvent Da Porto's ambiguities further, Bandello makes Romeo fall instantly in love with Juliet, later emphasising his sexual potency to an unexpected degree. Romeo's self-accusation of being responsible for Juliet's (apparent) death is retained, and in fact expanded, but as a remain of Da Porto's version, where his irresoluteness sounds more naturally tinged with shades of unmanliness. If Da Porto says nothing about Romeo's permanence in Mantua, Bandello remarks that he has an allowance by his own father, and there remains honourably and well accompanied[79], with no apparent overbearing feelings of sadness – a trait that instead Boaistuau calls attention to[80], laying the ground for Brooke's further expansion (ll. 1741-61) and Painter's more closely derivative

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[77] "egli [havea] alla Giulietta scritto, che per cosa niuna al suo maritare non consentisse, e meno il loro amore facesse aperto, che senza alcun dubbio fra otto o dieci giorni egli prenderia modo di levarla di casa del padre" (Da Porto, p. 61).

[78] Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender, and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 6, 9.

[79] "Quivi, presa una casa, non gli lasciando suo padre mancar danari, onoratamente e ben accompagnato se ne stava" (Bandello, p. 103).

[80] "où il loua maison et, vivant en compaignie honorable, s'essaya pour quelques moys à decevoir l'ennuy qui le tourmentoit" (Boaistuau, p. 92).

rendition[81]. Boaistuau's erasure of Romeo's self-accusation at the news of Juliet's death also dispels doubts about his weak hesitancy. But if the main narrative turns towards disambiguation are marked by Bandello, first, and later by Boaistuau, gradually reinforcing, if by single touches, Romeo's masculine identity, Brooke goes in the opposite direction, interrupting the linear, albeit slightly meandering, transmission of an increasingly 'virilized' figure of young lover. No one says – as Brooke does – that Romeo is beardless, suggesting ephebic connotations; save Da Porto, no one underlines – as Brooke does – that he is more beautiful than the women at the feast; no one calls him – as Brooke does – an "unseemly woman in a seeming man" (III.iii.111). This qualification derives from behavioural inadequacy to male standards of 'fortitude'. And yet, the immediate parallel is the likewise 'grotesque' big, handsome man in the guise of a nymph we find in Da Porto – a Veronese *Haec-Vir* – except that this image suggests gender-hybridization untinted by moral monstrosity and strengthened by narcissistically angel-like behavioural features. As said above, the farthest and the closest sources of Shakespeare's play converge towards this point, but with a difference, whose relevance is suggested by Bandello's excising intervention.

Turning points

What may be gathered from this overview is Bandello's hand in toning down masculine ambiguity. A Dominican friar and Bishop of Agen, Bandello contains the transgressive potential of Da Porto's portrait of an angel-like violent yet hesitant young man and translates it into conventional male paradigms which guarantee manliness while offering an alternative to the vigorous and red-blooded figure of Tybalt, "primo cugino di Giulietta, giovine molto prode de la persona"[82]. If Brooke did not see Da Porto's novella, as lack of documentary evidence seems to suggest, Boaistuau retained Bandello's model of a lyricized Romeo, that belittled the potential for 'bigenderedness' perceivable in Da Porto, and compounded it

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[81]   "where he took a house: and liuing in honorable company, assayed certaine months to put away the griefe which so tomented" (Painter, p. 233r).

[82]   Bandello, p. 100.

with hints of Juliet's courageous manliness, indirectly adding to ideas of male fortitude, resoluteness, and constancy. Interestingly, the Friar's accusation of Romeo's monstrous 'bigenderedness' because of lack of those qualities, as presented in Brooke, emphasizes a critique of Romeo's desperate self-victimization voiced earlier on in the narrative. Before encountering Juliet, Bandello tells about some friends being worried that he consumed himself with unrequited love like "snow against the sun" (a metaphor present in all the following novellas). One friend in particular gives him advice on how to forget that girl, saying that it is extreme madness ("estrema pazzia") to desire what one cannot have, it is a mistake ("errore"), and he should lift from his eyes the veil that blinds him ("il velo che gli acceca") by attending feasts and looking out for other women in order to eventually free himself from his unruly desire ("che affrenerà questo tuo poco regolato appetito, e ti metterà in libertà")[83]. Boaistuau calls the advice a bitter rebuke ("un sien compaignon, plus meur d'aage et de conseil que luy, commença à le reprendre aigrement") and qualifies Romeo's pining as vicious ("ainsi precipité en cest abisme de vices"), erroneous ("l'erreur"), leading him astray from the right route ("Oste ce voile amoureux qui te bande les yeux et qui t'empesche de suyvre le droict sentier")[84]. Brooke follows him closely[85], like Painter[86].

Bandello marks a turning point in many respects and in a very subtle way. He first dispels suspicions of hermaphroditism perceivable in Da Porto and then applies to Romeo the model of dejected and doting masculinity as a recognizable alternative to vigorous manliness, justifiably censured by Romeo's friend with accusations of moral deviance. In this sense, Brooke did not need to read Da Porto to restore the ambiguity excised by Bandello, at least

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[83]   Bandello, p. 89.

[84]   Boaistuau, p. 66.

[85]   "plungéd deep in vice" (l. 123), "error" (l. 128), "ill employéd youth" (l. 126), "henceforth begin / To know and fly the error which too long thou livedst in. / Remove the veil of love, that keeps thine eyes so blind, / That thou ne canst the ready path of thy forefathers find" (ll. 127-30).

[86]   "so drowned in this dongeon of vice", "error", "doe away that amorous vaile or couerture which blindeth thine eyes and letteth thée to follow the right path" (p. 220v).

on a moral plane, that ambiguity was latent in the model of abject and broken masculinity of lyrical poetry Bandello introduced as an antidote to Da Porto's more potentially transgressive figure. Thus, Brooke had only to revive that censorious voice, which he did by interpolating 225 lines on Romeo's monstrous wailing and the Friar's reprimand, in fact suggesting yet another turning point, although potentially embedded in the story as he received it. The question is why he did so if not prompted by linear transmission, but cultural debate on gender deformity might have had a part in the process. This was Brooke's specific legacy to Shakespeare. It was then up to Shakespeare to revise, elaborate on or refute it.

Loci of significance: towards Romeo after Romeo

An analysis conducted on these selected textual passages tells us more than one might expect about discontinuous phenomena and their meaning, inviting further reflection. Without considering the paratexts, which normally contain the ideological programme, and their relation to actual narratives (which they sometimes contradict, as in Brooke[87]), comparison between passages from the different versions along the line of their transmission at the same time shows the relevance of lexical or phrasal borrowings and the need to go beyond them. The convergence of Da Porto and Brooke towards similar forms of masculine ambiguity discloses the permanence, albeit in altered shape, of one and same semantic potential that may take different emphasis and connotation depending on the narrative perspective and the context; it may be shaded, channelled in different forms and blended with different models, it may be kept dormant or activated, perhaps with new overtones and intentions. This nucleus of potential significance may induce us to invoke ideas of architextuality[88], if not a more amorphous field of

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[87] "Brooke is more heavily moral in his Address to the Reader, accusing the lovers of lust and disobedience […]. In the poem itself, however, the translator's sympathy is with the lovers. Brooke stresses Juliet's modesty and Rome's integrity; the Friar is not 'superstitious' but a real sage, of famed virtue, respected by both houses and the Prince" (Bullough, pp. 276-77).

[88] Or the relation between texts that share common features such as genres or subgenres, see Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction,* trans. Jane E. Lewin, Berkeley-Los Angeles-Oxford, University of California Press, 1992.

intertextuality, to resist postulating direct knowledge between distant texts in the absence of documentary evidence. But internal echoes, such as the praise of the beauty of Romeo surpassing that of women in these two texts only, prompts more extensive research in this genetic direction, too. At all events, the model of masculinity embedded in the tradition of amorous lyrical poetry, compounded with other interdiscursive and cultural material, is there and suggests a complex dynamic relation between different types of texts. This invites to reflect about the relevance of loci of significance with different degrees of latency in different texts that may be activated when or if the occasion requires. Evidently, the occasion demanded that Da Porto and Brooke, perhaps independently, suggested masculine ambiguity, yet significantly with diverse implications – clearly less openly censorious, and more intriguing, in the case of Da Porto. Further comparative research into the dynamics of these sources will be able to confirm whether this is the right course. Further research is also needed to map out textual concordances and verify when and if sources other than Brooke agree with Shakespeare where Brooke does not[89]. Studies in that direction will provide us with a better understanding of how Shakespeare's Romeo after these Romeos was part of this process and how he related to it. As Belsey says, "comparison with the sources is where we catch Shakespeare at work. It's what he changes that throws into relief what makes him Shakespeare"[90].

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[89] One example is the lack of reference to Romeo's listening "to Giulietta's voice before revealing himself or being discovered" at night, as in Shakespeare's II.i (Henke, p. 71). This detail is missing in the Boaistuau-Brooke-Painter line while being present in both Da Porto (p. 53) and Bandello (p. 94). See also Romeo's above-mentioned killing of Tybalt out of vengeance and note 60 above.

[90] Belsey, p. 63.

A Bitter Comedy of a Midsummer Night

Marisa Sestito

"A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry"

Contradiction seems to be at the core of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, suggestively symbolized in *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*, the play the workers are going to perform at court to celebrate the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta. It is the director Peter Quince who informs the company about it, quite at ease with the inconsistencies of the title: neither he nor the others are unsettled by the oxymoron attributing woefulness ("most lamentable") to a genre which should be identified instead by mirth and levity ("comedy"). The effect on the public cannot but be ludicrous, even if the additional references confirm the mournful nature of the entertainment emphasizing it through symmetry – "most cruel" mirroring "most lamentable" – and reversal – "death" contradicting "comedy". Both rhetorical devices question the nature of what is actually being proposed by the artisans, as "comedy" does not seem to be the formal structure containing the plot but rather appears as one of the two terms concerned, "death" being the other: according to Quince, it is not

the comedy *of* (i.e. a play containing a story) but the comedy *and* (i.e. a play and a story), which rather complicates the issue[1]. The wording may of course depend on the messy attitude of the would-be players, but there may also be more challenging hypotheses involving metatheatre, thus raising first of all the question whether the "comedy", apparently just a component of the title not identifying the play itself, might focus on the comic ineptitude of clowns attempting a tragic action: an entertaining trial likely to account for Bottom's anticipation of merriness[2].

The suggestions contained in the second part of the title are different: here the tune changes and a positively violent image ("and most cruel death") defines the fate of the two characters concerned. The reference to Pyramus and Thisbe brings into play a further important issue directly involving the main source of the story, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, here masterfully revisited by Shakespeare. The Latin poem constitutes the inspiring force of the play, spreading from the centre of the artisans' 'interlude'[3] to the other levels of the plot, where specific elements of *The Most Lamentable Comedy* are reproduced, as in the case of the older generation's hostility towards the young people (Egeus vs. Hermia), responsible for triggering the action in the *Dream* (flying from the court into the forest). Ovid's influence pervades the whole play, and the insisted symbol of the ever-changing moon effactually exemplifies it.

Shakespeare's use of *Metamorphoses* is singular, however, in that it ignores the motive justifying the existence of the episode in the poem: the changing colour of the mulberries, that is, soaked by Pyramus's spurting blood when he commits suicide. In *The Most Lamentable Comedy*, the metamorphosis of the berries is no longer mentioned, and the tree itself, named eight times in Ovid's work, is

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[1]   As Peter Holland points out in his edition of the play, the title parodies contemporary works, such as Thomas Preston's *A lamentable tragedy mixed full of pleasant mirth, containing the life of Cambises king of Persia* or *A new tragical Comedy of Apius and Virginia*; see William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Peter Holland, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 147. It will be noticed that both the "lamentable tragedy" and the "tragical comedy" actually identify the plays containing the story of Cambises and that of Apius and Virginia, which is not the case with Pyramus and Thisbe's unfortunate passion.

[2]   The title of the paragraph quotes Bottom's appreciation of the play (I.ii.13).

[3]   The episode occurs in *Metamorphoses*, Book 4, ll. 55-166.

fleetingly quoted just once by Quince, on the occasion of the lovers' double suicide. Introducing the play to the Athenian court, he obviously strives to stress its tragic nature, employing what he very likely considers a fit rhetorical strategy; producing instead a ridiculous overload of alliterations, he removes the tree to the background, reducing it to a purely descriptive image, a sort of neutral mediation between the two deaths and the 'glorious' hammering of the letters B for Pyramus and D for Thisbe:

> Anon comes Pyramus, sweet youth and tall,
> And finds his trusty Thisbe's mantle slain;
> Whereat with blade – with bloody, blameful blade –
> He bravely broached his boiling bloody breast;
> And Thisbe, tarrying in mulberry shade,
> His dagger drew and died. (V.i.143-48)

The place of the forest where the lovers are supposed to meet thus loses its original setting, and the majestic tree no longer dominates the scene. What remains of the old place is the tomb over which the mulberry used to cast its shadow: it is where Semiramis' former husband lies, evoked quite often both in his 'official' name of "Ninus" and in the workers' homely revision of "Ninny". Worth noticing is that a further distraction from the source appears in the non-Ovidian tree, the "Duke's oak" mentioned by Quince as meeting point for the rehearsal (I.ii.99). And yet, the vanishing mulberries of the play-within-the-play still exist outside it, quoted by Titania when asking the fairies to feed Bottom with all sorts of delicious fruits and berries (III.i.157-59). As already mentioned, the fading of the tree does not entail a reduction of the metamorphic motif, which, in the *Dream*, is ubiquitous, even if displaced, as it were, to a more functional context. Removed from the artisans' theatrical experiment, it is in fact woven into the sentimental texture of the plot to better emphasise the weight of the theme of love. The revisiting goes unexpectedly and amazingly so far as to harbour in the new context the metamorphosis of the tree itself, whose glorious abundance of 'snow-white' fruits shrinks to a humble little flower, which quietly preserves the Ovidian sign in its 'milk-white' colour which, like the mulberries, it is eventually going to lose. The change is once again due to a violent action, no

longer caused by Pyramus' sword or blood, but nonetheless provoked by a sharp weapon, Cupid's arrow accidentally hitting it. Becoming "purple with love's wound" (II.i.167), the flower does not only modify its aspect but also alters its nature, developing into an active vehicle of change and setting off a chain of physical and psychological transformations. Some of them are comical but some are not, owing to the ability of the little red flower to overturn expectations and leading the characters into irrationality and loss of self. The destabilizing process intended to affect Hermia, Helena and Titania is significantly anticipated by Oberon, drawing for Robin Goodfellow a disturbing alliance between stars and humans:

> Thou rememb'rest
> Since once I sat upon a promontory
> And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
> Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
> That the rude sea grew civil at her song
> And certain stars *shot madly* from their spheres
> To hear the sea-maid's music? (II.i.148-54, my emphasis)

> Fetch me that flower; the herb I showed thee once.
> The juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid
> Will make or man or woman *madly dote*
> Upon the next live creature that it sees. (II.i.169-72, my emphasis)

The wiping out of the original plan – the mulberries preserving the memory of tragic love – produces the side effect of drawing attention to the chain of events building up *The Most Lamentable Comedy* and leading to its own end. Focussing on the 'new' plot, it also contributes to discovering the fascinating ground tested by Shakespeare in the mid-nineties, when, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, he explores comic and tragic modes, sometimes contrasting and often blending them so as to reach unforeseen unities. The different genres of the two plays do not prevent us from realizing how far-reaching their alikeness is, made perceivable at once by the titles themselves. Echoing the same word, *The Most Lamentable Comedy* and *The Most Excellent and Lamentable Tragedy* seem to preserve the common sign of sadness.

Leaving aside the comic and tragic tones, and reducing the plots to the essentials, the sequence of events in both *Romeo* and the play-

within-the-play in the *Dream* shows compelling similarities: they share the parents' hostility, the young lovers' secret encounters, the man's misinterpretation of facts and consequent suicide, the woman's consciousness of the partner's tragic misunderstanding and her ensuing suicide, the lovers' common burial place (crypt / urn). The pattern can even be refined by pointing out the coincidences in the death scenes, where both female characters commit suicide by stabbing themselves and using their partner's weapon. Even stronger is the correspondence shown in the lovers' desperate final act: no last 'encounter' is granted to them, no look or word softens the emptiness of Juliet's and Thisbe's solitary end. Which again, in the case of the *Dream*, significantly works as a disproval of the source: where, in Ovid, on hearing Thisbe's voice, Pyramus opens his eyes looking on her for a short moment before slowly closing them again and dying, in Flute's (highly ludicrous) lament[4], no 'contact' is allowed, there is no single last look. The intentional distancing from *Metamorphoses* brings *A Midsummer Night's Dream* closer to *Romeo and Juliet*, paradoxically emphasising at a deeper level what is rejected on the surface, thus identifying the Latin poem as the primary source for both plays. If, on the one hand, Ovid outweighs Boccaccio and Chaucer, on the other, he does the same with Bandello, Brooke and the long line of rewriters.

"A crew of patches"

Considering the different threads along which the multiple plot develops, the amount of dramatic space occupied by the comic portion is amazing; somehow obviously, one would think, given the remarkable metatheatrical potentialities offered by clowns piecing together a play. A powerful metaphor, centred on the growth of a theatrical project dealing with a work that needs to come to terms with several issues, such as the actors' personality and attitude, the challenge of verisimilitude posed by the play, and the possible reactions of the audience; all conditions that allow the

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4   "Asleep, my love? / What, dead, my dove? / O Pyramus, arise. / Speak, speak. Quite dumb? / Dead, dead? A tomb / Must cover thy sweet eyes. / These lily lips, / This cherry nose, / These yellow cowslip cheeks / Are gone, are gone. / Lovers, make moan. / His eyes were green as leaks" (V.i.318-29).

Athenian workers to fulfil crucial functions and to be on a par with the highest hierarchies involved in the plot. Even more significant is the theatrical levelling, considering the social gap plainly referred to and emphasised in the play. On the one hand, there are the workers, a carpenter, a weaver, a joiner, a tailor, a tinker, a bellows-mender, the men introduced by Robin to Oberon in Act III and by Egeus to Theseus in Act V, using roughly the same concepts:

> ROBIN
> A crew of patches, rude mechanicals
> That work for bread upon Athenian stalls,
> Were met together to rehearse a play
> Intended for great Theseus' nuptial day. (III.ii.9-12)
>
> EGEUS
> Hard-handed men that work in Athens here,
> Which never laboured in their minds till now,
> And now have toiled their unbreathed memories
> With this same play against your nuptial. (V.i.72-75)

On the other hand, there are the 'upper classes' belonging to the highest levels of classical myth (Theseus, Hippolyta, Egeus) and Celtic folklore (Oberon, Titania, Puck): inhabitants of diurnal and nocturnal courts, who plainly diverge in their spheres of existence (regarding action, use of time, relation to environment) but are easily comparable when exercising their power. In between, bridging as it were the two worlds, the labourers carry on their theatrical action, ludicrous at first sight because of its awkwardness, momentous and far-reaching on closer inspection.

Particularly interesting in this perspective are the scenes in Act I, III and V that show the performance in its making and follow the grievous work in progress of the artisans. They initially cope with their roles, trying to adapt them to their temperaments, then 'refine' them through various devices, and finally put all their energy into rendering the proposal acceptable and above all safe. Incidentally, their presence in Act IV is relevant but implies different issues, and specially Bottom's monologue in the first scene.

In the workers' build-up of the performance, the actual irrelevance of the story itself is paradoxical, synthesized by Quince in the bare mention of the title and two single lines. The first, when

he answers Bottom wondering whether Pyramus is a tyrant or a lover: "A lover, that kills himself, most gallant, for love" (I.ii.20); the second, when he explains the role of Thisbe to Flute: "It is the lady that Pyramus must love" (I.ii.40) – where "must" sounds like an intriguing reference to the source.

Around this basic core the troupe tries to dispute with the director, contesting his choices. Bottom is vaguely reluctant to interpret romantic roles and definitely prefers loud Senecan characters – "I could play Ercles rarely, or a part to tear a cat in" (I.ii.25) – even if his passion makes him anxious to get on stage and therefore ready to play any part. Flute objects to identifying with Thisbe, wanting to preserve his masculinity made evident by the growing beard. Snug is worried about the part of the lion, which he would like to be given in written form, being "slow of study" (I.ii.60). Not to be overlooked are Quince's solutions proposed to Flute and Snug – the first intended to wear a mask, the second to roar "extempore" (I.ii.61) – interestingly alluding to the modes of the *commedia dell'arte*[5].

The scroll Quince consults, matching interpreters and roles, implies only a general though significant outline of the story, inferable from the list of characters. Besides Pyramus, Thisbe and the lion, it initially comprises three additional roles that give the full company the chance to be involved: Starveling is going to be Thisbe's mother, Snout Pyramus' father, Quince himself Thisbe's mother. Strangely enough, Pyramus' mother is missing: an absence that may depend on the necessary coincidence of roles and individuals, as doubling was apparently not an option; or, more suggestively, on a further captivating allusion to *Romeo and Juliet* and to the almost inexistent Lady Montague[6].

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[5]   A revisiting of the *commedia dell'arte* echo-scene is in III.ii.400-30, with Robin cheating Lysander and Demetrius. A further variation of the same device is in *The Tempest*, III.ii.40-83, with Ariel tricking Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo.

[6]   But she definitely cannot be undervalued in her function. She does not speak more than three lines in the first scene of the play and yet gains the dignity of a character caring for her husband ("Thou shalt not stir one foot to seek a foe", I.i.78) and worrying for her son ("O where is Romeo, saw you him today? / Right glad I am he was not at this fray", I.i.114-15). See Marisa Sestito, "Diseguaglianze femminili nello spazio drammatico", *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 5 (2004), ed. Agostino Lombardo, pp. 73-91.

The minimal references to the script leave room for the 'actors' to display their own personalities. Absolute leader is Bottom, who literally tries to play all the roles. He begins by taking on the function of director and telling Quince what to do and how to proceed with the company: "You were best to call them generally, man by man, according to the scrip. […] First, good Peter Quince, say what the play treats on; then read the names of the actors; and so grow to a point" (I.ii.2ff). As for the contents of the play, he is perfectly satisfied with the title, *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*, which he seems to find sufficiently exhaustive to pretend to be acquainted with the script and to placidly comment on its quality, "A very good piece of work, I assure you, and a merry", before resuming right afterwards his directorial attitude: "Now, good Peter Quince, call forth your actors by the scroll. Masters, spread yourselves".

Eventually, leaving Quince alone, Bottom goes through some exhibitions in a riot of hilariously funny energy. He yearns for a role of tyrant – which unfortunately Pyramus is not – and offers it in "Ercles" style:

> The raging rocks
> And shivering shocks
> Shall break the locks
> Of prison gates,
> And Phibbus car
> Shall shine from far
> And make and mar
> The foolish fates. (I.ii.26-33)

If given the chance to use a mask, he would interpret Thisbe as well, speaking "in a monstrous little voice: 'Thisne, Thisne!'". And though indifferent to the parents' roles, if allowed to play "extempore", the lion could be definitely attractive: "I will roar that I will do any man's heart good to hear me" (I.ii.64). If the wild beast frightened the ladies, he would know how to handle the situation – much less does he know how to handle similes: "I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove. I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale".

In their first meeting, the artisans map out the context of the "comedy", contrasting with fun and laughter the preceding first scene of the play, ennobled by the mythical figures of Theseus, the killer of monsters, and Hippolyta, the queen of the Amazons. The issues discussed at court are weighty and appropriate to the lofty context, ranging from the maiden's rebellion against her father, possibly subject to the death penalty, to equality in the application of justice. The light-hearted dialogues of the second and last scene of the act relieve ambiguity and tensions. So far.

When the artisans meet for the rehearsal in the first scene of the third act, the attitudes manifested in their first appearance are widely confirmed. Bottom dominates the scene as before and assumes control over the situation at once, speaking the very first line of the scene ("Are we all met?"). In his further interventions, determined to prove his theatrical competence, he seems to lay traps for Quince by asking him questions he is unable to answer: "Peter Quince? […] There are things in this comedy of Pyramus and Thisbe that will never please. First, Pyramus must draw a sword to kill himself, which the ladies cannot abide. How answer you that?" (III.i.6ff). Quince remains silent while Starveling suggests leaving the killing out. "Not a whit", Bottom retorts, "I have a device to make all well".

His solution ("Write me a prologue") works on many levels. To start with, it underlines Bottom's rampant personality in his trying to appropriate any part of the project. In this case, he does not simply tell Quince to write, he also tells him what to write and how to explain the harmless nature of the show: there is no real suicide, Pyramus is not Pyramus but Bottom the weaver, and the lion is no lion but Snug the joiner. On the one hand, Bottom's aim is to neutralize any possible dangerous reaction of the court; therefore, he wants additional lines to be inserted and appropriate costumes to be worn. On the other hand, he comically faces the issue of verisimilitude, worrying due to the scary realism of the lion and, vice versa, endeavouring to find convincing solutions for the improbable roles of Moonshine and Wall.

The mention of Moonshine and Wall and the necessity of having them on stage sounds like a novelty which implicitly modifies the list of characters and opens the way to captivating metatheatrical suggestions. At this point, the scheme formerly made known by

Quince leaves some pieces behind, forgetting the parental figures –
and the allusion to Montague and Capulet. The point is that, in the
dress rehearsal, close to the actual staging (III.i.5), the "comedy"
requires consistency with the story itself and the primary source
needs to be considered. And Quince is aware of it: "you know
Pyramus and Thisbe meet by moonlight" (III.i.44); "Pyramus and
Thisbe, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall" (III.i.59-
60).

The return to Ovid comically exploits the difficulties in
presenting the 'characters' of Moonshine and Wall, producing
exhilarating dialogues and weird scenic proposals, with Bottom
shining as usual. Looking beyond the brilliant surface, the closeness
to *Metamorphoses* is even more surprising on a deeper level, where
it reveals the structural relation of theatre and change: the artisans'
rehearsal – their work in view of the first night – becomes a
powerful metaphor of theatre itself, of its having to take many
complex factors pragmatically into account and having to be
always ready to modify previous assumptions. All of which Bottom
and the others masterly exemplify.

The influence of *Metamorphoses* and metamorphosis goes even
farther, in what could be at a first glance considered an oversight
or a mistake:

> BOTTOM
> Are we all met?
> QUINCE
> Pat, pat; and here's a marvellous convenient place for our rehearsal.
> This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn brake our tiring-house,
> and we will do it in action as we will do it before the Duke. (III.i.1-5)

The change of place for the rehearsal is at this point the right answer
to the needs of the performers, giving them the illusion of being on
stage and acting in front of the Athenian court. But it also subtly fits
in the revisited Ovidian perspective, shifting from the mulberry
tree to the little western flower to the hawthorn brake, whose
flowers (white or pink or red) and berries (dark red) reproduce the
ancient colours of Babylon. Interestingly enough, the
disappearance of the symbolic image of the Duke with the
dislocation of the rehearsal is somehow redressed by evoking his

name, and so vaguely recalling the past and still encouraging to look ahead towards the next and last step. Incidentally, not concerning the present issue but all the same worth noticing is Bottom's line, which anticipates Caesar's question a few instants before he is killed: "Are we all ready?"

"A tedious brief scene"

The artisans' play, chosen by Theseus as a fit entertainment for the court before bed-time, consistently undergoes further changes, first of all losing its original title. In the list of "sports" read to the Duke it is the last item and of the past preserves only the names of the protagonists and the tragi-comic contradiction: *A tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe: very tragical mirth*. The re-naming, probably due to Egeus, who knows the 'play' having seen it rehearsed, has quite interesting implications if compared with the old title, *The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe*, both because of what is kept and what is cancelled. The most evident change regards the disappearance of "death", a word certainly unfit for a triple wedding celebration; replaced by its opposite, "love", it is associated to the youth of the couple, certainly an agreeable suggestion tuned into the festive occasion. So, apart from the names, the only other coincidence with the past seems to be the contrast of laughter and tears, apparently sustained by grammatical symmetries as well: the superlative forms ("the most" / "very"), the analogous meaning of the adjectives ("lamentable" / "tragical") and that of the nouns ("comedy" / "mirth"). But after all, the similarity does not go beyond the surface, as here again the optimistic perspective prevails with the stress falling, as it does, on the last word which is "mirth".

Egeus' 'critical appreciation' of the entertainment sounds anything but inviting, described as "a tedious brief scene" (V.i.56), which is an interesting definition, considering that it again highlights the clash of opposites, as Theseus points out:

> 'Merry' *and* 'tragical'? 'Tedious' *and* 'brief'? –
> That is hot ice and wondrous strange black snow.
> How shall we find the concord of this discord? (V.i.58-60)

It is as if the contrast that, in the first act, did not in the least annoy the artisans, here, emerged in all its evidence. Theseus' questions motivate Egeus, who is the only one who knows what the whole thing is about, to explain the contradictions – while trying to persuade the Duke not to see the show:

> A play there is, my lord, some ten words long,
> Which is as 'brief' as I have known a play;
> But by ten words, my lord, it is too long,
> Which makes it 'tedious', for in all the play
> There is not one word apt, one player fitted.
> And 'tragical', my noble lord, it is,
> For Pyramus therein doth kill himself;
> Which when I saw rehearsed, I must confess,
> Made mine eyes water; but more merry tears
> The passion of loud laughter never shed. (V.i.61-70)

But of course, Theseus wants to see the play, thus enabling the spectators of the *Dream* to disprove the reliability of Egeus' description. Basically, the play is not brief at all, as it consists of about hundred and fifty lines, and, all things considered, it is not at all badly organised. After his first comic mispunctuated address ("If we offend, it is with our good will", V.i.108ff), Quince as Prologue explains who the figures of the dumb show are and, for the first time, carefully summarizes the story, known so far in bits and pieces. Whereupon, each character, correctly interpreting Bottom's suggestions at the rehearsal, describes his role; rather than "too long", it all sounds necessary and "apt" if the perspective, since these are the 'actors' concerned, cannot but be comical – and Egeus, in this case correctly, appreciates with loud laughs and "merry tears" the ludicrous nature of the performance, particularly riotous in Pyramus' suicide.

The *comedy* (rightly mentioned in the original title) is exhilarating for the absurd associations proposed by the interpreters in what they imagine to be a tragic tone: Pyramus, invoking the "sunny beams" of the moon, mourning his lady being "deflowered" by Lion; Thisbe crying over the "lily lips" and "cherry nose" (again white and red), over the "yellow cowslip

cheeks" and the "eyes green as leeks". Both flooding their laments with endless – and awfully skilful – alliterations and rhymes, such as: "the fairest dame / That lived, that loved, that liked, that looked with cheer" (V.i.287-88), or:

> I trust to take of truest Thisbe sight.
> But stay, O spite!
> But mark, poor knight,
> What dreadful dole is here?
> Eyes do you see?
> How can it be?
> O dainty duck, O dear! (V.i.269-75)

And of course, this seems the right atmosphere to celebrate the happy end for the three wedding couples. But looking closer at the audience enjoying the clowns' comedy, among the brilliant comments of the courtiers, two voices are missing: Hermia and Helena, certainly present, do not speak. To hear their words, one needs to go back to the awakening of the four lovers after their night in the woods and to their difficulty in coming to their senses and perceive things clearly:

> HERMIA
> Methinks I see these things with parted eye,
> When everything seems double.
>
> HELENA
>   So methinks,
> And I have found Demetrius like a jewel,
> Mine own and not mine own. (IV.i.186-89).

Demetrius, uncertain whether they are still dreaming, asks if the Duke was there. The two young women answer, sharing a single line and speaking for the last time: Hermia, "Yea, and my father"; Helena, "And Hippolyta" (IV.i.194).

Looking back at the beginning of the *Dream*, at Hermia's rebellion and refusal to obey her father and risking the death penalty; considering her determination and courage in flying alone into the woods at night, there to meet her beloved Lysander – imitated by Helena following Demetrius – and there suffering

betrayal and disillusionment, questions arise. How far, one wonders, do Ovid's lovers mirror these lovers, and how far do the clowns interpret their story? And then one wonders also if, for those two silent female bodies standing on stage, the happy comedy may not be lamentable.

Imbalanced Friendship and Gendered Bonds in *Timon of Athens*

Tommaso Continisio

Foreword

Timon of Athens is one of Shakespeare's most obscure plays and was doomed, until recent years, to a long oblivion. The limited interest in this play was partly justified by the traditional perplexity over the tragedy's authorship and date of composition (no longer disputed)[1]; its non-resolution, with an ending that at times seems rushed[2]; the static nature of its second part; the stark exasperation

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[1] It is well established that *Timon of Athens* is the result of a collaboration between Shakespeare and Middleton; its date of composition is presumably around mid-1606. John Jowett precisely identifies the authorship of individual scenes. Cf., above all, William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, *Timon of Athens*, ed. John Jowett, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 132-53. All the references are to this edition, and line numbers are inserted parenthetically in the text.

[2] The idea according to which *Timon* is an unfinished play was maintained first by E. K. Chambers in his *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1930, and then fostered by Una Ellis-Fermor in her "*Timon of Athens*: An Unfinished Play", *Review of English Studies*, 18 (1942), pp. 270-83.

of characters and situations; its harsh language, which is sometimes disconnected, lacking in harmony, split, and uneven. The basic nature of the plot of *Timon of Athens* and the extreme simplicity of its protagonist compared to Shakespeare's more complex creatures underlie the many contrasting interpretations of the play: "a tragical satire […] an *idiotes* comedy, rather than a tragedy"[3]; "more of a morality than a drama"[4]; "a pageant"[5]; "a cautionary tale"[6]. These readings culminate in Lesley W. Brill's view of the "polysemous construction" of *Timon of Athens* – a term that encompasses and therefore justifies all of them – according to which "the world of *Timon* is one of infinite moral complexity"[7].

It is with this polysemy in mind that this article sets out to analyse the polymorphic nature of a tragedy that has the flavour and severity of censure, whose poetic force and relevance lie precisely in the discomfort it generates. Specifically, I shall argue that the remarkable complexity of this play results from the displacement of "a dominant ideology" by the new, Jacobean "emergent cultural forms"[8]. This clash engenders a tissue of endless and systematic refractions and mirrorings that constitute the framework of the entire tragedy; they thus become the parable of a man torn apart by continuous antinomies and false appearances in the face of which speech and action are powerless. Against the backdrop of classical inquiries into amity as well as the early modern performance of utilitarian friendship, the tragic rite of Timon's transformation into his opposite can be read through the homosocial dynamics triggered by a somewhat distorted practice of asymmetrical male friendship.

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[3]   Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1965, p. 98.

[4]   George B. Harrison, *Shakespeare's Tragedies*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953, p. 258.

[5]   Muriel C. Bradbrook, *Shakespeare the Craftsman*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1979, p. 144.

[6]   John Wain, *The Living World of Shakespeare*, London, Macmillan, 1968, p. 143.

[7]   Lesly W. Brill, "Truth and *Timon of Athens*", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 40 (1979), pp. 17-36: 36.

[8]   Jonathan Dollimore, "Shakespeare, Cultural Materialism and the New Historicism", in *Political Shakespeare. New Essays in Cultural Materialism*, eds J. Dollimore and A. Sinfield, Manchester-New York, Manchester University Press, 1985, p. 6.

The message refraction

The mechanism of a double communication channel is established at the outset when Timon's ostentatious and purely ostensible centrality on the stage[9] is merely the effect of the flattery of which the protagonist himself is the unquestionable addressee, while the polished and excessively ceremonious verbiage of the characters who respectfully crowd around him reveals their falsity. This crack in communication is the first tangible sign of a crisis of signification and the overlapping of different epistemic systems at the core of this play. The arbitrariness and ambiguity of language calls into question, as Molly Mahood has argued, "the real relationship between name and nominee, between a word and the thing it signified"[10]. It is thus no coincidence that Timon's almost fairy-tale entry into the scene produces a double effect as the protagonist is simultaneously the master of the sumptuous performance of his generosity and victim of the flattery game to which he is subjected.

Timon's initial blindness is reflected linguistically in his empty speeches packed with clichés and maxims. The following lines reveal his opening naivety contrasting with the behaviour of other characters as the narration proceeds:

> TIMON
> I am not of that feather to shake off
> My friend when he must need me. I do know him
> A gentleman that well deserves a help:
> Which he shall have: I'll pay the debt and free him.
>
> […]
>
> I will send his ransom;
> And being enfranchised, bid him come to me.

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[9]   Interestingly, Tom MacFaul states that Timon is "like a private, bourgeois version of Richard II, wanting an abstract friendship in which he is always to be the centre. In this he is as deluded and doomed as the English King" (Tom MacFaul, *Male Friendship in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 142).

[10] Molly M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, London, Methuen, 1957, p. 73, quoted in Silvia Bigliazzi, *Nel prisma del nulla. L'esperienza del non-essere nella drammaturgia shakespeariana*, Napoli, Liguori, 2005, p. 16.

'Tis not enough to help the feeble up,
But to support him after.
(i.102-05; 107-10)

This gentleman of mine hath served me long:
To build his fortune I will strain a little,
For 'tis a bond in men.
(i.146-48)

Timon harps on the idea that everything is sacred, that men must entertain amicable relationships and that women are symbols of grace and family[11] – and it is no accident that Apemantus will later speak of prostitution and degraded sexuality, thus deflating the whole situation and anticipating the collapse of the sacred that Timon will suffer throughout the second part of the play. The protagonist lives the utopia[12] of a perfect society with an uncommon solidity of values. In the eyes of the Elizabethans, the myth that he wishes to embody is both ancient and modern, and again splits the message: the ideal of wealth as a demonstration of power, and not as mere accumulation, is of medieval origin; the purview of aristocrats as opposed to the merchant class[13]. At the same time it also represents the Renaissance model of the generous patron surrounded by a perfect court, contrasting with the increasingly wealthy proto-bourgeoisie of seventeenth-century England.

Nevertheless, Timon also lives the Renaissance utopia of the prince with his court. The play opens with specific *dramatis personæ* (a poet, a painter, a jeweller, and a merchant) who pay homage to the great lord; though all this feels unreal, what matters is the idealisation of an aristocratic society of the sort that Timon dreams of experiencing. It is interesting to note that the only person

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[11]   Consider the Amazons in the pantomime scene, who are labelled as "fair ladies" (ii.142), or the future wife of Timon's servant, who embodies the sacred value of the family.

[12]   In this respect, see Agostino Lombardo, "Le due utopie di *Timone d'Atene*", in William Shakespeare, *Timone d'Atene*, ed. and trans. Agostino Lombardo, Roma, Officine Edizioni, 1983, pp. 7-14.

[13]   Le Goff maintains that the dignity and honour of the lords consisted in giving without receiving. Cf. Jacques Le Goff, *La civilisation de l'Occident médiéval*, Paris, Artaud, 1967, p. 279.

admitted to this court who does not comply with the canons of the perfect courtier is Apemantus, the cynical philosopher. Apemantus is tolerated despite his brutal bluntness: it is as though the acceptance of difference within the perfect organism represented by the Renaissance court completed its overall harmony. His sanctification makes him harmless, and Timon's invitation that he stay since he is an Athenian is laden with significance: "I take no heed of thee; thou'rt an Athenian, therefore welcome" (ii.35-36). Timon's Renaissance utopia is thus completed by the cult of Athens as the perfect city, within which everything moves Platonically with harmony and nobility. For this reason, when Timon is attacked by Caphis, one of his creditors' servants, he is astonished by the indelicacy of such request: those who do not comply with the ideals of decorum and composure cannot be from Athens, and when he discovers that Caphis is Athenian, Timon will begin to realise that his ideal city is far from his long-cherished brotherly communion. By contrast, the audience is aware of this particular aspect from the very beginning of the play: the painter, the poet, the merchant, and the jeweller represent the adherence of aesthetic figures par excellence to the ruthless logic of an economic system dominating a world where wealth is the only criterion of moral judgment; even the props, which suggest the incessant dominion of gold and material goods, and the repeated clusters of images (stones, gold, disease, death) reveal what really lies behind ephemeral appearances, following a method taken by Shakespeare and Middleton to an extreme of subtlety.

This paradoxical dialectic between being and seeming is channelled through the unpleasant atmosphere that gradually develops thanks to a series of recurrent images – especially of food, animals, and sex. Apemantus is the harbinger of a gloomy atmosphere expressed in a down-to-earth, caustic, and factual language relying on continuous images of degradation. For instance, in the scene when Timon invites him to share a convivial moment,

> Timon
> Wilt dine with me, Apemantus?

APEMANTUS
No; I eat not lords.

TIMON
And thou shouldst, thou'dst anger ladies.

APEMANTUS
O, they eat lords; so they come by great bellies.
(i.207-10)

the invitation is turned into something repulsive with the transformation of the perfect courtier into a greedy and lustful animal. The game of duplications reappears continually. The whole of the first part of the play shows Timon's blind prodigality, whilst he is surrounded by hypocrites who pretend to share his ideal of harmony exclusively for the sake of money; when they stop playing their parts, they become the personified negation of the Renaissance dream of the perfect court and reveal themselves as representatives of a new, Jacobean society that rejects social solidarity. Timon, on the other hand, reveals himself as a man in a cage, imprisoned by the mask he has forced himself to wear. This imprisonment is fuelled by false friends who hypocritically prevent the unveiling of the truth – and when this does occur, they force Timon into physical confinement, besieged in his mansion by the servants of his creditors.

As a precious document attesting for the historical and epistemological crisis between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *Timon of Athens* develops another double, split message: the story of Timon gestures towards medieval axiology, with elements known to the Elizabethan audience – such as, for instance, the condemnation of lies[14] – while simultaneously being perceived as the epitome of a new world divided between the real and the ideal that Shakespeare and Middleton view with dismay. The Greek Timon becomes a city-comedy Jacobean character and the economic reality within which the play moves makes explicit references to the historical moment when *Timon of Athens* was written, dominated by an economic rationale that will become the

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[14]   Jacques Le Goff emphasises the role of lies in medieval society, and how they have always been continually pointed out and feared. Cf. Le Goff, p. 419.

expression of the most despicable avarice and of a collective consciousness devoid of dignity.

Above have I tried to outline a few examples of the complex game of refractions that stylistically supports the development of the fundamental theme of this tragedy: the opposition between being and seeming, expressed chiefly through social relationships. Nevertheless, the semiotic dichotomy between 'inside' and 'outside' becomes more confused (overdetermined, one might say) when we focus on Timon's actions before and after his fall, especially if we agree that Timon is a man ruined from the beginning[15]: for instance, the Poet's literary joke reveals the flattery surrounding Timon that he himself uses to obtain rewards and thanks:

> POET
> 'Tis common:
> A thousand moral paintings I can show
> That shall demonstrate these quick blows of Fortune's
> More pregnantly than words.
> (i.90-93)

The Poet insists on the myth of the change of Fortune, namely the medieval idea of tragedy as a steep fall from the heights of prosperity, a lesson in the terrible insecurity of worldly existence. Rolf Soellner sees the circular myth of fortune reflected in the structure of *Timon* thanks to the subplot related to Alcibiades. The critic argues that the tragedy begins with Timon being favoured by luck, only to show his fall; Alcibiades, by contrast, although momentarily at the bottom of the wheel, eventually returns to fortune's favour[16]. Just as both playwrights looked with concern at that yearning for power, success, and earthly gratification, so the Elizabethan audience perceived that Timon's generosity, visibly gratified by adulation, was nothing but a ruthless form of *Vanitas* – and, therefore, a sign of the decay of the nobility; therefore Timon

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[15]   Maxwell refers to the ruin of the protagonist as an element already present at the beginning of the tragedy. Cf. J. C. Maxwell, "*Timon of Athens*", *Scrutiny*, XV (1948), pp. 194-208: 198.

[16]   Rolf Soellner, Timon of Athens, *Shakespeare's Pessimistic Tragedy*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1979, p. 71.

will fall and simultaneously be responsible for his own decline. And since in Shakespeare and Middleton the development of the tragic plot is accompanied by the internal co-responsibility of the hero, he will descend into the abyss, greedy for the transitory grace of mortals and forgetful of the spiritual values displayed through speech.

"I'm wealthy in my friends"

The opening dream of creating a straightforward mapping of representation between words and things raises the issue of the complete loss of referentiality and the dichotomy between subject and object, precipitated by an initial rupture and a subsequent obligatory reconfiguration of the relationship with the 'other'. The protagonist is the victim/agent of a profound personal betrayal, but, above all, he betrays himself: that is, the noble self with which he has identified in his own and others' eyes. The short circuit created by the two overlying epistemic systems is also clear when characters aim to perform amicable relations.

All seminal works focussing on the early modern dramatic treatments of friendship[17] rely heavily on its classical and Renaissance formulations[18]. The emphasis on sameness of character and perfection in friendship, for instance, appears in Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nichomachean Ethics*, where a virtuous friend is an 'other self', in other words a mirroring projection of the self, essential for self-knowledge. Nonetheless, to help understand the

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[17] Above all, cf. Laurens J. Mills, *One Soul in Bodies Twain: Friendship in Tudor Literature and Stuart Drama*, Bloomington, Principia, 1937; John M. Wallace "*Timon of Athens* and the Three Graces: Shakespeare's Senecan Study", *Modern Philology*, 83:4 (1986), pp. 349-63; Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of Bounty': *Timon of Athens*, Jacobean Patronage, and Maternal Power", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38:1 (1987), pp. 34-57; G. W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; David Wootton, "Francis Bacon: Your Flexible Friend", in *The World of the Favourite*, eds J. H. Elliott and W. B. Brockliss, London-New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999, pp. 184-204; Laurie Shannon, *Sovereign Amity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002.

[18] For instance, Erasmus's collection of classical wisdom (*Adagia*); Montaigne's essay "Of Friendship", translated by John Florio in 1604; and Bacon's 1612 essay of the same name (which, of course, cannot have been passed around to Shakespeare and Middleton for the composition of *Timon of Athens*).

cultural resonances of enactments of friendship beyond the Ciceronian model[19], it is of utmost importance to include Seneca's *De Beneficiis*, according to Coppélia Kahn the most significant treatise to explore "gift-giving *per se*"[20], and his *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, with their discussion of the social conventions of friendship, grounded in ethics and goodwill. To this end, it is essential that amity be driven by love and generosity rather than expectations of reward and reciprocation[21]; however, what we see in *Timon of Athens* is a sense that giving must take place exclusively within the performance of a practice that is to some extent *do ut des*.

The multi-layered semantic value of specific lexemes that recur throughout the play engenders perverted enactments of male friendship[22]. For instance, from the very beginning of the tragedy we realise that words like *worthy*, *goodness*, *good*, *fortune*, *value*, *trust*, *use*, and *bond* have an unavoidable financial meaning[23]. All human relationships are thus tainted, with the Athenians engaged in a mutual cannibalistic devouring in a city[24] where money, the

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[19] *Laelius De amicitia* (c. 44 BC) testifies to Cicero's friendship with Atticus. This work, influenced by Plato's *Lysis*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, has at its heart a notion of friendship in which Cicero found agreement on "de re publica consensus […] rerum privatarum consilium […] requies plena oblectationis" (10.34, 103). Cf. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Amicitia*, in Cicero, *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, trans. William Armistead Falconer, The Loeb Classical Library, London, Heinemann, 1923, p. 211. The English translation with the parallel text in Latin is available online: https://www.loebclassics.com/view/marcus_tullius_cicero-de_amicitia/1923/pb_LCL154.103.xml

[20] Kahn, p. 49.

[21] Cf. Peterman, p. 52; p. 70.

[22] Cf. Lewis Walker, "Fortune and Friendship in *Timon of Athens*", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 18:4 (1977), pp. 577-600: 594.

[23] Among the seminal studies on the economic dimension of *Timon*, cf. W. H. Bizley, "Language and Currency in *Timon of Athens*", *Theoria*, 44 (1975), pp. 21-42; Kenneth Muir, "*Timon of Athens* and the Cash-Nexus", in *The Singularity of Shakespeare and Other Essays*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1977, pp. 56-75; Wallace, pp. 349-63; and Kahn, pp. 34-57.

[24] Gail K. Paster maintains that "the mentality of Athens is so narrowly materialistic that the bonding agent in this social fabric is not love […] but rather money" (Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare*, Athens, The University of Georgia Press, 1985, p. 99). For a discussion of Shakespeare's Athenian settings, cf. Robert S. Miola, "Timon in Shakespeare's Athens", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31 (1980), pp. 21-30.

"visible god" (xiv.387), and the cash-nexus underlie a ruthless, indiscriminate logic of gift-giving.

For Timon, the gift holds the utmost value, combined with friendship and a sense of solidarity between men: in contrast to the *Merchant of Venice*, for example, the protagonist gives without worrying about reciprocation, and when the nobleman begs for an opportunity to return his gifts, Timon responds with tragic irony:

> TIMON
> O, no doubt, my good friends, but the gods themselves have provided that I shall have much help from you. How had you been my friends else? Why have you that charitable title from thousands, did not you chiefly belong to my heart? I have told more of you to myself than you can with modesty speak in your own behalf; and thus far I confirm you. 'O you gods', think I, 'what need we have any friends if we should ne'er have need of 'em? They were the most needless creatures living, should we ne'er have use for 'em, and would most resemble sweet instruments hung up in cases, that keep their sounds to themselves.' (ii.85-96)

Evidently, Timon seeks fame, which he considers even more important than his luxurious goods. His narcissistic obsession with reputation takes on weightier implications through its hyperbolic reference to the celestial spheres, as Timon sees his deeds as worthy of appreciation by the gods. Although Shakespeare and Middleton may be deriding philanthropic giving, whether or not acts of beneficence can become tarnished by hubris is left shrouded in mystery. The two playwrights may already have been familiar with the distinction between true beneficence and vainglorious liberality as defined by Cicero, since it is clear from his initial insistence on public acknowledgements that Timon's prodigality is driven by a fleeting desire for glory.

The rite of the gift is virtually enacted through gold, considered not an object to be possessed but rather a sacred element through which every earthly action is to be sublimated. Apparently, Timon is practicing his virtue through friendship in true Senecan fashion. This suggests that underlying Timon's ideal of generosity is the classical myth of the Golden Age, also evoked by Gonzalo in the *Tempest*, where harmony and love reign supreme and nature distributes its gifts to men without any competition, abuse, or envy;

in this perfect and timeless harmony, gold acquires an aesthetic power and becomes a luminous force that embellishes and enhances everything.

However, Timon's transformation from philanthropic and idealistic patron to mad misanthrope takes place directly on stage and is a highly tragic moment. What we are witnessing is the public death of the protagonist: the man we see from this moment onwards will be a sort of human simulacrum, with death inside and destructive anger outside. The highly evocative scene unfolds throughout the second part of the play, with a continuous representation of the clash between matter and spirit. Yet the representation on stage of a moral conflict recalls the tradition of morality plays, and the religious experience we are noticing is deliberately underlined by the two dramatists with a long series of biblical echoes and explicit references to the figure of Christ: to give just a few examples, the banquet reminds us of the Last Supper, and the coins that Lucullus offers the servant to bribe him recall the thirty coins that Judas received for betraying Christ. The hour when Timon's passion begins is the exact hour at which Christ dies – and the word "passion" itself is used by Flaminius to describe Timon's sufferings. These biblical references[25] create a sacred atmosphere and complicate that game of allusions and communicative refractions hinted at above, as the playwrights aim to underline the religious aspect of this dramatic moment in order to elevate Timon as a symbol of the man's perennial need for spiritual values, here cruelly denied. The tension that anticipates the catastrophe gradually builds. It will be his close friends, transformed into birds of prey, who deliver the final blow destroying Timon's "verbal dream"[26], or his "dream of friendship" (xiii.34), and in the end caustically revealing reality to his eyes: the servants of creditors and the senators were merely a mild prelude of it.

To render this scheme effective, and to demonstrate the danger of imbalanced amicable relations, with a specific Christological

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[25]   Cf. Roger V. Holdsworth, "Biblical Allusions in *Timon of Athens* and Thomas Middleton", *Notes and Queries*, 235 (1990), pp. 188-92. See also the various works on the presence of the Bible in Shakespeare by Naseeb Shaheen, in particular *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Plays*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1999, pp. 666-79.

[26]   Mahood, p. 181.

reference echoing Peter who denies Christ three times and insisting on the number three, I will concentrate on three consecutive rejections staged by Shakespeare and Middleton, playing on the falsity of the language used and each ending with a warning message about friendship. The scene of the first refusal is very short. Lucullus denies the slightest help to his friend after accusing him of prodigality in two-faced and hypocritical language:

> LUCULLUS
> Many a time and often I ha' dined with him and told him on't, and came again to supper to him on purpose to have him spend less. (v.23-25)

His response, "Every man has his fault, and honesty is his" (v.27), is "brilliant in his simplicity"[27], and his falsity continues when he tries to corrupt the servant who spits coins at him. At this point, Lucullus hypocritically rages against his friends' duplicity: "Here's three solidares for thee, / Good boy, wink at me, and say thou saw'st me not" (v.42-43). The scene of the second refusal, by contrast, is more nuanced: Lucius is equally thoughtless and declares his willingness to help, but when he is actually asked, he leaves with a banal excuse feigning the greatest sorrow:

> LUCIUS
> Denied that honourable man?
> […]
> yet, had he mistook him and sent to me, I should ne'er have denied his occasion so many talents.
> […]
> What a wicked beast was I to disfurnish myself against such a good time when I might ha' shown myself honourable!
> (vi.16-44).

Lucius's falsity is all played out in the first person; the foreigners present are astonished to witness this brazen change of perspective, and their commentary almost recalls the Chorus, which denounces the disconcerting new world of materiality that triumphs over the spirit: "Men must learn now with pity to dispense, / For policy sits above conscience" (vi.83-84). The third rejection is based on

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27   MacFaul, p. 146.

rhetorical artifice and develops the theme of the falsehood of language at length. Sempronius at first shows annoyance at having been asked before the others and, when the servant denies this ("My lord, / They have all been touched and found base metal", vi.5-6), pretends to be most outraged for the opposite reason – namely, that Timon did not turn to him first, thus disrespecting him:

> SEMPRONIUS
> Must he needs trouble me in 't? Hmh! 'Bove all others? […]
> Must I be his last refuge? […]
> He's much disgraced me in't. I'm angry at him,
> That might have known my place. I see no sense for't
> But his occasions might have wooed me first […]
> And does he think so backwardly of me now
> That I'll requite its last? No.
> So it may prove an argument of laughter
> To th' rest, and I 'mongst lords be thought a fool […]
> Who bates mine honour shall not know my coin.
> (vii.1-26)

The servant clearly probes the deflated wisdom of Timon's ungrateful friends with the practice of touching, an allusion to gold, and by playing on the homophony between metal and mettle, so frequent in early modern England. Furthermore, the oxymoronic juxtaposition of "fair" and "foul" in his next line ("How fairly this lord strives to appear foul!", vii.30-31), reminiscent of the contradictions and moral confusion pervading *Macbeth*, strengthens the ambiguous lack of adjacency between being and seeming, between referentiality and self-referentiality.

   In the three moments analysed, then, the hypocrisy governing all social relations and drawing its lifeblood from the rhetorical capacity of lies is revealed once again. In view of this, Timon's supposedly faithful friends betray the archetypical view of disinterested friendship exemplified, for instance, in Cicero's *De Amicitia*. There the Latin orator states that "pestem enim nullam maiorem esse amicitiis quam in plerisque pecuniae cupiditatem" (10.34, 146)[28], since they perform *adulatio* and seek only a utilitarian

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[28]   "The greatest bane of friendship is the lust for money",

end in amicable unions. On a subtler level, as is frequent in early modern English drama, ingratitude is expressed through recurrent images of wild animals. Voracity leading to mutual cannibalism is conveyed by means of several references to famished dogs, with which Timon's friends are repeatedly associated. According to Caroline Spurgeon, Shakespeare usually likens dogs to "fawning or licking"[29], yet the "glass-faced flatterer[s]" (i.59) not only fawn "upon [Timon's] debts" (viii.50), but mangle his "int'rest into their glutt'nous maws" (viii.51); a distasteful image recalled by Apemantus previously in the play ("What a number of men eats Timon", ii.39; and "so many dip their meat in one man's blood", ii.41), heightening the ravenous behaviour[30] of the other characters. By analogy with Christ, Timon becomes the sacrificial victim of those whom he has pampered and nourished, and the feasting upon not only his wealth, but also his flesh is sacramentally referenced through the Eucharistic sacrifice as well as the myth of the pelican, which feeds its young on its own blood by pecking its breast.

Conclusion

Timon's misanthropic tirade results, according to Ken Jackson, from the sudden awareness that real gift-giving always involves some form of exchange. This reasoning is in line with the Derridean impossibility of the absolute gift[31] that justifies the mechanism triggered by Timon's vanity and his ceaseless craving for attention, a mechanism which certainly follows a utilitarian logic typical of

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https://www.loebclassics.com/view/marcus_tullius_cicero-de_amicitia/1923/pb_LCL154.147.xml

[29] Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1958 [1935], p. 195. That action is also supported by Timon's line "Uncover, dogs, and lap" in xi.84. In this regard, cf. James L. Jackson, "Shakespeare's Dog-and-Sugar Imagery and the Friendship Tradition", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 1:4 (1950), pp. 260-63.

[30] Timon's ungrateful friends recall the story of Actaeon devoured by his dogs as narrated by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Cf. Clifford Davidson, "*Timon of Athens*: The Iconography of False Friendship", *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 43:3 (1980), pp. 181-200: 189.

[31] Cf. Ken Jackson, "Derrida, the Gift, and God in *Timon of Athens*", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 52 (2001), pp. 34-66.

the Jacobean English social structure. The play's continuous shifting between public and private spaces allows Shakespeare and Middleton to draw a picture of persistent loneliness amongst all-male communities, whose elusive pursuit of meaningful and stable homosocial bonds is driven by practices of giving, receiving, and benefit.

Therefore, what friends may owe one another is an issue that recurs in Shakespeare's plays and becomes an explicitly crucial question in *Timon of Athens* as well, particularly because any other forms of personal relations, be they sexual or familiar, are lacking. If one does not consider Phrynia and Timandra, the only women who physically appear on stage and to whom Timon gives gold along with his counsel to "damn others" (xiv.165) with venereal diseases, the play is devoid of characters meant as providers of nourishment and bearers of life – that is female characters, belonging to the sex that substantiates manliness and homosocial bonds in a traditional aristocratic culture. The exclusively male community in Athens navigates within a multifaceted structural narrative frame that engenders a loss of virility in male characters – particularly in Timon, who ends up as the personification of a denied motherhood, metaphorically suckling his foes with money. The Renaissance dream of a continuous masquerade that embellishes life and ennobles human beings has turned into hypocrisy; animalistic brutishness desecrates all values, especially the most fundamental one of gratitude.

Poisonous Language: *Timon of Athens* and the Scope of Invective

Davide Del Bello

On 30 June 1637, during the period legally known as the Trinity Term of the infamous Court of Star Chamber (*Camera Stellata*), William Prynne, barrister at law, was found guilty "for writting and publishinge a scandalous and libellous Booke"[1] together with two other pamphleteers, Henry Burton and John Bastwick. They were all fined £5000, ordered to stand at two pillories (at Cheapside and at Westminster), to have their ears cut off, and be imprisoned for life without pen or paper in three removed castles in Wales. Dr Prynne, who had already been sentenced in 1633, stripped of his degree at the university of Oxford and expelled from the Inns of court for publishing an invective against all acting and spectacles[2], was found to have his ears already partly cropped. He reportedly

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1   Samuel Rawson Gardiner, ed., *Documents Relating to the Proceedings Against William Prynne in 1634 and 1637*, London, The Camden Society, 1877, p. 1. For a general account of Prynne's case at the Star Chamber see also Edward P. Cheyney, "The Court of Star Chamber", *The American Historical Review*, 18:4 (July 1913), pp. 727-50.

2   William Prynne, *Histriomastix: The Player's Scourge, or Actor's Tragedy*, London, Michael Sparke, 1632.

fainted at the pillory when a rough hangman sawed off part of his cheek with what was left of his ears. Upon special motion of Chief Justice Finch, Prynne was also sentenced "to be branded in the forehead" with the letters S and L, *Seditious Libeller*,[3] and to have his "nose slitt"[4]. Unexpectedly, the public execution for this ferocious sentence, itself a spectacle, elicited an outpour of empathy on the part of the people gathered, the sign of a growing discontent that was to lead to the abolition of the Start Chamber three years later, in 1640. The charges against Prynne underlined his disruptive role as a railer, "stirring up people to discontent", "cast[ing] an aspersion upon Her Majesty the *Queen*, and railing and uncharitable censures against all Christian People"[5]. Prynne was described "lyke a madde dogge" that "bayes at the moone"[6]. The Star Chamber proceedings interestingly underline that their sentence had less to do with his attack on theatres than with his

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[3]   "The haingman burnt Prin in both the cheekes, and, as I heare, because hee burnt one cheeke with a letter the wronge waye, hee burnt that againe; presently a surgeon clapt on a plaster to take out the fire. The haingman hewed off Prin's eares very scurvily, which putt him to much paine, and after hee stood longe in the pillorye before his head could be gott out, but that was a chance" (Gardiner, p. 87).

[4]   Gardiner, pp. 25, 76.

[5]   Once again, Gardiner informs us that "Mr. Prynn compiled and put in Print a Libelous Volume, Entituled by the name of Histriomastix against Plays, Masques, Dancings, &c. And although he knew well, that His Majesties Royal Queen, Lords of the Council, &c. were in their publick Festivals, and other times, present Spectators of some Masques and Dances, and many Recreations that were tolerable, and in themselves sinless, and so published to be, by a Book printed in the time of His Majesties Royal Father: yet Mr. Prynn in his Book hath railed, not only against Stage-Plays, Comedies, Dancings, and all other Exercises of the People, and against all such as behold them; but farther in particular against Hunting, Publique Festivals, Christmas-keeping, Bonfires, and May-poles; nay, against the dressing up of a House with Green-Ivy: and to manifest his evil and mischievous design in publishing of this Libel, he hath therein written divers incitements, to stir up the People to discontent, as if there were just cause to lay violent hands on their Prince; and hath expressed in many Speeches against His Majesty, and His Houshold, infamous terms unfit for so Sacred a Person. He hath cast an aspersion upon Her Majesty the Queen, and railing and uncharitable censures against all Christian People" (Gardiner, pp. 86-87).

[6]   Gardiner, p. 25.

sweeping invective, his "quarrells with all mankinde"[7], his venom-spitting rhetoric[8] which scorned the "prodigall disbursements" incurred by the kingdom[9]. Prynne's *cause célèbre*, quite possibly the one that sealed the definitive demise of the Star Chamber, marked the culmination of procedures which had in fact been put in place much earlier, during the reign of Elizabeth in the 1590s, and firmly encoded into Anti-Libel legislation by James I in 1605. The Case *de Libellis Famosis* (Easter Term, 1605) of the Court of Star Chamber laid out the legal precedent that was to set in motion the Court's repressive action against Libel for years to come[10]. Among other damning provisions, the decree established that "it is not material whether the Libel be true, or whether the party of whom the Libel is made, be of good or ill fame" because libelling, like poison, operates by secretive means and may not be openly prevented or counteracted. He who "poisoneth another" by infamous libel commits a most grievous offence, whether the scandal is caused *in scriptis* or *sine scriptis*[11]. The Case concluded memorably, with a list

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7 "this booke is not meerely against stage playes, but it rayther quarrells with all mankinde, and Mr. Pryn, lyke madd Ajaxe being offended with Ulisses and the Grecian princes, whippes all that come in his waye" (Gardiner, p. 22).

8 Justice Finch claims to have heard "this monster of men and nature spitt his venome against the people in generall" (Gardiner, p. 10). Later, of Prynne it is said that by "alledginge the examples of vitious kinges, by him scited in his booke, the venomme of his harte passeth all their vyces" (Gardiner, p. 23).

9 Gardiner, p. 9.

10 In her book on the "culture of slander" in early modern England, Lindsay Kaplan explicitly aims "to establish that defamation was a significant social concern in the early modern period" and to highlight "the literary importance of defamation" (M. Lindsay Kaplan, *The Culture of Slander in Early Modern England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 109). Cheney notes that as early as 1602 "next to riot and forgery [libel] is more frequently punished in Star Chamber than any other offense" (Cheyney, p. 735). Veeder Van Vechten explains that "during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I, the reports teem with such cases [of defamation] and the bulk of litigation in defamation at once assumed very large proportions" (Veeder Van Vechten, "The History and Theory of the Law of Defamation. I", *Columbia Law Review*, 3:8 (1903), pp. 546-73: 557). Perry Curtis talks about a widespread "culture of libel" to which some of James I's poetry provides a response; see Perry Curtis, "'If Proclamation Will not Serve': The Late Manuscript Poetry of James I and the Culture of Libel", in Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds, *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writing of James VI and I*, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2002, pp. 205-32.

11 The *OED* makes it clear that, while the word "libel" may have initially retained its etymological connection to print (*libellus*), i.e. "any published statement

of three "certain marks by which a Libeller may be known: [...] 1. *Pravitatis incrementum*, increase in lewdness. 2. *Bursae decrementum*, decrease of money, and beggary. 3. *Conscientiae detrimentum*, shipwreck of conscience"[12].

This paper evokes this well-known episode of British legal history to reflect upon the rhetorical and political resonances of railing and invective in a play probably composed between 1604 and 1608, but presumably only staged in its original form in the nineteenth century[13]. The "unfinished"[14] *Timon of Athens* straddles uneven ground in the corpus of Shakespeare's plays. Traditionally grouped with the tragedies, yet often ascribed along with *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale* to the nebulous category of 'problem plays', *Timon* presents the kind of 'false starts' and 'loose ends' which scholarship has come to expect in later romances[15]. Critical

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damaging to the reputation of a person" or "any writing of a treasonable, seditious, or immoral kind", by the early seventeenth century it had already come to include "any false and defamatory statement in conversation or otherwise". Perhaps it could be shown to have been competing with the word "slander", which was much more forcefully tied to a feudal, verbal code of "shame and dishonour". In fact, Jacobean legislation on libel, with the royal edict of 1613, put an end to duelling as an "honourable" means of addressing defamation (see Van Vechten, p. 555). The word "libel" seems also to have taken on aesthetic overtones similar to the ones we find in the secondary sense of "mock" as "imitation/counterfeiting", for instance when applied "to a portrait that does the sitter injustice, or to a thing or circumstance that tends to bring undeserved ill repute on a person, a country". The shifting boundaries between railing and counterfeiting would deserve some reflection, not possible here. See *OED*, "libel". Lindsay Kaplan discusses terminological ambiguity over 'libel' and 'slander' at some length, noting that "distinctions in the terms 'libel' and 'slander' were still unclear" and that "the common law courts did not consistently distinguish them as libel and slander respectively until 1660" (Kaplan, p. 12).

[12] See Edward Coke, *The Selected Writings and Speeches of Sir Edward Coke*, ed. Steve Sheppard, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2003, p. 148.

[13] Several adaptations were staged in the course of the seventeenth century, all quite unlike the Shakespeare original. See Stanley T. Williams, "Some Versions of *Timon of Athens* on the Stage", *Modern Philology*, 18:5 (September 1920), pp. 269-85.

[14] See Una Ellis-Fermor, "*Timon of Athens*: An Unfinished Play", *The Review of English Studies*, 18:71 (1942), pp. 270-83. Twentieth-century editors of *Timon* have also put forth other conjectures but the question is not settled.

[15] With the romances, *Timon* shares in fact elements of theme, style, and imagery, so much so that despite its stark, misanthropic gloom and the seeming absence of romantic closure, one may be inclined to read it along the sinuous path of

consensus points to a date of composition between 1604 and 1608[16], and *Timon* was printed in the First Folio of 1623. However, no record of it ever being performed during Shakespeare's lifetime exists. This, combined with stylistic inconsistencies and the lack of a prompt copy, has been used to uphold theories of a collaborative work. Opinion on the matter is still somewhat divided[17]. Possibly to a wider extent than other plays by Shakespeare and arguably on account of its perceived flaws, the text of *Timon* has provided an adaptable backdrop to changing critical views on Shakespeare. The one aspect of the play, however, that seems to have mostly exercised the attention of critics and to have engaged directors in recent performances is less Timon's misanthropic deployment of invective than the swift parable of his financial ruin, from the heights of irresponsible prodigality to a state of abjection and savagery that ultimately exposes usury and rejects gold itself as the source of all evil[18]. Research along these lines has, among other

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romances to come. All quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from: William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, *Timon of Athens*, eds Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton, London, The Arden Shakespeare (Third Series), 2014.

[16]   In his Cambridge edition of the play, Karl Klein mentions "comparatively 'free' versification and the rough nature of the blank verse" as features scholars associate with romances. See William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, ed. Karl Klein, New Cambridge Shakespeare, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 1.

[17]   Largely on the basis of stylometric analysis, critics now seem to have embraced the theory of a co-authorship involving Middleton, but dissenting voices remain. Previous candidates included Chapman, Day or Wilkins. See William Shakespeare, *Timon of Athens*, ed. H. J. Oliver, London, The Arden Shakespeare, 1959, p. xiv.

[18]   See for instance the following studies: Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature: Jonson, Shakespeare, Donne, and Their Contemporaries*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983; Karen Newman, "Rereading Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* at the Fin de Siècle", in *Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century: The Selected Proceedings of the International Shakespeare Association World Congress, Los Angeles, 1996*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 1998, pp. 378-89; David Bevington and David L. Smith, "James I and *Timon of Athens*", *Comparative Drama*, 33:1 (1999), pp. 56-87; Hugh Grady, "*Timon of Athens*: The Dialectic of Usury, Nihilism, and Art", in Richard Dutton and Jean E. Howard, eds, *A Companion to Shakespeare's Works*, Malden, Blackwell, 2006, 4 vols, vol. I, pp. 430-42. The 2012 National Theatre production of *Timon* starring Simon Russell Beale elaborated on the topical issue of waste and money by setting part of the play in the current financial enclave of the City and part in a waste ground with "parodic echoes of the financial sector's tower blocks". *The*

things, shed much-needed light on the brittle network of aristocratic and homo-social patronage, the capital-driven practices of a prodigal Jacobean court and the legally infused language that traverses the play[19]. This paper acknowledges the relevance of these contributions but would shift focus on the rhetorical modulations of invective itself, on Timon's *"bursae decrementum"* as the marker (not only the motive) of his invective, and on railing as a topically dramatic feature that deserves much closer scrutiny. Back in 1966, in his ground-breaking essay on "Timon and Misanthropic Gold", Kenneth Burke suggested that we see through the theme of gold, money and debt so central to the play and start to explore its symbolic ramifications[20]. More specifically, Burke recalled Freud's well-known association between the finding of treasures and defecation[21] to argue that in *Timon* gold partakes ambiguously of the same excremental symbolics of invective (to

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Guardian reviewer hailed the play as "a perfect parable for our times", "a fable about the toxic nature of a ruthlessly commercialised world"; see: https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/jul/18/timon-of-athens-review-olivier (last accessed October 2018).

[19] Coppélia Khan's 1987 analysis of Jacobean patronage and feminine power in *Timon* is an influential early instance of this enduring interpretative outlook, which has engaged the substantial corpus of Shakespearean criticism repeatedly in accordance with the priorities envisaged by cultural studies. Among other things, what studies of this kind have contributed to develop is a sustained focus on the ties that Shakespeare's theatre entertains, implies or constructs between the aesthetically-charged language of the stage and the all-encompassing, discourses of power, sex, and politics in Shakespeare's England. Coppélia Kahn, "'Magic of bounty': *Timon of Athens*, Jacobean Patronage, and Maternal Power", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38:1 (1987), pp. 34-57.

[20] Burke relates "the fecal connotations of gold" dug up by Timon to the "fecal connotations of invective" identified by Freud. In Freudian terms, invective would thus be equated "with the excrementitiously tabooed" that Timon's misanthropy so obdurately embodies. See Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966, pp 120-23.

[21] Primarily in Sigmund Freud, "Character and Anal Eroticism", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, London, The Hogarth Press, 1959, 24 vols, vol. IX, p. 174. See also Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1959. For a recent discussion of the ties between excrement, money and literature, see Susan Signe Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 26.

mimic the legal Latin above, we could talk about a sort of *irae excrementum*), a type of language that is the most outrageous expression of unregulated freedom. Burke suggested that we turn specifically to the rhetorical workings of invective to try and make sense of a play like *Timon*, a "sturdy display of golden misanthropy", "corrupt text on the subject of absolute corruption"[22]; a text which brings to radical extremes the probing of invective undertaken in *Coriolanus* and *King Lear*. Ultimately, rhetorical invective of the kind used by *Timon* could be seen as the drastic exercise of "a primary 'freedom of speech'" tied to the one that would have been granted to the "gifted railer" of antiquity or, in milder form, to the fool in medieval times, whose cursing was seen to perform an invaluable apotropaic function in the community[23]. That this "mode of expression", Burke notes, should have been necessarily at odds with the prescriptions of the Athenian-Jacobean powers evoked by the play makes for interesting dramatic tension. Also, such rhetorical invective poses a series of issues that, via Shakespeare, would still be highly relevant to the "most thoroughly repressed" genre of invective in American society[24]. Burke's claim and suggestion seem to me even more forceful for us at present, in a spectacle-driven aggregate of cultures ever more anxious about the social scope, the limits and

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[22] "*Timon of Athens* and Misanthropic Gold", in Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, pp. 115-24.

[23] In his symbolic role, the Fool does infiltrate the play in Act II, in a bantering scene with Apemantus quite unrelated to the rest of the play.

[24] "Though one has heard much about the repression of sexual motives, in our average dealings invective is the mode of expression most thoroughly repressed. This state of affairs probably contributes considerably to such 'cultural' manifestations as the excessive violence on television, and the popular consumption of crude political oratory. Some primitive tribes set aside a special place where an aggrieved party can go and curse the king without fear of punishment [...]. In earlier days the gifted railer was considered invaluable by reason of this expert skill at cursing the forces deemed dangerous to the welfare of the tribe" (Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action*, p. 93). The current topical relevance of Burke's reflections need not be stressed. On the role of invective in democracy see Jeremy Engels, "Uncivil Speech: Invective and the Rhetorics of Democracy in the Early Republic", *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 95:3 (August 2009), pp. 311-34 and Thomas W. Benson, "The Rhetoric of Civility: Power, Authenticity, and Democracy", *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, 1:1 (2011), pp. 22-30.

the challenges posed by apparently uncontainable instances of a rhetoric of vilification, blame or discontent. To claim that *Timon* is "first and foremost about money"[25] is, I believe, to misrepresent the dramatic network of motives at work in the play: it means taking at face value thematic threads which are certainly present and immediately relevant to our current obsessions, while in fact neglecting the symbolic filaments that the titular hero, by *antonomasia* the reviling misanthrope, brings to the complex texture of the play. This paper follows Burke's lead to reread *Timon* primarily as a play on invective, and to address invective in *Timon* as instances of symbolic rhetoric. A few qualifications are in order. Interest in the character of Timon the cynical railer has been voiced before, both in canonical scholarship and in subsequent criticism[26]. An example is a 2012 volume entirely devoted to early modern railing and reviling, which reserves a whole section to Shakespeare's play[27]. As I intend to show, my own reading of *Timon* expands upon existing scholarship of this kind in two directions: 1) by touching upon invective as a highly-encoded rhetorical mode or genre of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century literature, and 2) by using these preliminary data to put forth general remarks on Shakespeare's topical use of invective in *Timon*, especially against the Star-Chamber anecdote recalled above. There is arguably a sense in which, in its compelling drive to relate the hang-ups of our present to the incipient anxieties of a shared, early modern past, recent criticism of Shakespeare has overplayed or side-lined features of his language and rhetoric. I submit that this applies to the rhetoric of invective, which Prendergast's study, for example, examines primarily in the terms of the Jacobean polemics around stylistic and/or moral perversion[28]. The long rhetorical history of

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[25] Shakespeare and Middleton, *Timon of Athens*, eds Dawson and Minton, p. 3.

[26] See "The Pilgrimage of Hate: An Essay on *Timon of Athens*", in G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1930, pp. 235-72.

[27] Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast, *Railing, Reviling, and Invective in English Literary Culture, 1588-1617: The Anti-Poetics of Theater and Print*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2012. See especially chapter 4, "Aristocratic Remains: *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*."

[28] "This is a book about the Renaissance fashion for railing as an expression of perversion in its many senses […]. The rhetorical perversions of railing dominated the English literary landscape from 1588 to 1620, inspiring writers to

classical, medieval and Renaissance invective could suggest other viable lines of interpretation which were equally part of the cultural debate at the time[29].

Dramatis personae?

The Life of Timon of Athens (to use the title given in the Folio) puts in play from the start the resonances and the implications of the Graeco-Roman names that populate its character-list. Only two female characters challenge an all-male cast, and then only in the male-imposed role of mistresses. Timandra (whose name echoes Timon's via etymological word play on the notion of 'man reverence') figures on stage very much as the emblematic embodiment of female unfaithfulness. Phrynia closely mimics *Phryne*: the famous *hetaira* or courtesan from ancient Greece charged with impiety[30]. And in their antonomastic roles, Timon and Alcibiades bring to the stage multiple allusions to episodes of Greek history and Athenian philosophy which would have been quite familiar to an educated Blackfriars audience and in all probability known by hear-say to a fairly large circle of early modern theatregoers[31]. While North's translation of Plutarch seems to have been Shakespeare's main source for *Timon*, research also indicates that Shakespeare's familiarity with other relevant Greek and Roman classics, notably Plato's *Symposium*, may have been

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rant about a variety of topics that they deemed to be immoral" (Prendergast, p. 1).

[29]   To qualify Shakespeare's version of invective and misanthropic language in *Timon of Athens*, I tap into a number of seventeenth-century rhetorical compendia, in the form of brief, relevant quotes from Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), Johann Susenbrotus (1484-1543), Henry Peacham (1545-1634), George Puttenham (1529-1590) and Thomas Wilson (1524-1581).

[30]   *Phryne* belonged to the class of *hetairai*, ἑταῖραι, high-class prostitutes who allegedly set themselves apart from brothel prostitutes by using the language of gift-exchange to mask their ply. See Leslie Kurke, "Inventing the 'Hetaira': Sex, Politics, and Discursive Conflict in Archaic Greece", *Classical Antiquity*, 16:1, (1997), pp. 106-50.

[31]   Robert S. Miola, "Timon in Shakespeare's Athens", *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 31:1 (1980), pp. 21-30.

underestimated[32]. Timon's churlishness is cited as a stock simile, an instance of *copia* in Erasmus's widely circulated compendium on abundant style, which references his own translation of Lucian's Greek original *Timon*[33]. This suggests that by Shakespeare's time the mention of Timon's name could rely and play on a set of culturally sedimented associations (starting with excessive prodigality, Athenian corruption, misanthropy) which rhetoricians had been quick to enlist. Timon's thoroughness in the pursuit of invective and hatred had made him proverbial in England well before Shakespeare's play. And the turbulent life of Alcibiades must have provided a similarly potent paradigm. Timon is the ultimate giver and the ultimate hater: his excesses of lavishness and aversion strain the fabric of his character to the diaphanous texture of a type or a cipher. He is less a tragic hero than the memorable embodiment of human flaws. And Alcibiades, in his flash appearances on stage and the prepossessing quality of his speech, shines forth with the vivid self-sufficiency of a myth. Apemantus the philosopher eventually comes across as a more palpable character than either, but at least initially he also lacks substance and consistency[34]. One could certainly see where Ellis-Fermor was coming from when she complained that Timon "is only real by reason of his continual presence" and is a character with "no

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[32]   See Jowett's comments on this in William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton, *The Life of Timon of Athens*, ed. John Jowett, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 189.

[33]   Desiderius Erasmus, "Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style (*De duplici copia verborum ac rerum commentarii duo)*", in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1978, 89 vols, vol. XXIV. Incidentally, Christy Desmet underlines the melodramatic potential of Erasmian exercises on copia and mentions one sentence that Erasmus offered for systematic expansion, "he lost all through excess", well suited to the plot of *Timon* (Christy Desmet, "Progymnasmata, Then and Now", in Patricia Bizzell, ed., *Rhetorical Agendas: Political, Ethical, Spiritual*, Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006, pp.185-92: 189). See also Craig Thompson, "The Translations of Lucian by Erasmus and S. Thomas More", *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 18:4 (1939), pp. 855-81; Thompson explains that *Timon* "in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries [...] was one of the favourite Lucianic writings, published four times before 1506" (p. 872).

[34]   In Ellis-Fermor's view even Apemantus "lacks sinew" (Ellis-Fermor, p. 272).

individuality"[35]. What are we to make of a play whose protagonist seems non-existent? A character whose tragic identity comes in and out of focus along a precipitous dramatic movement that Wilson Knight qualified perceptively as a "pilgrimage of hate"[36]?

The tenuous permanence of characters in *Timon*, which has led some critics to discern behind its tragic features the structural and thematic pattern of a morality play, calls for an interpretation that is broad enough to allow for an appreciation of its 'generic' flexibility, its formulaic contours and its universalist aspirations. Within a Shakespearean corpus that has of late become the ideal playground for criticism firmly anchored to the material contingencies of early modern culture, *Timon* could be seen to mark a disruption, a forced reappraisal of the connections that such contingencies necessarily harbour with the transcendental and the essential, of the inextricable blend between history and meta-history. In his uncompromising thoroughness, Timon, we noticed, is dramatized as the ultimate giver and the essential hater. Arguably, one way to shed more light on the shifting boundaries of this puzzling play is to read it beside the matrix of a rhetorical exercise that belonged to the classical Greek and Roman past thematically evoked by the play and was still very much alive in the Erasmian educational setting of sixteenth-century England: the attribution of praise or blame[37]. This type of exercise belonged to epideictic rhetoric, the rhetoric of praise and blame, of honour and dishonour, of excellence, nobility, bounty, magnanimity, of liberality and magnificence as well as vilification, backbiting and

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[35]   "our complaint concerning Timon is not that we do not see enough of him, but that, in spite of the length of time during which he occupies the stage, he fails to leave a deep, coherent impression of his personality. [...] Timon here is negative. There is no individuality play" (Ellis-Fermor, pp. 280-81).

[36]   Wilson Knight (see note 26 above).

[37]   Evidence of Shakespeare's training in the kind of rhetorical praise-and-blame exercises of *progymnasmata* was gathered by Thomas Whitfield Baldwin in his *William Shakspere's small Latine & lesse Greeke*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1944, 2 vols, vol. II, pp. 288-354. For a recent discussion see Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002. Erasmus's own *Morias Enkomion* (*In Praise of Folly*, 1509) is a masterful instance of epideictic rhetoric, which also addresses the issue of mild invective (biting or *mordacitas*) as a subtle rhetorical tool to promote social awareness and possibly reform.

vituperation: subjects of commemorative speeches, whose focus is neither political deliberation nor judicial pronouncement but ceremonial display[38]. It is a rhetoric of public show well-suited to the spectacular and the anti-spectacular sways of Shakespeare's *Timon*[39], to which we shall now turn for clues.

Sweep of vanity

The first act of *Timon* presents us with the spectacle of patronage, the pyrotechnics of flattery and the extravagance of lavish consumption. Scene i enlists representatives of the Renaissance guilds: a Poet, a Painter, a Jeweller, and a Merchant, summoned to take part in a sort of neo-Platonic Symposium which blends philosophical and literary platitudes with praise and outright flattery. In the flurry of compliments and mutual deference that follows there takes shape a powerful motif which runs through the play and resonates from the start with Shakespearean romances[40]. It is the theme of sensational appearance, of seductive semblance and their problematic relationship with the 'real' or 'truthful' demands of ordinary life. The prevailing sentiment is one of dignified pomp and affected decorum. Pleasantries are exchanged, platitudes tactfully restated and circumstance ceremoniously

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[38] Yun Lee Too, "Epideictic genre", in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006. See Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995. The rhetoric of vituperation is also linked to the ancient Greek practice of ψόγος ('blame, censure'), a form of ritual invective whose social scope was amply discussed by Bruno Gentili in *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica: da Omero al V secolo*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1988, especially pp. 108-9. See also the study on *psógos* and elegy by Carles Miralles, *Studies on Elegy and Iambus*, eds Stefano Novelli and Vittorio Citti, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 2004.

[39] A very perceptive essay on the 'spectacular' in *Timon* is Richard Hillman's "The Anti-Spectacular in *Timon of Athens*", http://09.edel.univ-poitiers.fr/shakespeare/index.php?id=134 (last accessed October 2018).

[40] Editors of *Timon* have invariably recorded this affinity with the romances. Jowett, for instance, noticed the "Shakespearian romance theme of the journey from the city to the wild woods" (*Timon of Athens*, ed. Jowett, p. 45). Dover Wilson quoted previous scholarship, including Clifford Leech who saw "the germ of the romances" in *Timon* (William Shakespeare, *The Life of Timon of Athens*, eds John Dover Wilson and J. C. Maxwell, The Cambridge Dover Wilson Shakespeare, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. xiii). See also *Timon of Athens*, ed. Oliver, p. xii.

endowed with the veneer of mystery and of myth. Timon's "Magic of bounty" (I.i.6), the Poet says, must be praised for the sensational ("strange" and "rare") event that had them all "conjured" up to attend, away from the dull weariness of the world:

> POET
> I have not seen you long: how goes the world?
>
> PAINTER
> It wears, sir, as it grows.
>
> POET
> Ay, that's well known:
> But what particular rarity? what strange,
> Which manifold record not matches? See,
> Magic of bounty! all these spirits thy power
> Hath conjured to attend. (I.i.1-7)

The first act deploys all the traditional *topoi* that Aristotelian rhetoric of the kind practiced in Elizabethan grammar schools would have ascribed to the praising of virtue (value, honour, wisdom, worth, excellence, liberality, magnanimity, nobility). Each guest presents worthy Timon with worthy specimens of their respective art: samples of excellence in which "artificial strife" has, in keeping with received wisdom, managed to "tutor [...] nature", to surpass life itself: a dazzling jewel, an admirable picture, a morally edifying book. Providing as they do a "pretty mocking of the life" (I.i.35), these objects show a veneration of art and artifice that is quite central to the characters' understanding of themselves and of Timon's role at the outset of the play. The magnanimity they so admire in Timon is, in a sense, a quintessential form of art, which enthrals and mystifies in equal measure "all sorts of hearts", from "glass-faced flatterer[s]" to those who, like the cynic Apemantus, are allegedly immune to charismatic appeal. At least two features come immediately to the fore. First, Timon's brilliance is far from natural: it is in fact quite unnatural. It emanates from the sustained effort of one who is said to be long-trained in its exercise, someone "breathed, as it were / To an untirable and continuate goodness" (I.i.10-11). Perhaps more importantly, Timon's liberality seems to

be the ultimate index of the mystifying power of wealth, a motif addressed repeatedly from different angles and to various ends by critics of the play[41]. At a deeper level, Timon's art is associated with religious awe: it partakes of the redemptive efficacy of sacrament, for it is practised in the service of a goddess (Fortune) and made the object of "kneeling" and "sacrificial whisperings" by those who entreat him and "through him / Drink the free air" (I.i.83-84). Timon's priest-like power is said to rest, presumably unchallenged, well beyond the pale of others. He is an "incomparable man", cutting across all social distinctions ("all conditions") and all modes of individual constitutions ("all minds"). As such he at once embodies and sustains what has rightly been considered as a new type of order, a liberal hierarchy of means up against a traditional order of titles. He is not described as an aristocrat, nor is his position shown to lie in the sphere of politics or public service. His moral worthiness would seem rather to proceed first and foremost from his material wealth. The Merchant's offhand remark "O, 'tis a worthy lord" applies to Timon and is paralleled a few lines later by another remark, "'Tis a good form", which uses the same brisk formula to assess the worth of an object (a poem). Timon's worth is sanctioned in similar terms also by the Jeweller, whose "Nay, that's most fixed" recalls the language of money, namely the fixing of rates. Timon certainly rates high in the eyes of all. Possibly too high. For the breath-taking scope of his success is fragile. It is crippled from the start by the very art his patronage so generously upholds. The Poet has already imagined a poem which portrays Timon as the current favourite of the goddess *Fortuna*, whose fickleness is proverbial. Fortune's mutability, her "shift and change of mood" is clearly tied up with Timon's "present grace", and casts a disquieting light on his seemingly boundless triumph (I.i.65-74):

> POET
> When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
> Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependants,
> Which laboured after him to the mountain's top

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[41]   The undercurrent of counterfeit and mockery is present from the start, e.g. when the poet recites to himself: "When we for recompense have praised the vile, / It stains the glory in that happy verse / Which aptly sings the good" (I.i.16-18).

Even on their knees and hands, let him flit down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot. (I.i.86-90)

As guests discuss the relative merits of their arts and the bounty of their patron, premonitions of distress gather around their frequent mention of 'mocking'. At first, both Timon and the guests use "mock" in the appreciative sense of artful imitation, as in the Painter's comment "It is a pretty mocking of the life" (I.i.35) and in Timon's "well mocked" (I.i.176). Yet 'mock' gradually veers towards the more dyslogistic senses of 'counterfeiting' as a lie and of 'mocking' as vituperation and derision[42], which will inhabit most of the play after the first act. The ambivalence of mocking and counterfeiting, a key note in the dramatic tension of the play, will be voiced towards the end, in the plaintive apostrophe of a steward[43]:

O, the fierce wretchedness that glory brings us!
Who would not wish to be from wealth exempt,
Since riches point to misery and contempt?
Who would be so mocked with glory as to live
But in a dream of friendship –
To have his pomp and all what state compounds
But only painted, like his varnished friends? (IV.ii.30-36)

It is, however, an ambivalence that debilitates the play from its outset, notably in the exchange between Timon and the Jeweller, where it crosses two other major undercurrents of meaning, that of wealth and money, debt and bond, and the related one of dissipation, as leeching, consumption and waste. Converging as it

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[42] The *OED* lists "mock" in the sense of "derision" as the earlier meaning of the word, with an initial record dating back to the early fifteenth century. The secondary sense of "imitating closely or resembling" would seem to have emerged later and the *OED* lists Shakespearean occurrences of this later sense. See *OED* "mock".

[43] Critics have long noticed that, rather untypically, interpretative clues about the play in *Timon* are actually entrusted to subsidiary, anonymous characters, a feature that recalls both the sympathizing chorus of Attic tragedy and the depersonalising types of morality plays. See for instance Earl Showerman, "*Timon of Athens*: Shakespeare's Sophoclean Tragedy", *The Oxfordian*, 11 (2009), pp. 207-34.

does the major dramatic drives at work in the play, this passage deserves to be quoted in full:

> TIMON
> Sir, your jewel
> Hath suffered under praise.
>
> JEWELLER
> What, my lord, dispraise?
>
> TIMON
> A mere satiety of commendations –
> If I should pay you for't as 'tis extolled
> It would unclew me quite.
>
> JEWELLER
> My lord, 'tis rated
> As those which sell would give. But you well know
> Things of like value differing in the owners
> Are prized by their masters. Believe't, dear lord,
> You mend the jewel by the wearing it.
>
> TIMON
> Well mocked.
>
> MERCHANT
> No, my good lord, he speaks the common tongue
> Which all men speak with him (I.i.167-76)

The misunderstanding over praise and dispraise here is one first telling index of the confusion and 'confounding' of values that will sustain Timon's vitriolic attacks after his fall[44]. As we shall see, Timon's invective is deployed in terms of a confusion of categories. And the prospective loss of money signified in the uniquely Shakespearean 'unclewing' (in the sense of uncoiling and coming apart) reminds us of the degree to which Timon's identity is bound up with his own perception of himself as a 'man of substance'. The

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[44] Jowett notes that the term "confound", meaning 'ruin' and 'destroy', is an "important word in the play. It and *confounding* occur eleven times, over twice as often as in any other play by Shakespeare or Middleton, always in Shakespeare sections" (*Timon of Athens*, ed. Jowett, p. 185).

Jeweller uses flattery to endow Timon's identity with intrinsic value ("You mend the jewel by the wearing it"). But as Timon acknowledges his rhetorical skill, the Merchant cuts in to add that the language of the Jeweller, far from being the product of artistic ingenuity, is simply the "common tongue" of the market, the genius of exchange which "all men speak with him". This slippery line of thought breaks off with the sudden stage appearance of Apemantus, the cynic philosopher. What follows is a sustained repartee between him and Timon over the worth of Athenians and their gifts, even though the subject of their speech matters little. As they lob barbs at each other in a joust of words, Apemantus clearly comes through as the professional reviler, the one who nimbly juggles all the rhetorical resources of abuse to secure his Athenian notoriety. Interestingly, one of the resources he favours in his quick retorts, the chiastic wordplay of *antimetabole* that inverts whatever Timon says, serves well to prefigure in words Timon's own impending reversal of fortune[45]. From the very start Apemantus uses the language of mockery effortlessly, albeit with the kind of verbal slickness and Machiavellian expediency that we have come to expect from the scheming of Iago, Shylock or Claudius. By the time this scene comes to a close, Timon's impending downfall is sealed. Alcibiades the hero makes a one-line appearance on stage to state his own ambivalent devotion to Timon, a devotion phrased, once again, in the stylized, erotically consumptive language of feeding:

> ALCIBIADES (to TIMON)
> Sir, you have saved my longing, and I feed
> Most hungrily on your sight. (I.i.258)

The banquet scene that follows picks up this homoerotic thread and weaves it into a spectacle of reciprocal feeding and drinking. What we are presented with in scene ii is at the same time a highly sensual, and sensationalised, staging of Plato's Symposium and a

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[45] "A species of chiasmus (q.v.), or word repetition in reverse. The term is apparently first recorded in Quintilian […] who defines it merely as a figure of words 'repeated with variation in case or tense'" (Alex Preminger and T. V. F. Brogan, eds, *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993).

parody of the Last Supper. Timon's 'Symposium' is meant to showcase the delicacy of "his bounties" and, once again, praise the liberality of his "plenteous bosom". However, while the guests of Plato's gathering were urged to transcend sensual charms to contemplate eternal truths, here it is not people, but "the five best senses" which directly acknowledge Timon as their patron (I.ii.119-20). It is an apotheosis of wealth, a masque-like celebration of *copia* and excess accompanied by music and dance. But what reaches such pleasurable heights, must soon come down. The facade of unrestrained praise will prove brittle under the relentless barbs of Apemantus: scorn, and dispraise, creep in. Despite Timon's efforts, Apemantus, the "unpeaceable dog" (I.i.273), won't hide his angry sarcasm or be silenced: at table he gets away with a derisive caricature of grace and later openly inveighs against the vanity (and madness) of pomp:

> APEMANTUS
> Hoyday,
> What a sweep of vanity comes this way!
> They dance? They are madwomen;
> Like madness is the glory of this life,
> We make ourselves fools to disport ourselves,
> And spend our flatteries to drink those men
> Upon whose age we void it up again
> With poisonous spite and envy.
> Who lives that's not depraved or depraves?
> Who dies that bears not one spurn to their graves
> Of their friends' gift? (I.ii.130-41)

Apemantus's invective exposes the "poisonous spite" that lies behind the frenzied theatrics of flattery. He mocks and inverts the pleasures of food through a rather graphic picture, an ecphrasis of drinking and vomiting (voiding) which ties the physiological cause of a disordered, angry temper (cholera) to the ungrateful indulgence of flatterers. The end of the first act officially sanctions Apemantus' self-appointed role as a railer and reviler for the sake of Timon, whom he warns: "there would be none left to rail up on thee, and then thou / wouldst sin the faster" (I.ii.247-48).

All's obliquy

Timon's plunge from the pinnacle of praise and affection to the pit of scorn and hatred is as precipitous as it is thorough. Acts II to V chart the inexorable steps of his progressive estrangement from Athens, far from the "sweep of vanity" of civilised *convivia* and the lure of Athenian pomp. The undercurrents of mockery that ran through the encomiastic displays of Act I now flow out into powerful, visible streams of vituperation. Timon's language of bounty gives way to a rhetoric of penury, for it is now "deepest winter in Lord Timon's purse" (III.iv.14): having been the object of detraction, first material, then moral, Timon will now turn detraction into his informing principle. Two characters partake of his pilgrimage and are played off against him and each other in this unforgiving *mis-en-scène*: Apemantus and Alcibiades. Both, like Timon, deploy a rhetoric of invective but their ends differ, and the play encourages us to see their varying styles of disparagement side by side. Apemantus exercises his cynical skills at key junctures in the play, to attack and ridicule Timon's creditors, usurers' men who are "bawds between gold and want" (II.ii.61) and, we shall see, in a protracted final showdown with Timon (IV.iii.200-393). But Apemantus has long embraced scorn as his *modus vivendi* and if there is rage left in him, it is very much compressed within the rather narrow emotional range of irony (or its lighter variants in the form of urbane jests and barbs) and sarcasm. In his jaded detachment, Apemantus remains, despite himself, an Athenian, the cultural product of a society that values the prerogatives of privilege and sophistication. As a railer, Apemantus may be said to cover a conventional, socially acceptable role, not very different from that of a court jester, and the play indicates as much when it places both him and a Fool on stage in rather long, unexpected exchange (II.ii.51-125). Not so for Alcibiades. His earnest appeal to the Senate in Timon's favour falls on deaf ears, and when he tries to make a case for Timon's justified anger at the ungrateful attacks of creditors, he is bitterly rebuked for "undergo[ing] too strict a paradox, striving to make an ugly deed look fair" (III.vi.24)[46].

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[46] The exchange between Alcibiades and the Senators in III.vi over "a friend" who "should die" is one of the loose ends never quite cleared up in the play. I would be strongly inclined to read it as a reference to Timon himself, rather than to another friend of Alcibiades never mentioned elsewhere.

Hypocritically, the Athenian Senators qualify Timon's rage as "riotous" while they shield their "usuring" behind their entitlement to "anger". They blame Alcibiades for allegedly attempting to "make gross sins look clear" (III.v.39). And when he persists, he is banished from Athens. "Worse than mad" (III.vi.105), he lashes out against them:

> FIRST SENATOR
> Do you dare our anger?
> 'Tis in few words, but spacious in effect:
> We banish thee for ever.
>
> ALCIBIADES
> Banish me?
> Banish your dotage, banish usury
> That makes the senate ugly. (III.vi.97-99)

And again:

> ALCIBIADES
> Now the gods keep you old enough that you may live
> Only in bone, that none may look on you!
> I'm worse than mad: I have kept back their foes
> While they have told their money and let out
> Their coin upon large interest – I myself
> Rich only in large hurts. All those for this?
> Is this the balsam that the usuring senate
> Pours into captains' wounds? Banishment.
> It comes not ill: I hate not to be banished.
> It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury,
> That I may strike at Athens. I'll cheer up
> My discontented troops, and lay for hearts.
> 'Tis honour with most lands to be at odds,
> Soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods. (III.v.102-16)

Alcibiades' spirited invective stands out against the measured sullenness of Apemantus' barbs. "Spleen and fury" drive his vehement retort to the Senators, in a combative apostrophe where the fencing of words becomes one with the striking of weapons. To

Alcibiades the captain the wrangle of the Senate is just as intoxicating as the tactics of war. He will deploy troops and strike Athens. Via North's Plutarch Shakespeare effectively dramatizes Alcibiades' notorious impetuosity and brings to the play biographical allusions to the scandal involving Socrates, the corruption of Athenian youths (hinted at in the eroticised attachment to Timon) and the charges of impiety brought against Alcibiades as Socrates' favoured lover and later cleared. While arguably justified in the face of the senators' hardness of heart, Alcibiades' invective deploys a rhetoric of force and violent annihilation that Timon, despite his rage, will openly reject[47]. More specifically, Alcibiades' *hubris* (whereby for instance he does not hesitate to equate soldiers to the status of gods and claims that he would "hate not to be banished") opens up the very real option of violent scheming and reasserts abuse as a prerogative of a privileged class. Alcibiades is ready to use his rhetoric to stir up his troops and "lay hearts", an obscure phrase that conflates ideas of ambush ("waylay") and ruthless, almost Machiavellian, manipulation.

Timon's rhetoric of invective, on the other hand, is articulated on an altogether different plane. His definitive rejection of civilised society as such is signalled in his mock banquet for Athenian senators, whom he will surprise with a meal of stones and lukewarm water well devised to expose their hypocritical entitlements. Irony is the weapon of choice here, as Timon bends the protocols of etiquette and seating precedence to insinuate a levelling of social hierarchy and a corresponding flattening of sensual indulgence in the delicacies of food:

> TIMON
> Your diet shall be in all places alike.
> Make not a City feast of it, to let the meat cool ere we can
> agree upon the first place. Sit, sit. (III.vii.65-67)

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[47] "TIMON: Warr'st thou 'gainst Athens? / ALCIBIADES: Ay, Timon, and have cause. TIMON: The gods confound them all in thy conquest, and thee after, when thou hast conquered. / ALCIBIADES: Why me, Timon? / TIMON: That by killing of villains thou wast born to conquer my country." (IV.iii.101-6).

Irony takes on a progressively sarcastic colouring in the mock prayer of grace that follows. Timon's address to the gods merges notions of praise and scorn, of lending and borrowing, of sacred and profane in a rising pitch of anger that forcefully turns a blessing into a curse. Timon's confusion and "confounding" of categories, the ultimate outcome of his rage, comes across in this open imprecation (the first one of many to follow), a "malediction" that warps the intentional phrasing of good wish and uses *oxymora* (a figure of confusion) to great satirical effect. Alliteration is also very subtly deployed as a way of compounding and intensifying scorn:

> TIMON
> Live loathed and long,
> Most smiling, smooth, detested parasites,
> Courteous destroyers, affable wolves, meek bears –
> You fools of fortune, trencher-friends, time's flies,
> Cap-and-knee slaves, vapours, and minute-jacks!
> Of man and beast the infinite malady
> Crust you quite o'er. (III.vii.93-98)

After this, in Timon's eyes "All's obliquy" (IV.iii.18), a most piercing pun: all will be *obloquy* (abuse) and *oblique* scheming, all will be curse, vituperation, abhorrence and loathing, all malicious and debasing crosstalk. His speeches, which will take up most of the play, furnish a veritable catalogue of figures of censure, of the kind meticulously listed in Elizabethan rhetoric manuals[48]. Beside the more common and general categories of 'irony' and 'sarcasm' (very much the only ones a modern reader would be likely to register immediately) we could mention *ara* (imprecation: "Nothing I'll bear from thee / But nakedness, thou detestable

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[48]   I borrow these categories directly from the rhetorical compendia of Richard Sherry, *A treatise of schemes [and] tropes*, STC 22428, London, John Day, 1550; Thomas Wilson, *The arte of rhetorique*, STC 25799, London, Richard Grafton, 1553, 1560; Henry Peacham, *The garden of eloquence*, STC 19498, London, Richard Field, 1577 (revised in 1593); George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, STC 20519, London, 1589, who were translating and expanding earlier work in Latin by Johann Susenbrotus, Desiderius Erasmus and the classical tradition. These rhetoric manuals were a key part of the Elizabethan grammar school curriculum of *progymnasmata* that has been shown to have influenced Shakespeare's writing. See also Mack, and Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

town!", IV.i.32-33); *cataplexis* (*ominatio*: "Itches, blains, / Sow all th'Athenian bosoms, and their crops / Be general leprosy", IV.i.28-30); *categoria* (accusation: "ALCIBIADES: I never did thee harm. / TIMON: Yes, thou spok'st well of me", IV.iii.173-74); *bdelygmia* (*abominatio*: "Therefore, be abhorred / All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!", IV.iii.20-21); *procles* (provocation: "Maid, to thy master's bed, / Thy mistress is o'th' brothel", IV.i.12-13); *diasyrmus* (ironic elevation: "Be strong in whore, allure him, burn him up; / Let your close fire predominate his smoke, / And be no turncoats", IV.iii.143-45); *tapinosis* (the figure of 'substraction' or 'detraction', debasing of good things: "The sun's a thief, a with his great attraction / Robs the vast sea", IV.iii.439-40); *threnos* (lamentation: "all's obliquy; / There's nothing level in our cursed natures / But direct villainy", IV.iii.18-20); *mycterismus* (private mock: "All villains that do stand by thee are pure", IV.iii.363). To name a few. Rhetorically, all these would be grouped together as figures of exclamation (*ecphonesis*, or the outcry), the voicing of "vehement affections in vehement formes" visually conveyed, in Timon's devastating attack on Athens, in the pressing punctuation dictated by the nomenclature of hate. An effect of overpowering thoroughness is achieved to great dramatic effect as Timon's long tirade against the city modulates outcry and lament with the eschatological and scatological tones of *epiphonema* (a pointed, intensely passionate statement that is meant to seal an earnest moral message). The result is a splendid show of rhetoric; in Hazlitt's words, "some of the finest pieces of invective possible to be conceived[49]":

> TIMON
> Let me look back upon thee. O thou wall
> That girdles in those wolves, dive in the earth,
> And fence not Athens! Matrons, turn incontinent;
> Obedience, fail in children; slaves and fools,
> Pluck the grave wrinkled senate from the bench
> And minister in their steads. To general filths
> Convert o'th' instant, green virginity,

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[49] William Hazlitt, "*Timon of Athens*", in *The Round Table. Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, London, Dent, 1902, pp. 210-13: 210.

Do't in your parents' eyes. Bankrupts, hold fast;
Rather than render back, out with your knives,
And cut your trusters' throats! Bound servants, steal:
Large-handed robbers your grave masters are,
And pill by law. Maid, to thy master's bed,
Thy mistress is o'th' brothel. Son of sixteen,
Pluck the lined crutch from thy old limping sire;
With it beat out his brains! Piety and fear,
Religion to the gods, peace, justice, truth,
Domestic awe, night rest, and neighbourhood,
Instruction, manners, mysteries, and trades,
Degrees, observances, customs, and laws,
Decline to your confounding contraries –
And yet confusion live! Plagues incident to men,
Your potent and infectious fevers heap
On Athens, ripe for stroke. Thou cold sciatica,
Cripple our senators, that their limbs may halt
As lamely as their manners; lust and liberty,
Creep in the minds and marrows of our youth,
That 'gainst the stream of virtue they may strive
And drown themselves in riot. Itches, blains,
Sow all th'Athenian bosoms, and their crop
Be general leprosy; breath infect breath,
That their society, as their friendship, may
Be merely poison. Nothing I'll bear from thee
But nakedness, thou detestable town. (IV.i.1-33)

Timon in the woods

The style of Timon's invective from now on is very much shaped
by this all-encompassing rhetoric of confounding[50], the ultimate

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[50] Marx's reading of *Timon* had acutely brought this aspect of his rhetoric to the
surface. Cf.: "In *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844 Marx quotes
Timon of Athens xiv.26-45 and 382-93, and, weaving Timon's language into his
own, he comments, 'Does not money, therefore, transform all my incapacities
into their contrary? […] is not money the bond of all *bonds*? Can it not dissolve
and bind all ties?' He attributes to money 'The disturbing and confounding of
all human and natural qualities […] it is the general *confounding* and *confusing* of
all things […]. It makes contradictions embrace'" (*Timon of Athens*, ed. Jowett, p.
53).

discomfiture and destruction of all the forms that sustain civil intercourse: he will flee mankind, recast himself in the novel role of "Misanthropos" and live in a cave among the beasts. We too leave Athens behind with Timon as he looks back and curses its walls, and for the rest of the play action shifts to the woods and by the sea, where characters must come to find him and even struggle to make out his features in the wild abasement of his new condition. They will show up in turns, and in turns be cursed and sent back. Timon will reject Apemantus' malicious advice to adopt cunning (a strategy Apemantus can clearly use with consummate skill) and refuse Apemantus' claim that he is only aping the ways of cynics (IV.iii.200-20). His own indignation, Timon well knows, is of a very different calibre. Nor is Alcibiades, in Timon's accusing words, "th' Athenian minion whom the world voiced so regardfully" (IV.iii.81) treated any better. As he makes a formal entrance "in warlike manner" accompanied by two courtesans, Timon berates him for his violent lust and sends him off, with gold, to "follow [his] drum [and] paint the ground, gules, gules" with the blood of man (IV.iii.59-60); to spare no excess of violence and, once again, "make large confusion" (IV.iii.129):

> TIMON
> The gods confound them all in thy conquest,
> and thee after, when thou hast conquered!
>
> ALCIBIADES
> Why me, Timon?
>
> TIMON
> That by killing of villains
> thou wast born to conquer my country.
> Put up thy gold. Go on; here's gold, go on.
> Be as a planetary plague when Jove
> Will o'er some high-viced city hang his poison
> In the sick air. Let not thy sword skip one. (IV.iii.103-10)

Timon's vitriol reaches its nadir while he is out digging for roots, and, in this renewed pact with 'mother nature' appeals to bestial forces, to "tigers, dragons, wolves, and bears", and "new

monsters", for the chthonic annihilation of mankind. The one 'single man' who comes to mitigate his hate is his faithful steward, the only one Timon can proclaim honest (IV.iii.491). He is the one just man who, by Timon's own admission, could almost turn his "dangerous nature mild" (IV.iii.487). Yet, in the brief time still allotted to his life, Timon feels more curses are to be uttered: at the Poet, the Painter, and later at the Senators who flock like pilgrims to his cave hoping for a reasonable settlement and rewards in gold. Timon will not be turned. Eventually, a soldier will bring the news that noble Timon is "Dead / Entombed upon the very hem o'th' sea" (V.v.65-66). The unspectacular end of a most spectacular demise. His epitaph, in the form of a final execration against those who outlive him, is read out by Alcibiades, whose praise for Timon's noble heart, forever to be treasured, swiftly makes way for a planned attack on Athens. Now that Timon is dead, Athens will be 'treated' with Alcibiades' violent, swift prescription. Not bitter scorn but drums of war will strike:

> ALCIBIADES
> Dead
> Is noble Timon, of whose memory
> Hereafter more. Bring me into your city,
> And I will use the olive with my sword,
> Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
> Prescribe to other as each other's leech.
> Let our drums strike (V.v.77-83)

"Great Timon! Noble, worthy, royal Timon!"

Alcibiades's encomium, which takes us back full-circle to the rhetoric of praise of the first act, firmly restates a claim that echoes throughout the play off the lips of many: that Timon the "Misanthropos" was in fact noble at heart to the very end. That is relevant for our purposes because we are led to wonder whether Timon's parable of scorn only charts a tragic fall from dissipation to utter perdition, or whether his invective, as the faithful Flavius maintains, bears the redeeming features of a "noble nature" (202), even in a society, like Athens', that may have ceased to recognise nobility as a virtue beyond the protocols of law, the entitlements of

privilege, and the pleasantries of social etiquette. Timon's own invective against senators as "vapors" and "minute-jacks" (III.vii.96), as empty abstractions of the law or overzealous bureaucrats, would seem to suggest as much[51]. The numerous references to 'noble' in the play certainly play out the full array of senses conveyed by the word and the multiple, or even conflicting, uses to which 'nobility' can be bent. Clearly, in the mouths of senators, to be noble has mostly to do with the status secured by means or property (as when creditors urge Timon to pay back what he owes by using his "noble parts", II.ii.26). Or nobility resides possibly in the dazzling social spectacle that patronage entails (as when the Poet laments the demise of the "star-like nobleness", V.i.61, whereby Timon gave freely to all). However, Timon's nobility would seem to consist in more than either, as Flavius, the "one honest man" (IV.iii.492), is eager to suggest. It is perhaps Alcibiades' passionate defence of Timon at the Senate that provides the best clues on the subject. Alcibiades openly links Timon's nobility to Timon's passion (his "hot blood") and sets it up as a virtue of spirit against the treacherous mires (the depths) of the law. Not gold, but "noble fury and fair spirit" are the driving forces of his honour[52]:

> ALCIBIADES
> Of comely virtues;
> Nor did he soil the fact with cowardice–

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[51]   The epithet is especially telling because it recasts the Senate's alleged nobility in the terms of excessive fixation on formal minutiae, a criticism which in Jacobean England could easily have applied to the minute-books and the lengthy procedures of the Court of Star Chamber. This characterization also brings into play the whole semantic nexus between fastidiousness, formal scrupulousness, and loathing, an aspect that deserves analysis elsewhere.

[52]   Timon's nobility of spirit against the self-interested nobility of wealth comes across in his early exchange with Ventidius: "TIMON: Honest Ventidius. You mistake my love. / I gave it freely ever, and there's none / Can truly say he gives if he receives. / If our betters play at that game, we must not dare / To imitate them. Faults that are rich are fair. / VENTIDIUS: A noble spirit!" (I.ii.9-13). His qualification of ceremony against "true friendship" is also significant in this respect: "TIMON: Nay, my lords, ceremony was but devised at first / To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes, / Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown; / But where there is true friendship, there needs none. / Pray sit. More welcome are ye to my fortunes / Than my fortunes to me." (I.ii.15-20).

An honour in him which buys out his fault–
But with a noble fury and fair spirit,
Seeing his reputation touched to death,
He did oppose his foe; (III.vi.15-20)

Interestingly, Alcibiades' impassioned speech also qualifies
Timon's rhetoric of anger as a legitimate kind for argument: a
measured progression, at least initially "sober" and quite apt to the
circumstances that occasioned it:

ALCIBIADES
And with such sober and unnoted passion
He did behave his anger, ere 'twas spent,
As if he had but proved an argument. (III.vi.21-23)

As he challenges the heartless verdict of the Senate ("We are for
law. He dies", III.vi.86) Alcibiades even draws a daring parallel
between Timon's justified anger and the recourse to violence for
self-defence:

ALCIBIADES
To kill, I grant, is sin's extremest gust,
But in defence, by mercy, 'tis most just.
To be in anger is impiety,
But who is man that is not angry? (III.iv.54-57)

Who indeed, among humans, knows no anger? This question must
have had the ring of truth and everyday experience even to those,
among Jacobean audiences enured to a Protestant ethics of thrift,
may have been less inclined to countenance Timon's prodigality
and recklessness. The sense of Timon's nobility (nobleness)
arguably lies here, in the broad emotional spectrum (the
magnanimity) and the intensely human, deeply tormented passion
of his enraged response to a corrupt and bureaucratised social
order (the "strange times" of a "flinty mankind", IV.iii.479) which

has forsaken pity[53]. Despite all, Timon's self-styled misanthropy admits at least one exception:

> TIMON
> Had I a steward
> So true, so just, and now so comfortable?
> It almost turns my dangerous nature mild.
> Let me behold thy face. Surely this man
> Was born of woman.
> Forgive my general and exceptless rashness,
> You perpetual sober gods! I do proclaim
> One honest man. Mistake me not: but one,
> No more, I pray, and he's a steward.
> How fain would I have hated all mankind,
> And thou redeem'st thyself! But all save thee
> I fell with curses. (IV.iii.485-96)

If this is true, noble intensity of feeling could be said to smoulder even under the darkest embers of Timon's invective. And while this goes against the grain of recent productions of the play along modernist lines (with a predilection for absurdist aesthetics)[54], I

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53   In his exchange with Flavius, the faithful Steward: "TIMON: What, dost thou weep? Come nearer then. I love thee / Because thou art a woman, and disclaim'st / Flinty mankind, whose eyes do never give / But thorough lust and laughter. Pity's sleeping. / Strange times, that weep with laughing, not with weeping!" (IV.iii.476-81). Something could be said about Timon's association of Flavius to women in this passage and the verses that follow (Flavius the one honest man is 'surely born of woman'). We could take his comment as a stereotypical slight, in the purely dismissive tone of irony (women are overemotional) or see it as a veiled, final acknowledgement of women's emotional soundness over and above the male-dominated institutions or the homo-social bullying Timon has grown accustomed to in his pleasure days.

54   I am thinking especially of the 2017 production directed by Stephen Ouimette at the Stratford Ontario Festival; see: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/theatre-reviews/review-strong-performances-anchor-the-politically-apt-timon-of-athens/article35218268/ (last accessed October 2018). See also the 2018 San Francisco production by Rob Melrose, who wrote a short essay on his own stage interpretation of Timon where he claims that "the second half of the play anticipates Beckett with its dark sense of the absurd", http://cuttingball.com/productions/timon-of-athens/ and https://www.kqed.org/arts/13829027/how-do-you-solve-a-problem-like-timon-

believe it gives us a sense of how this tragic play partakes of the style of romance. To be sure *Timon of Athens* lacks the symbolic breadth of *The Winter's Tale* or the strange, exotic richness of *The Tempest*. But Timon's meteoric fall presents us with a chiaroscuro – between the lustre of civilised culture he inhabits (Timon's "Lights, more lights!", I.ii.235) and the dour environment he retreats to – which I think can convey equally well the tableau of a morality play or the sublime aesthetics of a vista by Caspar David Friedrich. Timon's "rich conceit", that has "vast Neptune" weep for a "low grave" seals in a final, memorable scene the highs and the lows of Timon's life, as the expanse of the sea opens out to other seas, the primary setting of romances to come. No one could have captured the grandeur of the medieval romance of the 'low grave' evoked in the final scene better than William Hazlitt, who turned our attention to Timon "making the winds his funeral dirge, his mourner the murmuring ocean; and seeking in the everlasting solemnities of nature oblivion of the transitory splendour of his life-time"[55]. More importantly for our purposes, Hazlitt is also one of the very few critics to have expressed unqualified esteem for the intense feeling at work in the play and to have seized, in the nuanced prose that distinguishes his criticism, the very different motivational tapestries of Timon's and Apemantus' imprecations:

> Every topic of contempt or indignation is here exhausted; but while the sordid licentiousness of Apemantus, which turns every thing to gall and bitterness, shews only the natural virulence of his temper and antipathy to good or evil alike, Timon does not utter an imprecation without betraying the extravagant workings of disappointed passion, of love altered to hate. Apemantus sees nothing good in any object, and exaggerates whatever is disgusting: Timon is tormented with the perpetual contrast between things and appearances, between the fresh, tempting outside and the rottenness within, and invokes mischiefs on the heads of mankind proportioned to the sense of his wrongs and of their treacheries.[56]

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of-athens (last accessed October 2018). For an overview of much earlier productions, see Stanley T. Williams, "Some Versions of *Timon of Athens* on the Stage", *Modern Philology*, 18:5 (1920), pp. 269-85.

[55]   Hazlitt, p. 213

[56]   Hazlitt, p. 212.

As we have seen, a closer scrutiny of the language of abuse employed by three main characters, Timon, Apemantus and Alcibiades, brings out rhetorical patterns that might help us make sense of the controversial literary (and cultural) purview of polemic, the rhetoric of *praise* or *blame* that gained unprecedented currency in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Renaissance[57]. Rhetorically, the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century in England have been shown to present hybridization between the emotional repertoire empowered by the Catholic liturgy of the past and the strictures imposed by the Anglican implementation of Protestantism, whose mistrust of pathos was matched by a fierce resolve to quell any upsurge of Popish superstition. It was, in fact, a hybridity fuelled by the relentless exercise of Protestant scatological invective against Roman rites, a highly theatrical posture of the kind conveyed, paradoxically, in the very anti-theatrical polemics of William Prynne's *Histriomastix*, the most illustrious victim of early anti-Libel legislation[58]. Perhaps more importantly, it was a hybrid form particularly ill-fitted to the incipient modes of capitalism and the elitist interests that went with it, a clash of interests and a cultural tension that *Timon of Athens* brings powerfully to the Jacobean stage. Emergent capitalism must downplay the fluid, pathos-infused rhetorical models of the past in favour of predictable, reproducible patterns of language, a form of standardization and technicization envisaged in the rigid dichotomies that Peter Ramus, the most influential Protestant rhetorician of the time, made popular[59]. Along these lines,

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[57] Vickers, pp. 54, 291.

[58] See Grace Tiffany, "*Hamlet* and Protestant Aural Theater", in *Shakespeare's Christianity: Catholic-Protestant Presence in* Julius Caesar, Hamlet, *and* Macbeth, ed. Beatrice Batson, Waco, Baylor University Press, 2006, pp. 73-90.

[59] "Standardisation" and "technicization" are the words used by Kathryn Dean in her study on the links between capitalism and the kind of analytical popularized by Ramus. In *Capitalism, Citizenship and the Arts of Thinking: A Marxian-Aristotelian Linguistic Account*, London, Routledge, 2014, Dean argues that "Ramus, and the Ramist movement that flourished in England after his death, can be seen as an early manifestation of [...] attempts to 'industrialise intelligence'" (p. 88).

invective, whether in fact it be Popish or Protestant[60], would be contained, channelled and meticulously broken down in the manageable (and profitable) codes of science and the law. *Timon of Athens* should, I think, be seen as a highly effective theatrical response to this fraught cultural and rhetorical juncture. Its staging of unregulated invective is the dramatization of emotion, a radicalized instance of *exclamatio* or *ecphonesis*, the figure "of vehement affection or passion"[61] whose rhetorical potential would have been widely recognized and shared in the past as a legitimate vehicle for social utterance but must now be given melodramatic embodiment on stage in order to be heard. *Timon of Athens* may be said to assert as much, when seen against the cultural backdrop of a society that increasingly defined itself around the manipulative terms of contractual bonds, methodical procedures and capital-driven litigation[62]. Also, in a genre-problematic play like *Timon of Athens*, that already partakes of the uneasy blend of tragedy and comedy found in Shakespeare's romances, there is an important sense in which the melodramatic intimations of 'romance', itself a

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[60] The Puritan version of Protestantism would soon have to face its own rhetorical alter-ego in the debates sparked by the Antinomian controversy in the New World, which forcefully brought repressed emotion back to centre stage. This was to resurface also in the rhetoric of *Enthusiasts* and seventeenth-century *Ranters*. See Michael Heyd, *Be Sober and Reasonable: The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*, Leiden, Brill, 1995. Especially suggestive is Heyd's study of the association (corroborated by Richard Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* of 1621) between Enthusiasm and Melancholy, the latter being one of the features explicitly mentioned with regard to Timon's invective in the play. See also: David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1985; David D. Hall, ed., *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1990.

[61] In Peacham's definition: "Ecphonesis of the Latines called Exclamatio, is a forme of speech by which the orator through some vehement affection, as either of love, hatred, gladnesse, sorrow, anger, marvelling, admiration, feare, or such like, bursteth foorth into an exclamation or outcrie, signifying thereby the vehement affection or passion of his mind" (p. 62). Puttenham's definition (p. 177) is phrased in very similar words.

[62] The first recorded use of the word 'procedure' itself dates back to the mid seventeenth century (see *OED* "procedure"). This is one aspect of the play underlined by Shakespearean criticism in the past but somewhat side-lined in recent studies. See for instance Ernest Charles Pettet, "*Timon of Athens*: The Disruption of Feudal Morality", *The Review of English Studies*, 23:92 (October 1947), pp. 321-36.

hybrid form of Catholic and Protestant rhetoric[63], strive to circumvent or elude those insidious forms of cultural coercion[64]. Hazlitt's appreciation of the play and of Timon's nobility in particular resonates with the romance-infused quality of Timon's limitless invective.

Ultimately, we read *Timon* from a historical vantage point that is both similar and different to the one in which the play was written and circulated. One significant point of departure, I submit, would have to do with the status, the function and the aim of display rhetoric, the language of praise and of blame, of open scorn and invective, which our highly bureaucratised culture seems constantly engaged to curtail[65]. *Timon of Athens*, an unusual play on

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[63]   Research by Tiffany Werth to characterize the cultural milieu which leads to the resurgence of Romance is invaluable in this respect. Her aim is "to identify its function as a hybrid genre, expressing the complex, overlapping, and intersecting history of forms and formal representations that were never fully reducible to simple binaries. These texts consistently trouble such categorization, whether literary (such as 'epic' or 'romance', prose or poetry, dramatic or nondramatic), religious ('Protestant' or 'Catholic'), or even historical periodization (medieval, early modern, or 'Renaissance'). Romance's quality of being in-between – both in its formal attributes and in its historical development – disrupts a familiar narrative whereby the medieval and Catholic give way to the early modern and the Protestant" (Tiffany Jo Werth, *The Fabulous Dark Cloister: Romance in England After the Reformation*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011, pp. 6-7).

[64]   On this point Werth notes that "even as historians have mapped this confessional confusion with greater subtlety, the place of imaginative literature as both reflection and constituent of a hybrid or in-between religious climate has only intermittently come into scholarly focus. Because of the ways that the formal attributes of romance are interleaved with English religious identity, this book argues it is a literary genre that provides a singular portal into the contested, tempestuous intermediacies that undermine these newly formed, and forming, communities. They are the 'ruined choirs' in the changing landscape of post-Reformation English literature" (Werth, p. 3).

[65]   This is an issue that calls for sustained future reflection elsewhere. The rhetoric of praise may be said to fare better in our time possibly because it responds so effectively to the market-driven priorities of business and global advertising, now often embraced even in academia. The scope of censure and invective, on the other hand, seems to me seriously curtailed in academic discourse, and very much exercised along tacit ideological lines that lurk behind scientistic expectations of neutrality and factual objectivity. Leading cues come once again from Burke, whose *Philosophy of Literary Form* considers the rhetorical impoverishments brought about by scientific discourse. His comments apply to the literary rise of irony in nineteenth-century France, but as always in Burke,

invective and abuse written – possibly never performed – at a time when libel and slander were being firmly encased within the widening remit of the law, also invites us to reflect on all this[66]. On what invective – a literary device that captures the potentials and the pitfalls of an irrevocable cultural practice – brings to our imperfect understanding of human interaction. A most notable instance of Shakespearean difference.

they provide a "representative anecdote" of a symbolic mechanism at work in the increasingly scientistic and professionalising context of Jacobean England, especially in view of the libel legislation being put in place at the time on much more systematic grounds than ever before: "pure science had robbed the social critics of a stable basis upon which they might erect a system of protest, such completely relativistic sciences as psychology and anthropology having destroyed the underpinnings of absolute judgment. Only those who remained staunch Catholics were able to write sturdy invective. They could still base their thunder upon the old ideology of horrors, thus deriving 'strength,' but the 'new men' had weakened: they could not say, 'It is wrong in the eyes of God,' nor even, 'It is wrong in the eyes of human justice,' but simply, 'I do not like it'" (Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, New York, Vintage, 1941, pp. 419-20).

[66] William Hudson's 1621 extensive treatment of libel is a good instance of this Jacobean trend, fully embodied in the coercive power of the Star Chamber. The Chamber would soon become a byword for political and social oppression, wielded via draconian measures against seditious libel and perjury. Cf. William Hudson, "A Treatise on the Court of Star Chamber", in Francis Hargrave, ed., *Collectanea juridica: consisting of tracts relative to the law and constitution of England*, London, Clarke, 1792. See also Kaplan's study on slander (mentioned bove) and Andrew McRae, "The Literary Culture of Early Stuart Libeling", *Modern Philology*, 97:3 (2000), pp. 364-92.

Anti-Comedy in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

Roger Holdsworth

Critical discussion of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* has shifted significantly since the last century. It used to be suggested that the play is best understood as a political allegory, since its plot bears some resemblance to two events which occurred shortly before its composition: the death in November 1612 of Prince Henry, James's elder son, and the marriage of the king's daughter Princess Elizabeth to the Elector Palatine the following February, after its postponement because of the death. The play, too, features bereavement and postponed nuptials: it opens with three widowed queens who confront Theseus and induce him to break off his wedding with Hippolyta until the funerals of their husbands can take place; and, as it ends, another period of mourning, for the dead Arcite, is about to take place, alongside a much-delayed betrothal,

since Princess Emilia is finally able to accept the hand of the one surviving kinsman. In addition, Henry's projection of himself as "the epitome of militant Protestant chivalry"[1] offers a separate point of contact, as Shakespeare and Fletcher's play is much concerned with knightly etiquette, and it is possible to read it on a non-allegorical level as an "exploration of the tension between chivalric idealism and painful emotional reality"[2].

One hears less these days of this kind of approach, with good reason: it is a critical dead end. Its adherents assure us that the real-life events in question "exercised a powerful influence on the nature of the play"[3]; that it "took its being" from them[4]; that the action "must surely have been for its first audience quite saturated in current relevance"[5]; even that the play's characters are real people (Theseus and Hippolyta, for example, are James and Queen Anne)[6]. But beyond vague claims that Shakespeare and Fletcher are 'responding' or 'alluding' to these historical parallels, no commentator demonstrates what the dramatists might have expected to gain by doing so, or how awareness of the parallels benefits interpretation of the play.

A more plausible reading, at least at first glance, has also lost ground. This rests on the view that the play, despite dark moments, is at heart a comedy: typically of the genre, it guides its characters to a life-affirming conclusion, bringing harmony, personal and social, out of discord and contention. According to Philip Edwards, the play dramatises "the unavoidable process of growth" which is the "growth into experience", a movement from "youth, in which the spontaneous passion of friendship is dominant", to "riper age

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[1]   William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Eugene M. Waith, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 30.

[2]   Margaret Shewring, "*The Two Noble Kinsmen* Revived: Chivalric Romance and Modern Performance Images", in *Le Roman de Chevalerie au Temps de la Renaissance*, ed. M. T. Jones-Davies, Paris, Touzot, 1987, pp. 107-32: 125.

[3]   Waith, ed., p. 30.

[4]   Glynne Wickham, "*The Two Noble Kinsmen* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Part II*?", in *The Elizabethan Theatre VII*, ed. G. R. Hibbard, London-Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1980, pp. 167-96: 181.

[5]   J. R. Mulryne, "Shakespeare's *Knight's Tale*: *The Two Noble Kinsmen* and the Tradition of Chivalry", in Jones-Davies, ed., pp. 75-105: 99.

[6]   See Wickham, p. 178.

[…] leading to marriage"[7]. For Brownlow, the conclusion offers a satisfying resolution which sees "the gods themselves subdued to the order of a large design" and leaves us with impressions of "civility and graciousness, of irregularity tamed by ceremony and justice, of Providence acknowledged"[8]. Critics of this persuasion tend to value the play for being morally uplifting. It instils in us "gratitude for life"[9] and "wonder at the transcendent power of good"[10].

For more recent critics, such comments impute an optimistic and restorative strategy to the play which it does not pursue. They describe a much darker, more sceptical, more ironic work, more inclined to subject its characters to criticism, and sometimes ridicule, than to praise, and closer in tone and outlook to *Troilus and Cressida* or *Timon of Athens* than to *As You Like It*. Far from moving purposefully to a festive destination, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is haunted by "the futility of doing", "the impossibility of moving freely from intention to achievement", and its characters experience the world as "a disorientating labyrinth that mocks direction"[11]. And while love in Shakespearean comedy promotes unity and renewal, here it is "a potentially tragic fantasy", either "a form of solipsism"[12] or proof of "the tendency of desire to separate people from themselves"[13]. The result is not a comic vision of mental and emotional enlargement, but "a representation of neurotic suffering"[14].

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[7]   "On the Design of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*", *Review of English Literature*, 5 (1964), pp. 89-105: 103-4.

[8]   F. W. Brownlow, *Two Shakespearean Sequences:* Henry VI *to* Richard II *and* Pericles *to* Timon of Athens, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977, p. 215.

[9]   Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare as Collaborator*, London, Methuen, 1960, p. 145.

[10]   Waith, ed., p. 61.

[11]   Paula S. Berggren, "'For What We Lack, / We Laugh': Incompletion and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*", *Modern Language Studies*, 14:4 (1984), pp. 3-17: 3, 5, 10.

[12]   Julia Briggs, "Tears at the Wedding: Shakespeare's Last Phase", in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, eds Jennifer Richards and James Knowles, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, pp. 210-27: 224.

[13]   Marcus Nordlund, "Divisive Desires in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*", in *Pangs of Love and Longing: Configurations of Desire in Premodern Literature*, eds Anders Cullhed *et al*., Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars, 2013, pp. 130-43: 137.

[14]   Mary Beth Rose, *The Expense of Spirit: Love and Sexuality in English Renaissance Drama*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1988, p. 224.

It seems to me that this last approach makes much better sense of the play. Jacobean in terms of its date, it emerges as a very 'Jacobean' work in style and outlook: pessimistic in its view of the capacity of human beings to think or act consistently, and anxious to present a world which gives assurance of a larger design while constantly asserting the opposite; Jacobean, too, in its readiness to expose the arbitrariness of the conventions of dramatic plotting and characterisation through which an idea of life as intelligible and ordered is maintained. The present essay expands on this view of the *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, noting effects which critics have overlooked.

The first scenes and what follows introduce concerns which are the stock-in-trade of early modern comedy: love, marriage, and the obstacles they face, including the self-imposed solitariness of the heroine (with Emilia's initial desire to stay single, compare Olivia's in *Twelfth Night*) and the hero's attachment to a male friend (Palamon and Arcite look back to Bassanio and Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*, and Leantio and Polixenes in *The Winter's Tale*). Theseus is about to seal his union with Hippolyta, an event which he anticipates will be decisive and transforming. It is "This grand act of our life, this daring deed / Of fate in wedlock" (I.i.164-65)[15]. The wedding has to be delayed – death, grief, and time making their customary brief appearance in the opening movement of comedy – when three queens ask Theseus to help them recover the bodies of their husbands, killed in battle outside Thebes. He agrees, seeing this as a test not only of his "manhood", to which the women had originally appealed (I.i.72), but of his right to be regarded as human, since he must follow the call of honour in preference to the lower one of sexual pleasure:

> As we are men,
> Thus should we do; being sensually subdued,
> We lose our human title. (I.i.231-33)

Theseus leaves his friend Pirithous, to whom he is joined in an unbreakable "knot of love" (I.iii.41), to be his stand-in at the

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ceremony, although Hippolyta remains confident that "we, more than his Pirithous, possess / The high throne in his heart" (I.iii.95-96). The theme of friendship is widened by Emilia, Hippolyta's sister, who argues on the basis of her own childhood that "the true love 'tween maid and maid may be / More" than that between men and women (I.iii.81-82); and by the arrival of the cousins Arcite and Palamon, Theseus's Theban captives, who look forward to a lifetime in a prison cell together because the close bond between them will grow even closer. Their attitude changes when they see and fall in love with Emilia and become rivals for the right to claim her, Palamon's case resting on his insistence that "I saw her first" (II.ii.160). Since Emilia cannot choose between them, Theseus decrees that the two kinsmen must decide the question for her by combat: the winner will marry her, the loser will be executed. Arcite overcomes his opponent but dies in a riding accident before he can claim his bride, whereupon Theseus reprieves Palamon from the scaffold and ends the play by giving Emilia to him. Amatory obstacles also occupy the subplot, in the form of the Jailer's Daughter whose unrequited passion for Palamon makes her spurn her Wooer and descend into madness. On the advice of the Doctor treating her, the Wooer pretends to be Palamon, and, on this basis, she accepts him. Two substitute bridegrooms thus supply the means by which the play can end with marriages, always comedy's chief symbol of the unity and self-understanding which it wishes to convince us its characters have achieved.

The factitiousness of the ending is a sign that *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is treating the traditions of comedy in a very disengaged way. There are many others. Comic lovers and husbands-to-be tend to start with attitudes to women and to marriage that come across as being in various ways misguided, and then learn to change them. Theseus should be a candidate for such reform, since he declares in the speech quoted above that as a "man" he should seek "honours" on the battlefield, and choosing instead to continue with his wedding would mean he was "sensually subdued" and not fully human. The logic here is that sex with women is bestial. However, there is little improvement on this view even at the end of the play, where his references to Emilia are insistently reductive: she is a "star" (V.iii.20), "the victor's meed, the prize and garland" (V.iii.16), a "garland" that must be worn (V.iii.130), a "prize"

(V.iii.135), a "stolen jewel" (V.iv.119), "the treasure" that "must needs be by / To give the service pay" (that is, to reward the efforts of whichever man wins the combat; V.iii.31-32). The kinsmen echo this prejudice. Women are "the enemy" (II.ii.197), and marriage to one of them would entail loss or depletion of one's identity. In loving Emilia, Palamon fears he will "lose himself", and his love for her makes Arcite feel shackled (II.ii.156-58). To them, too, Emilia is a "jewel" (III.i.9), a "garland" or a "prize" (V.i.42-45), and, like Theseus, they regard honour and sex with women as mutually incompatible: "women", Arcite decides, will "woo us to wander from […] the ways of honour" (II.ii.73-76), and Palamon, marrying Emilia but saying not a word to her, dedicates his wedding-day "to honour", meaning to honouring his dead cousin (V.iv.98).

A comedy might cope with even this degree of misogynistic male bias if its heroine, taking her cue from Rosalind or Portia, were a source of resistance to it. Emilia, however, not only acquiesces in the men's devaluation of women, she gives it explicit support. Abruptly dropping her determination to have no dealings with men, she is overwhelmed by the excellence of her suitors and, incapable of choosing between them, passes into a state of mental paralysis in which she becomes first "lost […] Utterly lost" (IV.ii.34, 46) and then a "flower […] alone, unplucked" (V.i.167-68), the utterly passive object of male imaginings. She announces finally, "I am extinct" (V.iii.20). Self-abnegation of this order is sabotaging enough to the play's connection to the traditions of comedy, but Emilia has more damage to inflict. She not only relegates herself, she insists, against all the evidence, on the immeasurable superiority of either kinsman to women generally. At first, the comparison is with any female individual ("There were no woman / Worth so composed a man", V.iii.85-86), then we learn that just one of the men exceeds the value of the entire female sex. In parting from Palamon, Arcite "cuts away / A life more worthy from him than all women" (V.iii.142-43).

This is not the only way in which the play's version of gender relations runs counter to standard comic practice. Bonds between men are everywhere in Shakespeare, and often very resistant to

attempts to break or loosen them[16]. In comedy, this poses a particular difficulty, since heterosexual coupling, ratified by marriage, is the destination of the plot and the main sign of social renewal. The hero must turn his attention fully to his female future partner, and the male friend must be detached from the hero, or accept his subordinate place in the traditional sexual hierarchy. In *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare addresses the problem by creating a "plot-convenient second female"[17], so the friend, too, can marry and be despatched into a heterosexual future. Where he does not adopt this tactic, as happens in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter's Tale*, the hero's attachment to his wife has to be vigorously asserted, though it is possible to feel that the vigour of the assertion itself measures the risk to the hero's heterosexual loyalties that the unattached friend still poses. *The Two Noble Kinsmen* seems to implement a particularly decisive solution to the problem: it ejects the friend from the play by killing him. "Bear this hence", Theseus says of the corpse (V.iv.109), as though, cleared from view, the dead friend will no longer exert his disruptive pull on the direction of the hero's affections. The play, however, engineers exactly the opposite impression. Ignoring his wife-to-be, as he has done all along, Palamon addresses his final speech to the dead body:

> Oh, cousin!
> That we should things desire, which do cost us
> The loss of our desire! That nought could buy
> Dear love, but loss of dear love! (V.iv.109-12)

Waith finds these lines "a moving reassertion of the bond of friendship"[18], but he misses their implications. The finales of Shakespeare's comedies strive, albeit with varying degrees of

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[16] For a survey of Shakespearean examples, see Roger Holdsworth, "Trouble in Paradise: Friendship and Masculine Identity in *The Winter's Tale* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*", in *Le ultime opere di Shakespeare. Da* Pericles *al caso* Cardenio, eds Clara Mucci, Chiara Magni and Laura Tommaso, Napoli, Liguori, 2009, pp. 185-208.

[17] William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, ed. William C. Carroll, London, The Arden Shakespeare, 2004, p. 33.

[18] Eugene M. Waith, "Shakespeare and Fletcher on Love and Friendship", *Shakespeare Studies*, 18 (1986), pp. 235-50: 248.

success, to rank male-male intimacy below the male-female intimacy which the hero and heroine can now expect. Palamon's closing speech is a refusal of this manoeuvre. As Belsey notes, "heterosexual passion and homosocial friendship are defined in exactly the same terms: both are dear love; both are desire"[19].

"Desire" does not limit the possibilities of male-male relationship to the merely homosocial, however; nor should it, since another way in which the play deliberately separates itself from the conventions of romantic comedy is to treat both gender and sexual orientation as unfixed, and subject to casual alteration rather than being deeply expressive of the self. Of course, the cross-dressing heroines of Shakespeare's other comedies bring these questions into play, and the theatre's use of boys for female roles assisted a complex exploration of them; but we always know that the character is a woman pretending to be a man and has only to change her clothes – to switch, in Orsino's wonderfully punning phrase, to "other habits"[20] – to appear again as the woman she never ceased to be. By this means, the heterosexual nature of the coupling and marriage which comedy puts in place can be interrogated but reaffirmed.

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, there is no cross-gender disguise. There are instead constant, bewildering shifts of self-presentation which imply that the characters of this play, insofar as they are capable of self-inspection at all, have no firm idea of their sexual identities or the nature of their desires. A striking case of this is Emilia's eroticised memory of her childhood relationship with Flavina, which makes her certain she will never "Love any that's called man" (I.iii.49-85); a certainty succeeded by her clamorous yearning for the two kinsmen, by either of whom she longs to be "plucked". Similar redefinitions of self and motive abound. Arcite makes Theseus wish "I were a woman" (II.vi.63), while Arcite thinks Palamon "More than a mistress" (III.vi.26). In a bizarre sequence of thought, Palamon imagines Emilia being so impressed by his manly deeds that she will become a man herself and subject him to homosexual assault: "this lady, / This blushing virgin,

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should take manhood to her / And seek to ravish me" (II.ii.26-28). In their prison the kinsmen not only belong to each other, they change sex, marry, and procreate:

> We are an endless mine to one another;
> We are one another's wife, ever begetting
> New births of love. (II.ii.79-81)

Emilia contributes further to these indeterminacies of gender by finding Arcite's face to be that of "a wondrous handsome woman" but "his body / And fiery mind" to be male (II.v.20-22), and by comparing him to Ganymede, Juno, and Pelops in a single speech (IV.ii.15-21).

Sometimes these ambiguities challenge our own responses. One of the knights supporting Palamon appears at least partly female: "his face" is that of a "warlike maid […] Pure red and white […] His red lips, after fights, are fit for ladies" (IV.ii.105-11). Does this mean that the lips might be ladies' lips, or that they are fit to kiss ladies? And if the latter, is this because they are manly lips, or because, on the contrary, they are womanly lips, which are the lips ladies prefer to be kissed by? The play's most striking example of the play challenging our receptiveness to cross-gender innuendo is the Jailer's Daughter's cry as she declares her longing for Palamon: "Oh, for a prick now" (III.iv.25), perhaps the most startling pun in the canon. Does she want to be equipped with a penis or penetrated by one? The full passage is "Oh, for a prick now, like a nightingale, / To put my breast against" (III.iv.25-26), so the primary reference is to the myth of Philomel, who was metamorphosed into the bird and thrust her breast against a thorn so she would stay awake and keep singing; but the comma after "now" invites the actor to pause to allow the pun to be registered. Ovid's myth returns in yet another regendering of the kinsmen. They are "Two emulous Philomels" (V.iii.124), engaged in a singing contest.

Nothing in the play is left untouched by this emphasis on sexual indeterminacy. When the Countrymen's Bavian, a clown in a baboon's costume, is warned "My friend, carry your tail without offence" (III.v.35), the joke seems to be that this is, in coarsened form, what one of the main-plot friends might say to the other; but "tail" in Jacobean bawdy means "vagina" as well as "penis", and

are we sure of the sex of the baboon? In a later reference, he/she becomes hermaphroditic: "The Bavian with long tail and eke long tool" (III.v.131). Palamon's stallion, on the other hand, is bisexual and can be ridden by all comers: "come cut and long tail to him, / He turns ye like a top" (V.ii.49-50).

These uncertainties and unsticking of expected associations are part of a larger intention to deny the traditional reassurances of comedy. An important target is the conventional comic plot, the phased arrangement which shepherds us from breakdown through conflict to harmony. No such structure is evident in Shakespeare and Fletcher's play. The plot (the term is inappropriate in its suggestion of something which has the appearance of being planned) is kept in motion by a series of unconnected and unpredictable events, inserted as each one is required. They include Pirithous's unexplained freeing of Arcite, at the very point that separation of the cousins is needed (II.ii.247); Emilia's abrupt onset of passion for both of them (she simply announces that "My virgin's faith has fled me", IV.ii.46); the Jailer's Daughter's unaccountable obsession with Palamon – it is "beyond reason" (II.vi.11), she accurately remarks; the starting of Arcite's horse, killing its rider; and Theseus's decision not to execute Palamon but to marry him to Emilia, a change of mind which did not follow from Arcite's accident. Critics' detection, in the belief that they are complimenting the play, of the supervising presence of Providence in all of this does not seem sensible. A more helpful approach to the accretion of chance happenings is to view it as not botched but deliberate, as mobilising a conscious rejection of Aristotelian theory. Aristotle insists on connectivity. Peripeteia – sudden turns of event – "should develop out of the very structure of the fable, so that they fit what has gone before, either necessarily or probably. To happen after something is by no means the same as to happen because of it"[21].

Exiled from the purpose-laden plot of comedy, the characters of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* inhabit a starker, darker universe, the universe

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[21]   Aristotle, *Aristotle on the Art of Fiction: An English Translation of Aristotle's* Poetics *with an Introductory Essay and Explanatory Notes*, ed. L. J. Potts, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1968, p. 31.

of "One damn thing after another", where only "the event" (meaning the outcome), "That never-erring arbitrator", supplies a kind of certainty (I.ii.113-14). Here drift replaces direction, and Arcite, sounding suddenly like Estragon counselling Vladimir in *Waiting for Godot*, gives the only possible advice: "let us follow / The becking of our chance" (I.ii.115-16). Jonson was clearly struck by this aspect of the play. In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), two friends, pursuing a woman who regards the question of which of them has her with complete indifference, select fictitious names for themselves and invite a madman to choose. The name the madman selects is 'Palamon'.

Rejecting comic structure, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* also rejects the idea of human potential this structure was designed to serve: the capacity to know oneself and to open oneself to, and to love, others. In place of interaction, the play is full of relationship by proxy, substituted or indirect contact, or its outright avoidance. The plot is launched by Theseus's deferring his presence at his own wedding and electing his friend to stand in for him at the ceremony, "the pretended celebration" ("intended", but also simulated, fake; I.i.210). The impression of a willed remoteness from others then extends to every other character, many of whom are seen entering "*alone*", or engaging in solitary speaking even when others are present[22]. The idea of self-absorption this indicates is picked up in two references to Narcissus (II.ii.119, IV.ii.32), the youth who fell in love with his own image; a third is implied when Arcite tells Palamon he is better off looking at and talking to himself than trying to communicate with him:

> Kinsman, you might as well
> Speak this and act it in your glass as to
> His ear which now disdains you. (III.i.69-71)

Palamon responds in kind when he speaks not to Arcite but to his corpse at the end of the play.

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[22]   This element of the play's staging is identified by Nordlund, pp. 136-38, who notes that it sets it apart from "most other Shakespeare plays".

Love begins and flourishes in comedy through the direct exchange of feelings and words. The lovers of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* opt for second-hand contact. Instead of asking Emilia why he is inspired to love her, Arcite asks Theseus to ask her:

>   ask that lady
>   Why she is fair, and why her eyes command me
>   Stay here to love her. (III.vi.168-70)

Emilia speaks movingly to both kinsmen for 50 lines ("On my knees, / I ask thy pardon, Palamon"; "Lie there, Arcite", IV.ii.36-37, 43), except that she is not speaking to the names' owners but to images of them, as a stage direction emphasises: "*Enter* EMILIA *alone, with two pictures*" (IV.ii.1-54). Similarly, Palamon addresses not Emilia, but the wall of her house: "Farewell, kind window. / May rude winds never hurt thee" (II.ii.277-78), not an easy speech for an actor who wants to avoid audience laughter.

At the centre of all these departures from the conventions of comedy is a refusal to take as anything more than fraudulent and self-induced the exalted idea of 'love' that the form is committed to celebrating. "'Tis in our power […] to / Be masters of our manners", Palomon assures his friend. He is, however, in a play where human beings do not control their emotions or desires but are creatures of the moment and are driven, often self-destructively, by impulses they cannot restrain or understand. "Why should I love this gentleman?" (II.iv.1), the Jailer's Daughter demands of her fixation on Palamon, the full force of which emerges if we take her to be emphasising "this": why should she love *this* gentleman, as opposed to any other? She remains mystified and never appears with Palamon, though she does give reports of encounters with him, which may or may not be true. She concludes her part happily coupled with a fake Palamon, whom she takes to be the real one – which has been the actual state of affairs all along.

The play's principal relationship, that of the kinsmen with Emilia, is dogged by the same impressions of simulation and pretence. Palamon bases the priority of his claim to love her on four words: "I saw her first" (II.ii.160). He then expands a little: "I that first saw her […] took possession / First with mine eye of all those beauties" (II.ii.169-70).

Arcite counters by arguing that the intensity of his love is more important than who can claim the first sighting:

> You play the child extremely. I will love her;
> I must, I ought to do so and I dare. (II.ii.208-9)

The charge of childishness would be more effective if it were not followed by this childish outburst, which almost demands a foot to be stamped in accompaniment. Palamon tells Arcite he must not peer out of the window at Emilia any more, to which he retorts, "I'll throw my body out […] to anger thee" (II.ii.218-20). An impression starts to form that the two men are more interested in outfacing one another than in what they are arguing over.

If we dwell on the petulance of their exchanges, however, we are in danger of missing a far more fundamental objection to the kinsmen's right to be taken seriously. This is that their passion achieves its superheated state entirely independently of any knowledge of, or contact with, the woman they claim – after a moment's inspection – so truly and deeply and unshakably to love. Moreover, their relationship with her gets no further than this. Throughout the play, Arcite speaks only a few formal words to Emilia in a single scene (II.v), when he is anyway disguised as someone else, and a few more as he dies; and Palamon never speaks to her at all. This failure to go beyond remote observation creates an extraordinary effect. The "love" they persistently brandish at one another seems self-created and self-propelled, a case of what Bacon diagnoses as the tendency to "submit the shows of things to the desires of the mind"[23]. The protestations of devotion, the claims and counter-claims, the challenges and threats of suicide, all seem to be taking place several metres off the ground.

It will not do to invoke a 'love-at-first-sight' convention here, as critics sometimes do, in order to suppose that we should not be troubled[24]. When Shakespeare employs this device, as he does in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Twelfth Night*, he ensures that the lover in question has plenty of opportunity to extend his knowledge of the loved object beyond that initially provided by sight. In *The Two*

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[23]   Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, London, 1605, II.iv.2.

[24]   See, for example, Waith, ed., p. 45.

Noble Kinsmen, the lovers never have more than sight to base their feelings on, and this produces some very strained logic, as when Palamon tells Theseus (but not Emilia) that he loves

> the fair Emilia,
> Whose servant, if there be a right in seeing
> And first bequeathing of the soul to, justly I am. (III.vi.146-48)

Is there "a right in seeing"? Seeing something and granting oneself rights of ownership over what is seen are virtually identical concepts in this play, where all the characters share an obsession with the processes of sight, preferring to "judge by the outside" (IV.ii.74) than proceed beyond the act of observation. In the men, this easily translates into a view of women as valuable adornments, whom they have not only a right to look at but a right to possess. For Arcite, loving (or what he calls loving) Emilia bestows on him "the birthright of this beauty" (III.vi.31), as though a deed of ownership came with the emotion, and he envies Palamon because he is still in prison and able to spy on her from the window of his cell. Palamon will "see / Her bright eyes" (one pair of eyes looking at another) and "feed / Upon the sweetness of a noble beauty" (II.iii.8-12). Seeing an object is a means to ingest it. In the subplot, the Jailer's Daughter's compulsive desire for Palamon is said to be the result of an "intemperate surfeit of the eye", which "hath distempered the other senses" (IV.iii.69-70). As elsewhere, the subplot is guiding interpretation of the main plot by offering starker or simplified versions of what is occurring there.

The posturing in this play, the violent but empty gestures, generate moments of absurdity, but also a certain bleakness, even hopelessness. Addicted to superficies, its characters seem capable of strong feeling, but not of consistent thought, and incapable of doing more than react despairingly to the vagaries of chance. If we seek contemporary models for the play's methods and ideas, we are led not to the comedies of Shakespeare but to the recently staged tragedies of Webster, in which life is "a general mist of error"[25] and

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[25]   John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. John Russell Brown, London, Methuen, 1964, IV.ii.188.

people are "driven [they] know not whither"[26]; and more especially to the *Essays* of Montaigne and their fascinated inspection of "the fits and fantasies of the soul"[27].

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[26] John Webster, *The White Devil*, ed. John Russell Brown, London, Methuen, 1960, V.vi.249.

[27] Michel de Montaigne, "Of Virtue", in *Montaigne's Essays*, trans. John Florio, London, Dent, 1965, 3 vols, vol. II, p. 430.

The Tamer Tamed: Dating Fletcher's Interactions with Shakespeare

Gary Taylor

> A physical system manifests itself only by interacting with another. The description of a physical system, then, is always given in relation to another physical system, the one with which it interacts.[1]

John Fletcher's play *The Woman's Prize; or, The Tamer Tamed* has been described as a sequel, an adaptation, an answer, and a counter-part to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*[2]. All those descriptions recognize that the plays constitute a particularly interesting dramatic diptych, created by different playwrights at different times. Fletcher's play was undoubtedly written later than Shakespeare's. But *The Tamer Tamed* has, by various scholars over the course of the last

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[1]   Carlo Rovelli, *Reality Is Not What It Seems,* trans. Simon Carnell and Eric Segre, London, Allen Lane, 2016, p. 216.

[2]   For 'counter-part', see Gerard Langbaine, *An Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, London, 1691, p. 217; for 'sequel', see Alexander Dyce, ed., *The Works of Beaumont & Fletcher*, London, Moxon, 1843-46, 11 vols, vol. I, p. lxiv; for 'answer', see E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1923, 4 vols, vol. III, p. 222; for 'adaptation', see Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds, *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, London-New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 23-65.

century, been dated as early as 1603 and as late as 1617[3]. Depending on which of these dates is correct, Fletcher's play could have been written at the beginning of his theatrical career, or after Shakespeare's death, or after Shakespeare's retirement from the stage, or after Shakespeare and Fletcher collaborated on three plays (*The History of Cardenio, All Is True; or, Henry the Eighth,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*), or just before those three collaborations, or in the middle of them[4]. Which of these dates is correct will affect interpretations, not only of Fletcher's play and Fletcher's career, but also of Shakespeare's own biography, and the history of aesthetic and practical interactions between the two most popular and influential playwrights of the seventeenth century. One might therefore assume that Shakespeareans would take a keen interest in locating *The Tamer Tamed* more precisely between 1603 and 1617. But, in fact, the dating of *The Tamer Tamed* has been as neglected as the rest of Fletcher's chronology. The last full-length scholarly analysis of evidence for the play's date was an article by Baldwin Maxwell published in 1935[5]. That article originated the now-widespread association of *The Tamer Tamed* with the year 1611[6]. But Maxwell's dating of other plays in the

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[3] Alfred Harbage and Samuel Schoenbaum gave the "range" of possible dates for the play as "1604–c.1617" (see Alfred Harbage, *Annals of English Drama, 975-1700: An Analytical Record of All Plays, Extant or Lost, Chronologically Arranged and Indexed by Authors, Titles, Dramatic Companies & C*, rev. Samuel Schoenbaum, London, Methuen, 1964, p. 98). Likewise, Chambers dated the play only "1604" or later (*Elizabethan Stage*, vol. III, p. 222). For 1603, see below.

[4] For a summary and synthesis of scholarship on the dating of the three Fletcher-Shakespeare collaborations, see Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, "The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare's Works", in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion,* eds Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 583-90.

[5] Baldwin Maxwell, "*The Woman's Prize, or The Tamer Tamed*", *Modern Philology*, 32 (1935), pp. 353-64. A slightly revised and expanded version of this article was printed in Maxwell's *Studies in Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1939, pp. 29-45.

[6] The year 1611 is cited as most likely by: Harbage, p. 98; Gordon McMullan, "Chronology for the Plays of John Fletcher and His Collaborators", in *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1994, p. 267; David Bevington, gen. ed., *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology*, New York, Norton, 2002, p. 1215; The Royal Shakespeare Company, ed., *The Tamer Tamed*, 2003; Meg Powers Livingston, ed., The Woman's Prize *by John Fletcher*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2008, pp. vii-viii. Lucy Munro does not explicitly commit herself to 1611, but her "1609-11" accepts it as an option, and her discussion

Fletcher canon has been contested, and, in the intervening eight decades, digital databases have made it possible to search comprehensively for phrases Maxwell interpreted as topical allusions[7]. A reconsideration of the evidence is long overdue.

How late?

Maxwell rejected the claims of Fleay and Gayley that *The Tamer Tamed* was written as late as 1613-16. Gayley argued that, being wholly Fletcher's, *The Tamer Tamed* must have been "written after [Beaumont's] retirement to the country in 1613". His only substantive argument is "the similarity of phrases in this play to those of *Wit without Money*", particularly the lines on "frippery" in III.i of *Tamer* and II.v of *Wit*, and "on the armies in the air at Aspurg in I.iv of the former and II.iv of the latter; as well as the mention of 'craccus', a favorite brand of tobacco at that time (cf. Middleton's *Faire Quarrel*, IV.i, of 1616)", which inclined him "to set the lower limit of composition at about 1615. Probably, as Fleay suggests, it was one of the plays acted by the Princess Elizabeth's men between 1613 and 1616"[8]. There is no reason to believe that Fletcher was incapable of writing a play on his own before Beaumont's retirement from the stage; *The Tamer Tamed* does not mention Aspurg; we don't know how long "craccus" was a London tobacco commodity; like other playwrights of the period, Fletcher often repeated himself verbally, and the repetitions can be separated by many years. Maxwell's strongest evidence against the years 1613-16 was the phrase "has worne / As many Servants out, as the Northeast passage / Has

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and commentary seem to prefer it: see John Fletcher, *The Tamer Tamed*, ed. Lucy Munro, London, Bloomsbury, 2010, pp. xv-xvi.

7   On *The Noble Gentleman*, see Philip J. Finkelpearl, *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 136-45, 249-55. See also Gary Taylor, "Thomas Middleton, *The Nice Valour*, and the Court of James I", *The Court Historian*, 6 (2001), pp. 1-36, and Gary Taylor, "Middleton and Rowley – and Heywood: *The Old Law* and New Technologies of Attribution", *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 96 (2002), pp. 165-217.

8   See Frederick Gard Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559-1642*, London, Reeves and Turner, 1891, 2 vols, vol. I, p. 198, and Charles Mill Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, New York, Macmillan, 1914-36, 4 vols, vol. III, pp. lxvii-lxviii.

consum'd Saylors" (II.ii.66-68; II.i.67-69)[9]. As Maxwell observed, the fact that Fletcher referred here to the north*east* passage "rather than the northwest passage as a consumer of men suggests that he was writing before September, 1611, when the survivors of Hudson's voyage to the northwest reached England with their tragic tale of how Hudson with eight others had by mutineers been set adrift in small boats to perish and how on the hazardous voyage home four of the mutineers had been killed by Eskimos and others had died of starvation"[10].

The evidence against a later date is, in fact, even stronger than Maxwell realized. The simile "Venture as many kisses as the merchants / Do dollars in the East Indies" emphasizes the risks ("venture") and the high costs of investment ("as many […] dollars") rather than profit (IV.iii.44-45; IV.ii.44-45). That simile can hardly have been written between 1612 and 1619. In 1612, the outflow of investment for East India Company ventures was far lower than in any other year between 1601 and 1640; in 1613, four East India ships returned with more than a million pounds of pepper, producing a massive profit for investors and beginning a period of six uninterrupted years of prosperity for Company investors[11].

This new evidence from the East India Company accounts confirms 1611 as the latest possible date for the play. Fletcher and Shakespeare's collaboration on *The History of Cardenio* must have been written at some time between mid-1612 and January 1613[12]. We can

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[9] References to *The Tamer Tamed* quote the old-spelling text of *The Woman's Prize*, ed. Fredson Bowers, in *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, gen. ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, 10 vols, vol. IV, pp. 1-148, a text that conflates the seventeenth-century witnesses but also provides a full textual apparatus. I also supply (where the line numbers differ) a second set of references, citing the modern-spelling text in *The Tamer Tamed; Or, The Woman's Prize*, eds Celia R. Daileader and Gary Taylor, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2006; that text gives preference to the manuscript version. The present essay is a much revised and updated version of my unpublished "The Date and Original Venue of Fletcher's *Tamer Tamed*", which Daileader and Taylor cited as "forthcoming".

[10] Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 35.

[11] See K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company*, London, F. Cass, 1965, pp. 115, 148-56. The figure for 1612 (£1,250 of exported gold and silver, £650 invested in goods for export) is less than 25% of the second lowest year (1608), which is itself only 63% of the third lowest year (1603).

[12] For the earliest possible date, see David L. Gants, "The 1612 *Don Quixote* and the Windet-Stansby Printing House", in *The Creation and Re-Creation of Cardenio: Performing Shakespeare, Transforming Cervantes*, eds Terri Bourus and Gary Taylor,

therefore be confident that *The Tamer Tamed* was written *at least* nine months before Shakespeare and Fletcher collaborated. Given the small size of the Jacobean theatre community, Shakespeare must have been aware of *The Tamer Tamed* before he decided to collaborate with the younger playwright.

But Maxwell's evidence, combined with the East India Company documents, establishes only that August 1611 is the latest *possible* date for the writing of the play. It could have been written many years earlier. However, Maxwell argued that the *latest* possible date was also the *actual* date. In support of original composition between February and August 1611, Maxwell claimed that the phrase "Louder then *Tom* o' Lincoln" (III.iii.159, meaning 'louder than') was written after the great bell of Lincoln Cathedral was recast (in December 1610), then rehung and first rung (on January 27, 1611)[13]. This is Maxwell's only evidence for pushing the date of the play as late as "early 1611", and this claim is still cited as relevant to the play's chronology in the most recent edition of *The Tamer Tamed*[14]. However, Lincoln's great bell was famous long before it was recast and rehung. Thomas Nashe had written that "thou shouldst hear Tom a Lincoln roare" in 1592[15]. The first part of Richard Johnson's prose romance,

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New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 31-46; for the latest possible date, see Gary Taylor, "The Embassy, The City, The Court, The Text: *Cardenio* Performed in 1613", in *The Quest for Cardenio: Shakespeare, Fletcher, Cervantes, and the Lost Play*, eds David Carnegie and Gary Taylor, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 286-308.

[13] Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, pp. 35-37.

[14] Munro, ed., *Tamer Tamed*, p. 101 (also cross-referenced in her discussion of the play's date, p. xvi).

[15] Thomas Nashe, *Strange Newes, Of the intercepting certain Letters* (1592), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow, rev. F. P. Wilson, Oxford, Blackwell, 1966, 5 vols, vol. I, p. 321. McKerrow's commentary on this passage refers to the "great bell in Lincoln Cathedral", citing Camden's *Britannia* (1586-1607): see McKerrow, vol. IV, p. 190. Fletcher himself, in *The Night Walker*, claimed that "Tom-a-Lincoln" could be heard "three miles off". Maxwell suggests that *The Night Walker* was written "immediately after *The Woman's Prize*" (*Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 53). But that conjecture is also based, in part, on the re-hung bell. The most recent scholarship dates *The Night Walker* in 1615. For a summary of contemporary scholarship on Fletcher's chronology, see William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, gen. eds Gary Taylor *et al.,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017, 2 vols, vol. I, pp. 3669-70. Maxwell's assumption that both *The Tamer Tamed* and *The Night Walker* topically refer to the recent re-casting of the Lincoln Cathedral bell contradicts his own evidence that *The Tamer Tamed* can have been written no later than September 1611.

The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne, written in 1599 and printed six times by 1631, also refers to "a great Bell" in Lincoln, "called Tom a Lincolne". The second part, written (and probably printed) in 1607, also refers to "the great Bell (called Tom a Lincolne)" in the "sumptuous Minster" there[16]. Johnson's romance was the primary source for an anonymous manuscript play associated with Gray's Inn, which must have been written between October 1607 and 1616; it, too, refers to the hero's donation of funds to build "a massy bell stilde by succeedinge tymes / Great Tom a Lincolne"[17]. Given the regular reprinting of the romance, Fletcher could have alluded to "Tom o' Lincoln" in any year of his writing life.

This leaves no explicit evidence linking Fletcher's play to the year 1611. However, Maxwell also claimed that the play contains two allusions to events in 1610; although these do not in themselves prove that the play was written in 1611, events of 1610 might still have been topical in 1611. The first of the two alleged allusions to 1610 is the phrase "Contrive your beard o'th top cut like Verdugoes" (IV.i.55; IV.0.55). Maxwell endorsed Gayley's claim that the word "Verdugoes" is evidence that Fletcher was influenced by the sentence "His great Verdugoship has not a jot of language" in *The Alchemist* (III.iii.70-71). Jonson's play was performed in Oxford in September

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[16]   Richard Johnson, *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne*, London, 1631, sig. B4ᵛ (Part I, chapter 2), sig. N2 (Part II, chapter 8). The romance was entered in the Stationers' Register on December 24, 1599; the second part was entered on October 20, 1607. See Richard Johnson, *The Most Pleasant History of Tom a Lincolne*, ed. Richard S. M. Hirsch, Columbia, University of South Carolina Press, 1978, p. xix.

[17]   *Tom a Lincolne*, eds G. R. Proudfoot *et al.*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, ll. 595-96. In discussing the date (pp. xix-xx), Proudfoot cites Maxwell's argument for the "topicality" of the bell in 1611, though his own references to the bell in the prose romance make nonsense of Maxwell's claim. Proudfoot's list of alleged Shakespeare echoes (p. xxxviii) does not include any convincing links to plays after *The History of King Lear*. He compares "I that have bene ere since the world began" (123) to "The same I am, ere ancient order was, / Or what is now received" (*The Winter's Tale*, IV.i.10-11): the two passages have only the words "I" and "ere" in common. Likewise, he compares "shee would soe beth[w]ack, & lay about them with her distaffe" (341-42) to Hermione's "we'll thwack him hence with distaffs" (*The Winter's Tale*, I.ii.37). He compares "then did I shout, & Cry / flamde all the beacons, filde each place with fire" (2729-30) to Ariel's "Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin, I flamed amazement" (*The Tempest*, I.ii.197-99).

1610 and probably performed in London by November of that year[18]. If Fletcher were influenced by Jonson, *The Tamer Tamed* could not have been completed until late 1610. But Fletcher's alleged dependence on Jonson seems to me highly unlikely. Fletcher does not use the unusual form found in *The Alchemist*. The word Fletcher did use ("verdugo") occurs in at least five English texts between 1578 and 1600, in the anonymous play *A Larum for London* (1602), in Beaumont and Fletcher's *Scornful Lady*, and as the name of a character in Fletcher's *The Pilgrim*. The latter play is ten or more years later than *The Alchemist*, but it is not at all clear that *The Alchemist* precedes *The Scornful Lady* – and the more important point is that the word is much more common in Fletcher's canon than in Jonson's. As Gordon McMullan points out, Spanish literature fascinated Fletcher from the beginning to the end of his career[19]. Fletcher wrote more plays based on Spanish sources than any other early dramatist[20]. This part of Maxwell's case must be thrown out.

The other alleged evidence for 1610 is equally dubious. Referring to the same lines about "the Northeast passage" which he had cited as evidence that *The Tamer Tamed* could not have been written after August 1611, Maxwell claimed that "the only period during the seventeenth century in which the English people could have been much interested in the search for a northeast passage was that of the four Hudson voyages from 1607 to 1610-11"[21]. This statement is doubly misleading. First and most important, Hudson's fourth voyage (1610-11) was *not* searching for a northeast passage. To circumvent this inconvenient fact, Maxwell was forced to conjecture that "[p]ossibly the two passages were at first confused in the popular mind, and it may have been assumed that the purpose of Hudson's fourth voyage was the same as that of his earlier attempts", and that

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[18] Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist*, eds Peter Holland and William Sherman, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds David Bevington *et al.,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 7 vols, vol. IV, pp. 544-45.

[19] See Gordon McMullan, *The Politics of Unease in the Plays of John Fletcher*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1994, pp. 257-62.

[20] See Joan F. McMurray, "John Fletcher and His Sources in Cervantes", PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 1987. See also Alexander Samson, "'Last thought upon a windmill'? Cervantes and Fletcher", in J. A. G. Ardila, ed., *The Cervantean Heritage: Reception and Influence of Cervantes in Britain,* London, Modern Humanities Research Association and Maney Publishing, 2009, pp. 223-33.

[21] Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 35.

"it is possible that Fletcher had confused the object of this voyage with the original object of Hudson's three earlier voyages"[22]. Like the assumption that Fletcher's "verdugo" must have been influenced by Jonson's "verdugoship" (rather than vice versa), this reasoning presupposes the dim view of Fletcher's talent prevalent among literary critics of Maxwell's generation. But Fletcher and his patrons took an active interest in European voyagers[23]. There is no evidence for Maxwell's conjecture that Fletcher, or anyone else interested in oceanic exploration, did not know the difference between east and west. Both extant seventeenth-century texts of *The Tamer Tamed* say "east", and, in dating the play, we can hardly presuppose that 'east' means 'west'.

More generally, Maxwell's account of seventeenth-century English attitudes toward oceanic exploration assumes that they duplicated twentieth-century American attitudes. Every North American schoolchild of Maxwell's generation learned about Henry Hudson, who was credited with discovering the Hudson River and Hudson Bay, and whose last voyage made him a retrospectively 'American' tragic hero. His voyages did not loom so large in the consciousness of the English at the time. There are no contemporary references to his voyages in the letters of that inveterate gossip John Chamberlain or that professional collector of important English news the Venetian ambassador in London (who was otherwise very interested in ships and their movements). Cawley's extensive researches on the influence of voyages of exploration on English literature does not record a single early literary allusion to Hudson's voyages to the northeast, and very few to his voyages to the northwest[24]. Hudson's first two voyages involved only a single small boat with a small crew (eleven men and a boy in 1607, fifteen men in 1608). Accounts of those first two voyages do not record any casualties and lend no support to the idea that the northeast passage

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[22] Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 35.

[23] On Fletcher's and his patrons' interest in colonization, see McMullan, *Politics of Unease*, pp. 197-256.

[24] Hudson does not appear at all in Cawley's *Unpathed Waters: Studies in the Influence of the Voyagers on Elizabethan [sic] Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1940; he quotes the passage in *The Tamer Tamed* but does not connect it to Hudson (p. 229). In *The Voyagers and Elizabethan Drama*, London, Oxford University Press, 1938, he notes a 1622 reference by Henry Peacham to Hudson's explorations in the northwest (p. 281), but nothing for the northeast.

"consum'd Saylors". Hudson's third voyage (1609) was financed by the Dutch and departed from Amsterdam; there is no evidence that many people in London even knew about it. Moreover, although the third voyage began in the northeast, it soon abandoned that intention and sailed west, laying the foundation for Dutch claims to the area between Delaware and New York (which did not come under English control until the 1660s). The single recorded casualty on that voyage took place in America, not on the "Northeast passage"[25]. Thus, none of the voyages of Hudson is relevant to Fletcher's image or to the dating of *The Tamer Tamed*.

The source of that image might derive from the accounts of sixteenth-century exploration collected in the second edition of Hakluyt's *Principle Voyages* (1598-1600), which gave expeditions to the northeast pride of place in the first section of the first volume. However, it might also have been influenced by Gerrit de Veer's *True and perfect description of three voyages* (STC 24628), entered in the Stationers' Register on May 15, 1609, and published in that year[26]. William Phillip, the English translator of de Veer's account, dedicated the volume to Sir Thomas Smith, Governor of the Muscovy Company (sig. A2) and of the East India Company. In order to acquire a sense of the number of sailors consumed by the Northeast passage, Londoners need only have read the title page of the 1609 account of the three Dutch voyages:

> […] with the cruell Beares, and the unsupportable and extreame cold that is found to be in those places. And how that in the last Voyage, the Shippe was so inclosed by the Ice, that it was left there, whreby the men were forced to build a house in the cold and desart Countrie of *Nova Zembla*, wherin they continued 10. monthes togeather, and never saw nor heard of any man, in most great cold and extreame miserie; and how after that, to save their lives, they were constrained to sayle about […] 1000. miles English, in litle open Boates, along and over the maine Seas, in most great

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[25] See G. M. Asher, ed., *Henry Hudson*, London, Hakluyt Society, 1860, and Donald S. Johnson, *Charting the Sea of Darkness: The Four Voyages of Henry Hudson*, Camden, Maine, International Marine, 1993.

[26] Maxwell mentions this text (*Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, p. 34) but de-emphasizes it, since it falls between the range of the Hudson voyages (1607-11), which is his primary focus, and is too early for 1611, his preferred date. He does not quote the title page or acknowledge the spectacular casualties.

daunger, and with extreame labour, unspeakable troubles, and great hunger.

Like other title pages, this one would have been posted in various public places as an advertisement[27]. Even a browser who opened the book and glanced at its first page would have found immediate references "to the North-east" and "those North-east Partes" and the attempt to "to find a passage" (Aii). This is quickly followed by references to the eventual death of "our Pilote William Barents" (B2^v). Barents led much bigger expeditions than Hudson: four ships in 1594, seven in 1595, two in 1596. Even before the extended and detailed account of the disastrous third voyage advertised on the title page, there is a graphic account of two men being killed and eaten by a polar bear (F2^v) – which might have contributed to Shakespeare's episode in *The Winter's Tale*[28]. It is impossible to prove that Fletcher knew this account of the Barents voyages; his reference to the Northeast passage could have been written in any year of his writing life, which was bounded by the accounts of northeast voyages printed in Hakluyt (1598) and Purchas (1625). But the 1609 volume at least corresponds to the facts of the passage in *The Tamer Tamed*, as do none of the Hudson voyages. Clearly, nothing here supports the claim that Fletcher's play was written in 1611 or even 1610.

Against this absolute absence of evidence *for* 1611 stand two pieces of evidence *against* 1611. First, Maria responds to Petruccio's feigned illness by urging everyone to "Get ye gone, / If you mean to save your lives. The sicknesse […] Is i'th house" (III.v.25-28); "the City" sets a watch on the house (III.v.32-33), who "lock the doores up" (III.v.37); Maria claims that she has seen "the tokens" (III.v.71), and, although Petruccio has allegedly shown symptoms only for "three houres" (III.v.35), everyone – including the other men, who have been his friends and supporters – immediately urges him to pray (III.v.44, 80-

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27   See Tiffany Stern, "'On each Wall and Corner Poast': Playbills, Title-pages, and Advertising in Early Modern London", *English Literary Renaissance,* 36:1 (2006), pp. 57-89, especially pp. 78-79.

28   "The Beare at the first faling upon the man, bit his head in sunder, and suckt out his blood" (F2^v); later the bear, who "still was devouring the man", was approached by others, and "fiercely and cruelly ran at them, and gat another of them from the companie which she tare in peeces" (F2^v); later the others rescue the bodies of "our two dead men, that had beene so cruelly killed and torne in peeces by the Beare" (F2^v).

81) and believes that "he's a dead man" (III.v.93). This scene would be much more plausible and piquant immediately after an outbreak of plague, when many Londoners would have experienced exactly this sequence of events. Although London suffered high plague mortality from March 1603 to November 1609, there was no plague in London in 1611 and only about three months of relatively low mortality in 1610 (August through October)[29].

Secondly, on May 4, 1610 (according to the English calendar), Henri IV of France was assassinated by François Ravaillac; a translated account of the murder was entered in the Stationers' Register in London on May 14 and presumably published almost immediately thereafter, but that text makes no reference to the execution of his assassin[30]. However, on May 30, another text was entered in the Stationers' Register; the spectacularly gruesome public execution of Ravaillac was its primary subject, emphasized by the title of the pamphlet. His four limbs were tied to four horses, which were then driven in different directions until his body was torn to pieces. This execution is not only verbally described in the pamphlet; it is illustrated by a specially created woodcut on the title page, which would have been used to advertise the pamphlet, and therefore would have made the nature of the execution known even to people who did not buy or read the text but simply saw it or spoke to someone who had seen it[31]. If Fletcher had wanted to cite an example of the punishment appropriate to assassins, then, at any time after May 1610, Ravaillac's fate would have provided the most dramatic example. But Fletcher instead cites "his infliction / That kill'd the Prince of *Orange*" (II.ii.43-44; II.i.44-45), referring to an execution that occurred in 1584. Of course, one might conjecture that "Prince of Orange" was meant to suggest "King of France" or that the censor replaced "King of France" with "Prince of Orange", but if the subject was too sensitive for the censor, we would expect the entire phrase to

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[29]   J. Leeds Barroll, *Politics, Plague, and Shakespeare's Theatre: The Stuart Years*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991, pp. 173-86.

[30]   Pierre Pelletier, *A lamentable discourse, vpon The paricide and bloudy assasination: committed on the Person of Henry the fourth […] King of France,* London, William Barrett and Edward Blount, 1610 (STC 19565).

[31]   *The terrible and deserued death of Francis Rauilliack, showing the manner of his strange torment at his Execution, vpon Fryday the 25. of May last past, for the murther of the French King, Henry the fourth*, trans. R. E., London, William Barley and John Baylie, 1610 (STC 20755).

have been cut. As it stands, Fletcher's play – in both texts – refers to an example twenty-six years earlier than May 1610, and the simplest explanation is that the example of May 1610 was not yet available to him or his audience. And this, in turn, eliminates the brief plague interval in August to October 1610 as a possible inspiration for the play's references to the plague.

The case against 1611 seems to me (and to Martin Wiggins) stronger than anything Maxwell, or anyone else, has cited to support composition of *The Tamer Tamed* in 1611 or at any time after May 1610[32]. But it still leaves open the question of how much earlier than 1611 the play was written.

How early?

A date of composition as early as 1603 or 1604 has been advanced on the basis of the play's allusions to military affairs outside England. Within less than thirty lines, *The Tamer Tamed* refers both to the siege of Ostend and to the commander of the forces that besieged it: "The chamber's nothing but a meere *Ostend*" (I.iii.89; I.iii.91) and "*Spinola*'s but a ditcher to her" (I.iii.65; I.iii.67). The siege began on July 5, 1601, and Spinola took command of the army of Flanders in August 1603; these passages cannot have been written before late 1603 (when the theatres were closed due to plague) and cannot have been performed before spring 1604 at the earliest. Oliphant claimed that Fletcher's lines in I.iii must have been written before Ostend capitulated in September 1604, because "the events referred to" in early modern plays "are in nine cases out of ten those of the past few months"[33]. But Ostend is the exceptional one case out of ten. It was as famous throughout the seventeenth century as Dunkirk would continue to be in the twentieth and early twenty-first. In 1620, John Taylor wrote of

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[32] Martin Wiggins also recognizes the importance of Ravaillac's execution in dating the play in *British Drama 1533-1642: A Catalogue*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011-18, 9 vols, vol. VI: *1609-1616* (2015), p. 54. Each of us reached this conclusion independently; I had noticed the connection and made it the basis for dating the play in Daileader and Taylor (2006), but Wiggins did not have access to my unpublished earlier version of the present essay. He does not discuss the 1610 pamphlets.

[33] E. H. C. Oliphant, *The Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher: An Attempt to Determine Their Respective Shares and the Shares of Others*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1927, pp. 151-53.

"Ostend whose siege all sieges did surpasse / That will be, is, or I think ever was, / […] Ostend endur'd (which ne'er will be forgot)"[34]. In 1638, another Londoner proclaimed that the Spanish siege had made Ostend "for ever famous to Posterity"[35]. These allusions demonstrate the continuing fame of the siege, and, not surprisingly, playwrights continued to allude to it long after 1604. Jonson mentions it in *Epicoene*, and so does Thomas Randolph in *Aristippus* (written in 1626, published in 1630). Jonson himself dated *Epicoene* "1609", and Randolph was not born until 1605. Fletcher could have alluded to Ostend at any time in his writing life. However, the reference to Spinola suggests a date later than 1604[36]. Spinola was initially less famous than Ostend: the first reference to him in the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic* does not occur until July 28, 1605 (after the dazzling military maneuver by which he outflanked the Dutch and crossed the Rhine)[37]. I have not found a literary allusion to him earlier than Jonson's *Volpone* (which cannot have been completed before January 1606)[38].

The Ostend/Spinola allusion in I.iii does not support a date in 1603-4. Nor does "These are the most authentique Rebels, next *Tyrone*, I ever read of" (I.iii.212-13). A. H. Thorndike claimed that this alluded to the appearance in London in 1603 of the second earl of Tyrone[39]. Maxwell demonstrates that "Tyrone" was in the news circulating among Londoners from spring 1603 to autumn 1607, and again in spring 1608, late 1609, late 1610, and spring 1614[40]. Consequently, a

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34   John Taylor, *An English-mans Love to Bohemia*, 1620, p. 8.

35   Lewes Roberts, *The Merchants Mappe of Commerce*, 1638, p. 108.

36   The earliest reference I have found to Spinola in an English printed book occurs in Edward Grimeston's translation of *A true historie of the memorable siege of Ostend* (1604), which was published after the town had fallen; Spinola does not enter the account until October 27, 1603 (p. 184), and all forty-one occurrences of his name are spelled "Spignola".

37   *Calendar of State Papers: Domestic Series, of the Reign of James I, 1603-1610*, ed. Mary A. E. Green, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1857, p. 230.

38   Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Richard Dutton, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, eds David Button *et al.*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012, vol. IV, pp. 4-5, 76. I have searched for Spinola (and "Spignola") in both *Literature Online* and *Early English Books Online-Text Creation Partnership*, and *Volpone* is the earliest literary allusion in either.

39   Ashley H. Thorndike, *English Comedy*, New York, Macmillan, 1929, pp. 607-8.

40   Maxwell, *Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger*, pp. 31-33. Maxwell's reference to late 1610 presumably lies behind Munro's claim that Tyrone "was much talked of in London in 1610, a fact which helps to date the play's composition" (Munro, ed., *Tamer Tamed*, p.

reference to him would have been 'topical' at any of these dates or in the months immediately following them. However, in the period between his submission to Elizabeth I in the treaty of Mellifont (March 30, 1603) and his flight from Ireland on September 4, 1607, Tyrone was not a rebel[41]. Fletcher refers to Tyrone specifically as a rebel who is "read of". This might refer to the proclamation of November 17, 1607, which three times calls Tyrone a "rebell"[42]. Many other texts about Tyrone followed during Fletcher's lifetime[43].

There is thus no evidence for composition in 1603 or 1604. The Spinola allusion cannot have been written until months after Tyrone submitted, and Tyrone was not again a rebel until late 1607. The two allusions, so close together textually, would not simultaneously have made sense to a London audience until 1607. The very allusions cited as evidence of composition in 1603-4 thus prove, on closer examination, that the play can *not* have been written *before* November 16, 1607[44]. That date also postdates the Midland riots of 1607, which critics have cited as an inspiration for various details of the women's rebellion in *The Tamer Tamed*[45]. That conclusion is important for three reasons. First, it establishes that *The Tamer Tamed* was not Fletcher's first writing for the stage. Second, it establishes that Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* cannot have been new when Fletcher wrote his

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40). She also cites this passage in her discussion of the play's date (p. xvi), though she there mistakenly refers to "I.iii.22" (rather than I.iii.223, in the line numbering of her edition). But late 1610 seems ruled out by the "Prince of Orange" reference.

[41] Nicholas Canny, "O'Neill, Hugh [Aodh Ó Néill], second earl of Tyrone", in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004 (last accessed November 15, 2018).

[42] *Stuart Royal Proclamations*, vol. I: *Royal Proclamations of King James I 1603-1625*, eds James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, Oxford, Clarendon, 1975, pp. 176-79. The proclamation is dated November 15, but the Great Seal and the writ to the Mayor and sheriffs of London are both dated November 17. Tyrone had been pardoned by Elizabeth on March 9, 1603, and publicly rehabilitated and "received […] into Grace and favour" on June 8 by "A Proclamation commaunding that no man abuse the Earl of Tyrone" (pp. 27-28), which does not describe him as a rebel.

[43] See, for example, the extended narratives in Fynes Moryson's *An Itinerary* […] *The II. part. Containeth the rebellion of Hugh, Earle of Tyrone* (1617) and Thomas Gainsford's *The true exemplary, and remarkable history of the Earle of Tirone* (1619).

[44] Even without the evidence of *Epicoene* (discussed below), the earliest possible date should be identified as late 1607. Wiggins gives the range as "1607-11" but does not explain why he considers 1607 the earlier limit; he may be accepting Maxwell's argument about Hudson's first voyage.

[45] Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, p. 8.

reply. No one – not even Eric Sams – imagines that Shakespeare's folio play was originally written later than 1603[46]. Third, it removes any reason for supposing that Fletcher revised the play six or seven years after he first wrote it.

The idea of revision was first floated to account for the contradiction between the alleged allusions from 1603-4 and an apparent allusion – in the same scene – to Jonson's *Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman*, which cannot have been performed earlier than December 1609. Gayley pointed out that Fletcher's character Moroso "may very well be a reminiscence of Morose" in Jonson's play *The Silent Woman*. Gayley compared the distinctive costuming of Jonson's Morose, "with a huge turban of nightcaps on his head, buckled over his ears" (I.i.115) to Fletcher's Moroso, whose "night-cap / […] looks like halfe a winding-sheet" (IV.i.54-55; IV.0.56-57)[47]. This is not just a literary allusion; it clearly refers to the same stage prop. But the case for a relationship between the two plays is stronger than Gayley realized. The name of Jonson's character was taken from his (obscure) Latin source for the plot of *The Silent Woman*[48]. No other character in the drama of the period has the name "Morose", and Fletcher's unique "Moroso" comes closer to Jonson's name than any other character[49]. Fletcher ends Act I with a moment of comic physical humiliation – Livia "*wrings [Moroso] byth' nose*" – that echoes Jonson's climactic comic humiliation of La Foole[50].

These are not the only links between Fletcher's *Tamer* and Jonson's *Silent Woman*. Fletcher's "I never will believe a silent woman. / When they break out they are bonfires" (I.iii.107-8; I.iii.110-11) quotes the

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[46] Ignoring Maxwell's refutation, Eric Sams cites a "1603" date for Fletcher's play as part of his convoluted conjecture that Shakespeare's play was written in 1602-3: see "The Timing of the Shrews", *Notes and Queries*, 230 (1985), pp. 33-45.

[47] *Epicene, or The Silent Woman*, ed. David Bevington, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. IV, pp. 373-516.

[48] The clearest account of Jonson's source for the name is in Roger V. Holdsworth's New Mermaids edition of *Epicoene*, London, Ernest Benn, 1979, p. xxiii.

[49] See Thomas L. Berger *et al.*, *An Index of Characters in Early Modern English Drama: Printed Plays, 1500-1660: Revised Edition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 70.

[50] Fletcher's action echoes Jonson's: see "tweaks by the nose" (IV.v.262), the stage direction "*Dauphine enters to tweake him*" (272.1), and the advice "leave tweaking; you'll blow his nose off" (274). The wringing of Moroso's nose just before the act-break is described, just after the act-break, as "my nose blown to my hand" (*Tamer Tamed*, II.i.2; II.0.2), echoing Jonson's language.

title of Jonson's play and refers to the central reversal of its action, marked by Jonson with the sarcastic question, "Is this the silent woman?" (III.vi.29)[51]. Unlike Epicoene, Maria has not previously been called "silent", so the phrase lacks an obvious antecedent in Fletcher's own script. The only other use of the phrase "silent woman" in the drama of the period occurs in Robert Davenport's *A New Trick to Cheat the Divell* (1639), where it clearly refers to Jonson's play: "I'm like the man that could endure no noise / In'th silent woman, answer all in signs" (V.iii). The only other examples of the phrase "silent woman" in Literature Online, between 1590 and 1660 – by Francis Beaumont, John Taylor, and John Suckling – all three refer to Jonson's play. In the same scene, Fletcher's appreciative "she can talke, God be thanked" (I.iii.120; I.iii.122) echoes and revises Jonson's appalled "She can talk!" (III.iv.41) – also referring to the play's lead female character. The phrase "she can talk" appears nowhere else in English drama between 1580 and 1642.

I will return to the relationship between Fletcher's play and Jonson's, but, for the moment, the important point is that Fletcher's echoes of Jonson here are perfectly compatible with all the allusions to other events. *The Taming of a Shrew* was reprinted by Nicholas Ling in 1607 (STC 23669). The rebellious women's "public celebration of the pleasures of eating" has been cited as a deliberate contrast with "the severe food shortages and high prices of 1607-9", and their repeated invocation of "ale" would have been particularly resonant after the government proclamation of December 12, 1608, which restricted the manufacture and sale of beer and ale[52]. The book on a disastrous voyage to find the Northeast passage was published at some point in the last seven months of 1609; Hudson's third attempt to find the Northeast passage started from Amsterdam at about the time that book was published, and Hudson returned to England in November 1609. In the period between the beginning of the siege of Ostend (1601) and the 1612 low-point in East India Company investment, the single year of highest "venture" of "dollars" was 1609. As for Tyrone, Maxwell noted that he was again in the news in

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[51]   In his conversations with Drummond, Jonson's only two references to the play called it "The Silent Woman", and the title page of the first quarto edition (1620) was changed from "Epicoene, or The Silent Woman" to "The Silent Woman". Clearly, this is the title by which the play was most widely known.

[52]   Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, pp. 8-9.

late 1609; moreover, the earliest Jacobean book that repeatedly described Tyrone as a rebel was published (in two editions) in 1609[53]. The first extended account of Spinola's Dutch campaigns published in English that uses the spelling "Spinola" – which occurs in both surviving texts of *The Tamer Tamed* – did not appear until late in 1608[54].

Spinola was also in the news again in 1609: this time, as one of the chief negotiators and signatories of the twelve-year truce between Spain and the Dutch republic. The treaty was signed on April 14, 1609 (in the presence of two English ambassadors), and news of it reached London readers in two texts, *A proclamation of the truce* on a single sheet (STC 18472a.5) and the more detailed but still affordable two-and-a-half sheet translation of *Articles of a treatie of truce*, which appeared in two 1609 editions (STC 18455.7, 18456)[55]. The English were interested in the truce for the same reason English troops had helped defend Ostend: Holland was the chief continental Protestant power. After the peace between England and Spain negotiated by King James in 1604, the Dutch were the only Protestants actively fighting the Hapsburgs and the Counter-Reformation. The truce also had immediate implications for English trade. The high level of London interest in the truce can be gauged by the number of references to it – before and after it was signed – in the letters of John Chamberlain, the Venetian ambassador in London, and the *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*[56].

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[53]   See William Barlow [Bishop of Lincoln], *An Answer to a Catholike English-man*, 1609, pp. 135 ("the Rebell […] Tirone"), 362 ("TYRONE the chieftaine and ringleader of the rest; whose Rebellious Insurrections"), 364 ("this Spartacus of these Fugitives (Tyrone by name) had his Rebels"). This book was an official reply to a critique of James I's *Apology*; the public controversy over the *Apology* was a major subject of diplomatic correspondence in 1609.

[54]   Jean La Petite, *A Generall Historie of the Netherlands*, trans. Edward Grimstone (STC 12375), pp. 1299-1318, 1342-66, etc. Some copies of this text have a title page dated "1608", others "1609", suggesting that it did not appear until late 1608.

[55]   Spinola is mentioned on sig. A3ᵛ of *Articles*, the English ambassadors "Sir Richard Spencer and Sir Raphe Winwood" on sig. A4.

[56]   John Chamberlain, *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1939, 2 vols, vol. I, pp. 256 (February 11, 1608, including an account of Spinola's speech at the opening of the negotiations), 273 (December 9), 275 (December 16), 278 (December 23), 285 (February 21, 1609), 287 (March 3), 289 (April 20).

Fletcher seems to have been thinking of the Dutch truce when he was writing *The Tamer Tamed*. That would explain the play's superfluous references to Ostend and Spinola, to German troops (I.iv.30, "a regiment of rutters"), "the Flemmish channell" (V.ii.32), and "the Dutchman" who sells horses (III.iii.63-65) – an occupation otherwise not associated with that nationality. More tellingly, the 1609 truce explains Fletcher's curious allusion to "his infliction / That kill'd the Prince of *Orange*" (II.ii.43-44; II.ii.44-45). Why should a play that cannot have been written earlier than 1609, and was set in an obviously contemporary London, refer to an execution that occurred in another country twenty-five years before? Editors claim that the 1584 execution "was particularly gruesome"[57]. But, in fact, it did not differ in any material particular from the standard execution of traitors in early modern Europe, including the much more recent London executions of the Gunpowder conspirators. No other play of the period alludes to it. But *A Generall Historie of the Netherlands* – the same 1608/9 book that gave the first extended account of Spinola's campaigns – refers to the Prince of Orange by name 521 times and includes his engraved portrait; its detailed account of his resistance to the Spanish culminates in the execution of his assassin[58]. The articles of the 1609 truce, translated and published in London only a few months later, three times refer to "the Prince of Orange deceased" (B3ᵛ, B4, C2). During the two decades of Fletcher's writing career, only in 1609 was the English public so particularly reminded of the death of the Prince of Orange.

These references – to Ostend, Spinola, Dutchmen, German troops, and the Prince of Orange – are not a random scatter of irrelevant topicalities but part of a sustained pattern of reference that shapes Fletcher's presentation of the play's gender conflict. The first two acts of *The Tamer Tamed* are dominated, verbally and visually, by the women's seizure, fortification, and successful defense of a walled urban upper space, from which they look down upon the men who besiege them. Maria "holds him out at pike's end, and defies him, and now is fortified" (I.iv.29-30); "She's fortified for ever", and those who try to enter her space are "beat back again" (I.iii.71; I.iii.73); the

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57   Bevington, gen. ed., *English Renaissance Drama*, p. 1240.
58   Jean La Petite, *Generall Historie*, p. 858.

women are "entrenched" (I.iii.97; I.iii.101), and protected by "trenches" (I.iv.23-24).

Such imagery combines the theatrical convention for staging urban military sieges with the Petrarchan conceit of a woman's virginity as a castle under male siege. But it does not derive from the most important English sources for Fletcher's plot, Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* and Jonson's *The Silent Woman*. It has been plausibly linked to *Lysistrata*, which Fletcher could have read in one of several editions that provided a Latin crib for the difficult Greek of Aristophanes; Jonson owned such an edition, and Jonson was the first English dramatist to be significantly influenced by Aristophanic comic practice[59]. In *Lysistrata*, as in *The Tamer Tamed* – and no other known play in the two thousand and twenty years between 411 B.C. and 1610 A.D. – a group of women seize an elevated space, defeat a group of male besiegers, and refuse to have sex until their conditions are accepted. In both plays, the male besiegers include old men who threaten to beat the women brutally if they continue to resist; in both plays, the men are literally doused by the women.

But *Lysistrata* is a play about war, written in a city really at war. But *The Tamer Tamed* is not about war; England was not at war in 1607-10; England had not been at war since 1603 and would not be at war again until the 1620s. England itself did not provide a political parallel for *Lysistrata*, and Fletcher needed to look elsewhere – beyond Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Jonson, or England – to find a military corollary for the women's resistance. He found it not in an ongoing war but in a recently declared peace. In *The Tamer Tamed* (unlike *Lysistrata*), the men's reaction to their women's seizure of territory is to "Beat a parley first" (I.iii.100; I.iii.99). The subsequent action consists entirely of negotiations on the "articles" (II.vi.127; II.v.126, and II.vi.171; II.v.170) and "conditions" (II.vi.115, 118, 150; II.v.115, 118, 149) of "the treaty" (II.vi.117; II.v.117) of "composition" (I.iii.237; I.iii.218), which will allow the women to "march off with conditions" (II.vi.93; II.v.93). Indeed, even before the audience sees the women ensconced in their "fortified" space, the text anticipates a settlement,

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[59]   See Coburn Gum, *The Aristophanic Comedies of Ben Jonson: A Comparative Study of Jonson and Aristophanes*, The Hague, Mouton, 1969, and David McPherson, "Ben Jonson's Library and Marginalia: An Annotated Catalogue", *Studies in Philology*, 71 (1974), pp. 25-26, item 8.

with the women "marching away with their pieces cocked" (I.iii.60-64; I.iii.60-61). This reiterated idea, that the women will "march off" (I.iii.274; I.iii.262), imagines the disengagement of forces and the associated movement of populations that actually occurred in the Low Countries in 1609; it is less obviously relevant to the sexual resolution (which will require Maria to *join* her husband, not leave him).

This Dutch parallel adds a series of meanings to Fletcher's play not present in Aristophanes, Shakespeare, or Jonson. Like the Dutch by the Spanish, Fletcher's women are repeatedly described by the men as rebels (I.i.19, I.iii.212, 267, I.iv.16, II.vi.119, IV.ii.35, 120, 121, IV.iv.25; I.i.19, I.iii.212, I.iii.255, I.iv.16, II.v.119, IV.i.35, 120, 121, IV.iv.25). On the other hand, the women, like the Dutch, deny that they owe the other party any obedience (I.ii.130-36, I.iii.208-9, II.ii.120, II.vi.92, III.iii.95-105; I.ii.130-36, I.iii.195, II.i.120, II.v.92, III.iii.95-104); they describe their own objective as freedom (I.ii.37, 151-54, I.iii.161, II.ii.42; I.ii.37, 151-54, I.iii.153, I.i.42), liberty (II.ii.78, II.vi.134; II.i.78, II.v.134), and equality with their opponents (III.iii.101)[60]. Moreover, and most profoundly, just as Dutch Protestants rebelled against their Catholic king, so Fletcher imagines the division between genders as a clash between rival faiths. When Maria first articulates her rejection of the idea of wifely obedience, Bianca is asked, "Are you of this faith?" and answers "Yes, truly, and will die in't" (I.ii.146). From the beginning, the women's resistance is described in terms of a religious belief, which departs from and challenges an older, traditional faith. "I have a new soul in me", Maria declares (I.ii.77), and she sets out to establish "new customs" (II.ii.84; II.i.84). The men compare the women's rebellion to that of the mythological titans against Zeus (II.iii.55); the women describe their own written statement of demands as "this creed" (II.vi.158; II.v.157). "What would this woman do", one man asks incredulously, referring to Maria, "upon a new religion?" (IV.v.167-8; IV.iv.166-7). Another of the men asks Livia, "Why do ye break your faith?" (I.iv.53), and she later swears "by the little faith I have in husbands / And the great zeal I bear" for the women's "cause"

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[60] In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate at the end is obedient (Sc. 16/V.ii.67, 115, 116, 153, 156), declares that wives "are bound to serve, love, and obey" (162), and describes any wife who does not do so as "a foul contending rebel" (V.ii.157). But this language does not appear elsewhere in the play, or in the pattern deployed by Fletcher.

(II.ii.76-77; II.i.76-77). This language (zeal, cause) is often associated with Puritans – as is the women's preoccupation with "reformation" (IV.v.227; IV.iv.227) and "soundness" in a doctrinal sense (II.ii.113; II.i.113), their fear of "persecution" for their beliefs (II.vi.199; II.v.158), and their resistance to the authority of "churchwardens" (II.iii.69). Asked "Of what religion are they?", Roland describes men as "Good old Catholics" who "deal by intercession all", praying to idols and obeying "the old law" (III.i.51-55). In fact, the men, but not the women, refer to Catholic saints (I.iii.19, 25, 189, II.i.60; I.iii.18, 24, 190, II.0.59) and the Latin *misereri* (V.ii.27); they swear "by Saint Mary" (V.ii.24; V.i.25) and, in another reference to the Virgin Mary, "by'r Lady" (I.iv.28, IV.iv.34, 35; I.iv.28, IV.iii.34, 35).

Fletcher thus associates the explicitly 'old' defenders of patriarchal authority (Petruccio, Petronius, Moroso) with the old religion and the explicitly 'young' women who resist them with the Protestant reformation. Indeed, Maria's demand for a "fellowship" of equals (I.ii.141) articulates an emergent ideal of 'companionate marriage', which social historians have often associated with the rise and consolidation of Protestantism[61]. That sectarian imagery also aligns *The Tamer Tamed* (written by the son of the Bishop of London) with Protestantism, in explicit contrast to *The Taming of the Shrew* (written by a man accused of being a papist) and implicit contrast to *The Silent Woman* (written by a man who was a professed Roman Catholic until 1610)[62].

All the foregoing evidence allows us to assign the original composition of performance of *The Tamer Tamed* to a narrow window of a few months. Fletcher's play cannot have been written after 1611; despite the wealth of topical allusions, there are none specifically pointing to 1611 or 1610, and plausible evidence pointing against composition after May 1610. It echoes or parodies Shakespeare's

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[61]　Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, New York, Harper & Row, 1977, p. 136, *passim*.

[62]　On the date of Jonson's conversion, see David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1989. The literature on Shakespeare's possible (but disputed) Catholic sympathies is extensive, but he was called a "papist" by John Speed in *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine*, London, 1612 (STC 23041), p. 637: "this Papist and his Poet, of like conscience for lies, the one euer faining, and the other euer falsifying the truth". Speed in context is clearly referring to Shakespeare's portrayal of Oldcastle in the original, uncensored text of *1 Henry IV*: see Gary Taylor, "The Fortunes of Oldcastle," *Shakespeare Survey*, 38 (1985), pp. 85-100.

Hamlet, *Twelfth Night*, *King Lear*, and *Pericles* (1600-8), but scholars have not detected convincing allusions to Shakespeare's plays of 1610-11[63]. It is much influenced by Jonson's *Volpone* and *The Silent Woman* (early 1606 to late 1609), but not by *The Alchemist* (summer to fall 1610). It has multiple connections with books and events of 1609, and no connections with books or events of 1610. It cannot have been written before Jonson completed *The Silent Woman*, which was first performed in December 1609 or January 1610. We can therefore be confident that the first performance of *The Tamer Tamed* occurred no earlier than the first week of December 1609 and no later than mid-May 1610.

Who and where?

The relationship of Fletcher's *Tamer Tamed* to Shakespeare (and Jonson) is intimately bound up with its date of composition, but also with the acting company that initially performed it and the theatre where it premiered. Neither the company nor the venue is self-evident. The earliest documentary references to the play date from 1633, after both Fletcher and Shakespeare had died.

In 1633, *The Tamer Tamed* belonged to the King's Men, and it is possible that they always owned it. But, by the 1630s, the King's Men also owned *The Silent Woman*. We know that *The Silent Woman* was first performed at the Whitefriars theatre by a reorganized company that had for the previous eight years played at the Blackfriars. We have no documentary evidence that they also performed *The Tamer Tamed*. But Fletcher, at this stage of his career, was writing for only two companies: the Blackfriars-then-Whitefriars boys and the King's Men. Fletcher had begun his career writing for boys; his association with the King's Men did not begin until *Philaster* (chiefly by Beaumont), which probably belongs to 1609. In 1611-12, the Whitefriars company performed at court Beaumont and Fletcher's *Cupid's Revenge* (1607) and *The Coxcomb* (1609); they also owned Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Scornful Lady* (1610) and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* (1608). By the 1630s, the King's Men had acquired

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[63]   For echoes of Shakespeare in Fletcher's plays, see D. M. McKeithan, *The Debt to Shakespeare in the Beaumont and Fletcher Plays,* New York, Collier, 1938. Editions of *The Tamer Tamed* have not provided any persuasive additional examples.

three of those four Fletcher titles – and *The Silent Woman* – and they could by the same means have acquired *The Tamer Tamed*, which they performed in 1633[64]. In 1616, the Whitefriars company's leading actor, former child star Nathan Field, became a sharer in the King's Men (replacing Shakespeare), and Field could have taken some of his old company's texts with him. So it is entirely possible that the first connection between Fletcher's *Tamer Tamed* and what we call 'Shakespeare's company' (the King's Men) did not occur until after Shakespeare's death.

We can say two things confidently: (1) *The Tamer Tamed* was first performed by one of those two companies, and (2) without documentary evidence, we cannot definitively determine which. Nevertheless, some circumstantial evidence is worth considering.

First, the genre of *The Tamer Tamed* much better fits the repertory of the Whitefriars company. To our knowledge, the first city comedy set in contemporary London performed by the King's Men was Jonson's *The Alchemist*, which premiered in the summer or autumn of 1610, and is thus later than *The Tamer Tamed*. Although Jonson himself had been writing urban comedies since *Every Man in His Humour* (1598), he had not set a play in London until he collaborated with Marston and Chapman on *Eastward Ho* in 1605 – a play written for the Blackfriars boys' company, which later metamorphosed into the Whitefriars boys' company. That genre was entirely characteristic of the boys' repertory; indeed, the first evidence of the existence of the reorganized (post-Blackfriars) Whitefriars boys' company was their performance at court, on January 1, 1609, of Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One*. In this as in other respects, *The Tamer Tamed* more closely resembles *The Silent Woman* (performed by the Whitefriars company) than *The Taming of the Shrew* (performed by the King's Men). Shakespeare's play is set in Italy, of course, not London, and the appearance of characters named Petruccio, Bianca and Tranio in Fletcher's London is rather odd. Its oddity is compounded by the fact that *The Tamer Tamed* is, on the dating established here, Fletcher's first play with an English setting; it is certainly one of his very few located

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[64]   For company repertories, see Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearian Playing Companies*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1996, pp. 356-60, 386-90. Like others, Gurr simply assumes that *The Tamer Tamed* always belonged to the King's Men, but Wiggins challenges that assumption. Wiggins is the source of dates for Beaumont and Fletcher plays here and elsewhere.

in London. It makes sense for Fletcher to set his play in London under the pressure of the established practice of the Whitefriars company and under the specific influence of Jonson's *Silent Woman*, which pointedly situates itself in the West End[65]. It makes less sense for the King's Men to make their first venture into city comedy with a playwright inexperienced in the genre, who would have had no reason to change the locale of Shakespeare's play if he expected *The Tamer Tamed* to be performed by the same actors who were reviving *The Taming of the Shrew*, or who had been playing it as a regular part of their repertory for years.

Second, the number and difficulty of female roles points in the same direction. A company of 'boy' actors could perform plays with more female roles than a company like the King's Men, dominated by adult males. *The Silent Woman* has speaking roles for six females, each necessarily played by a different actor (because they all appear on stage together). Shakespeare never wrote a play that required so many capable boy actors[66]. *The Tamer Tamed* has eight female characters on stage in II.v: five who speak and another three "maids" who have spoken briefly in the immediately preceding scene. Lucy Munro rightly points out that plays written for the King's Men that are "roughly contemporaneous" with *The Tamer Tamed* "regularly require five boy actors to appear in speaking roles in the same scene, often in the company of an unspecified number of 'Ladies'"[67]. But her definition of "roughly contemporaneous" seems based on the assumption that *The Tamer Tamed* dates from as late as 1611. The plays

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[65]   See Emrys Jones, "The First West-End Comedy" (1982), in *British Academy Shakespeare Lectures 1980-89*, ed. E. A. J. Honigmann, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 85-116.

[66]   The apparent exception, *Macbeth*, survives only in a version adapted by Thomas Middleton after Shakespeare's death. For Middleton's additions to the extant text, see Gary Taylor, "Empirical Middleton: *Macbeth,* Adaptation, and Micro-attribution", *Shakespeare Quarterly,* 35 (2014), pp. 239-72, and "Middleton and *Macbeth*", in William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: The Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Robert Miola, New York, W. W. Norton, 2014, pp. 294-303; for Middleton's expansion of the number of boys' roles, see Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds, *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to The Collected Works*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 383-98.

[67]   Munro, ed., *Tamer Tamed*, p. xvi. Munro was responding to the brief discussion of the word-count for the three lead female roles in Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed,* p. 26. My other evidence for performance by the Whitefriars company is published here for the first time.

she cites as examples – *Philaster* (dated by Wiggins in 1609), *The Maid's Tragedy* (dated by Wiggins in 1611), and *Valentinian* (dated by Wiggins in 1614) – do not match *The Tamer Tamed* in the demands they make on those boy actors. Maria speaks 4193 words[68]. Shakespeare occasionally wrote plays with such a big role for a boy actor: Cleopatra (written in 1607) speaks 4686 words, and Innogen (written in 1609-10) speaks 4393[69]. But these roles occur in exceptionally long plays, and it has been argued that the full texts were never performed or intended for performance[70]. Moreover, little was expected of the boys playing the secondary female characters in them. The second largest female role in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Charmian, speaks only 625 words, and all the roles played by boy actors together amount to only 5740 words (24% of the dialogue); likewise, the boy actor roles in *Cymbeline* speak a total of only 5772 words (22%)[71]. By contrast, Fletcher wrote 2026 words for the second boy in *The Tamer Tamed*, playing Bianca, and 1702 for the third boy, playing Livia; altogether, Fletcher wrote 8404 words for female characters played by boy actors (37% of the full text; 38% of the 'cut' text)[72]. By contrast, the longest role in the three "contemporaneous" Beaumont and Fletcher plays for the King's Men, cited by Munro, is Evadne in *The Maid's Tragedy* (with

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[68]   I counted words in *The Tamer Tamed*; those for *Philaster, Valentinian,* and *The Maid's Tragedy* were computed by Keegan Cooper. Both of us produced the word counts by downloading online transcripts of the early editions, creating a separate file containing each character's speeches, then running a word count using Microsoft Word (for the whole play and for specific characters).

[69]   Word counts for Shakespeare's female characters are based on Marvin Spevack's *A Complete and Systematic Concordance to Shakespeare*, Hildesheim, Georg Olms, 1968, 9 vols, especially vol. III, pp. 1186-1257 (*Antony and Cleopatra*) and pp. 1313-89 (*Cymbeline*). Names of Shakespeare's characters, dates and texts of his plays are cited from William Shakespeare, *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition,* gen. eds Gary Taylor *et al.*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016.

[70]   See Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[71]   For *Antony and Cleopatra*, I count Cleopatra, Charmian, Octavia, Iras, and the "Song" presumably sung by a boy; in *Cymbeline*, Innogen, Queen, Mother, "Song", and the Ladies.

[72]   The full text (22883 words) is the conflated text printed by Bowers and other modern editors; the cut text (21146) is printed in Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed,* based on the manuscript, representing (we argue) the version initially performed. Maria's part is not affected by the cuts; Bianca speaks 272 fewer words and Livia 13 fewer. Besides Maria, Bianca and Livia, the play's other women include the three maids, the City Wife and Country Wife, and the "Song" sung by unspecified women (483 total words).

3002 words, over 1100 words less than Maria); the largest percentage of words for characters played by boy actors is 30.5% (in *Philaster*); the largest number of words for the third boy actor is 944 (in *Philaster*)[73]. In all these respects (size of the lead boy actor's role, size of the third boy actor's role, percentage of words given to female characters), the three alleged parallels in the repertory of the King's Men (between 1609 and 1614) fall significantly short of the demands placed on boy actors by *The Tamer Tamed.* The distribution and structure of female roles in *The Tamer Tamed* suggests that it is more likely to have been written for the Whitefriars company.

Third, the play's allusions to the repertories of the two companies point in the same direction. *The Tamed Tamer* foregrounds its rivalry with, and revision of, *The Taming of the Shrew*. Fletcher goes out of his way to contradict Shakespeare's happy ending, repeatedly insisting instead that Petruccio's first wife remained shrewish until her death. Three of Fletcher's characters have the same name as three of Shakespeare's: one of those three (Petruccio) is clearly meant to be the same person, and arguably so are the other two (Bianca, Tranio). These two plays are the only ones in early modern English drama to contain a character named "Tranio"[74]. The stance Fletcher adopts toward Shakespeare here resembles that adopted in the Admiral's Men's *Tragedy of Sir John Oldcastle*, which recycled the characters and events of *1 Henry IV* but denied the veracity of Shakespeare's representation of Oldcastle. Maria's besting of Petruccio (and disdain for his first wife) figures Fletcher's besting of Shakespeare. We would expect such a rival play to be acted by a rival company. By contrast, Fletcher's allusions to *The Silent Woman* look like advertisements: not necessary to the plot, never explicitly critical of Jonson's play, never using exactly the same names or claiming to present the same characters, they are as gratuitous as product endorsements in modern films. They resemble the epilogue to *Henry V*, with its plug for the

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[73] *Philaster*: 21444 total spoken words; 6543 words spoken by female characters (30.5%); 2682 by Eufrasia/Bellario, 2167 by Arethusa, 944 by Megra. *Valentinian*: 24,892; 4,478 (18%); 2210 by Lucina, 681 by Eudoxa, 603 by Ardelia. *Maid's Tragedy*: 21,852; 5,803 (26.6%); 3002 by Evadne, 1887 by Aspatia, 533 by Cynthia.

[74] See Berger *et al.*, p. 97.

same company's 'Henry the Sixth' plays, or the allusion in *The Spanish Gypsy* to the same company's *The Changeling*[75].

As Daileader and Taylor note, Fletcher's play is perfectly intelligible without any knowledge of Shakespeare's: "all the information we need about Petruccio's tempestuous first marriage is laid out in the first few lines of Fletcher's play"[76]. But there is at least one episode in Fletcher's play that is hard to understand without knowledge of Jonson's play. In the influential 2003 Royal Shakespeare Company revival of *The Tamer Tamed*, one scene in particular – according to Gordon McMullan – offered particular interpretive challenges to the actors and director, who were never certain that they had understood its practical meaning in performance, even after much dedicated rehearsal time[77]. That scene was the first part of IV.iv, when Pedro tells Petruccio that Maria "is mad" and then explains that "If any speak to her, first she whistles, / And then begins her compass with her fingers, / And points to what she would have". When Maria enters, she says nothing for sixty lines, though she is insistently addressed and questioned continuously all that time. Instead of speaking, she "deal[s] by signs and tokens". Petruccio tells her to "Leave your mumping", and Sophocles wonders, "Do you think she's sensible" of what they are saying. Nothing in *The Taming of the Shrew* helps audiences or actors understand this scene. But if you had seen *The Tamer Tamed* at the Whitefriars theatre in December 1609 or early 1610, you would have recognized here an echo of another play performed at the Whitefriars theatre in December 1609 or early 1610: the memorable second scene of Jonson's *The Silent Woman*, where Morose and his servant are both on stage, but only Morose says anything, because he orders his servant to "answer me, by signs", "speake not, though I question you […] answer me not, by speech, but by silence", and "answer me not but with your legge, unless it be otherwise; if it be otherwise, shake your head, or shrug". Jonson's play does not actually contain a silent woman: even before she is married, Epicoene is never silent; she speaks few words, and she

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[75]   Gary Taylor, "Thomas Middleton, *The Spanish Gypsy*, and Multiple Collaborators", in *Words That Count*, ed. Brian Boyd, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2004, pp. 241-73.

[76]   Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed*, p. 15.

[77]   Gordon McMullan, personal communication, May 2005, confirmed November 16, 2018. (McMullan was the dramaturg for the 2003 production).

speaks them softly, but she does speak. Fletcher's scene combines Morose's interview with his silent signaling servant and Morose's job-interview with Epicoene: Fletcher's scene gives us exactly the silent woman, the speechless sexual object, that Morose seeks. In 2003, the very accomplished and experienced RSC artistic team was confused by this scene, because they were performing it in repertoire with *The Taming of the Shrew,* not *The Silent Woman.*

Fourth, *The Silent Woman* provoked government intervention and may have been suppressed very soon after its first performances; Fletcher must either have been influenced by a performance before February 8, 1610, or he must have read the play in manuscript. But why would he allude repeatedly to a suppressed play, not in print and no longer in the repertoire, and familiar only to people who had seen it in the relatively small indoor theatre at Whitefriars? Fletcher could have expected such references to be topical only if the play had been very recently suppressed, or if it had not yet been suppressed, when he began writing. Fletcher's references to *The Silent Woman* would be most topical if *The Tamer Tamed* were performed in the same theatre by the same company that had performed or was performing *The Silent Woman*.

All this evidence suggests that *The Tamer Tamed* was acted by the Whitefriars company soon after their performances of *The Silent Woman*. In fact, Fletcher's play could have been in the repertory with Jonson's from the first week the theatres re-opened in December 1609. The impresario Robert Keysar claimed that he spent £500 to support the company during the long closure of 1608-9, in the hope of playing "upon the ceasing of the generall sicknes"[78]. Naturally, no acting company could know when plague deaths would decline enough to permit performances again, so they had to be prepared and ready to open their doors as soon as the opportunity arrived; it would be in their economic self-interest to have more than one new play in waiting. After all, they could not predict which play would take an audience's fancy – or which might be suppressed by the authorities. (They had a long record of getting into trouble.) If it was written for the Whitefriars company as a companion to *The Silent Woman* and in anticipation of "the ceasing of the generall sicknes", *The Tamer Tamed* could have been written late in 1609; if it was begun after Jonson's

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[78]   Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, vol. III, p. 57.

play opened, it was almost certainly started before Jonson's play was suppressed at the beginning of February 1610.

In either case, *The Tamer Tamed; or, The Woman's Prize* is a response to two of the most misogynist plays in the English canon: *The Taming of the Shrew* and Jonson's *The Silent Woman*. Fletcher's play was not written as half of a diptych; it was the middle panel of a triptych, between Shakespeare's play and Jonson's. It links together the three playwrights that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries regarded as the holy trinity of English Renaissance drama.

The Shakespeare connection has always been recognized, but the critical importance of the Jonson connection has been ignored (even by those who have used it to date Fletcher's play). The Shakespeare connection has, as a result, been consistently misunderstood. As Chambers noted, "an answer to *The Taming of the Shrew* would have more point the nearer it came to the date of the original"[79]. But almost all scholars agree that *The Taming of the Shrew* was written at least ten and perhaps twenty years before 1609. It might still have been revived, occasionally or regularly, but there was nothing new or controversial about it. By contrast, in 1609 and the first months of 1610, *The Silent Woman* was brand new.

Fletcher deftly dissociated himself from the elements of Jonson's work that would have offended aristocratic women, like his patroness the Countess of Huntington[80]. Fletcher did not want to antagonize Jonson. In 1609 or 1610, Jonson wrote a commendatory poem for the first edition of Fletcher's failed *Faithful Shepherdess*, and, in 1611, Fletcher returned the favor with a commendatory poem for Jonson's failed *Catiline*. Unlike Beaumont, Fletcher did not write a poem in praise of *The Silent Woman*. Nevertheless, Fletcher's criticism of Jonson's misogyny – unlike his criticism of Shakespeare's – is entirely implicit. In *The Woman's Prize* as in *The Silent Woman,* the husband is crushingly defeated by his wife (who, in both plays, was performed by a boy actor). Jonson could, if he liked, interpret Maria as just another candidate for his College of unendurable semi-educated females, just another Cecilia Bulstrode. After all, the obvious target of Fletcher's satire was not Jonson, but Shakespeare. Although *The Silent*

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[79]   Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, vol. III, p. 222.
[80]   For more on the play's connections with and differences from *The Silent Woman*, see Daileader and Taylor, eds, *Tamer Tamed,* pp. 11-13.

Woman was almost certainly the more immediate stimulus, *The Taming of the Shrew* was a safer target. In literary London in 1609, Jonson was the rising star; Shakespeare was the setting sun[81]. And even Shakespeare might not be too offended, precisely because Fletcher's target was such an old play (and probably a collaborative one)[82].

Fletcher's sensitivity to these issues of male rivalry should not surprise us. His entire career is a triumph of homosocial collaboration. *The Tamer Tamed*, in particular, is as much a play about the complicated alliances of men with men as it is a play about men's conflicts with women. But what is remarkable about the play's connections to *The Silent Woman* and *The Taming of the Shrew* is Fletcher's strongly interactive relationship with Jonson and the complete absence of any evidence of a relationship to Shakespeare. Fletcher was certainly familiar with Shakespeare's work, and it is unlikely that two professional playwrights both working in the small scene of the London commercial theatre from 1606 to 1611 could have completely avoided meeting each other. But Shakespeare had probably stopped acting by 1609, when the King's Men performed *Philaster*, their first play by Beaumont and Fletcher. *The Tamer Tamed* gives us no reason to believe that Shakespeare and Fletcher were actively working together, or personally interacting, in 1609 or at any time before their collaboration on *Cardenio* in 1612. Shakespeare had experimented with two or three possible collaborators from 1603 to 1607 (Middleton in *Timon of Athens,* Wilkins in *Pericles,* and possibly Jonson in the lost original version of *Sejanus*), but none of those collaborations was repeated[83]. Fletcher might have imagined *The*

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[81] For the decline of Shakespeare's market value in the Jacobean book trade, see Gary Taylor, "*Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (and Tragicomedies and Poems): Posthumous Shakespeare, 1623-1728", in *New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition*, vol. II, pp. xlix-lxi.

[82] For a survey of evidence indicating that Shakespeare was not responsible for the Bianca subplot in *The Taming of the Shrew,* see Taylor and Loughnane, pp. 502-3, and John V. Nance, "Early Shakespeare and the Authorship of *The Taming of the Shrew*", in *Early Shakespeare,* eds Rory Loughnane and Andrew Power, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.

[83] For Shakespeare as the collaborator with Jonson on the original *Sejanus,* see Taylor and Loughnane, pp. 446-47, 538-42, and Gary Taylor, *The Tragedy of Sejanus,* in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition,* vol. I, pp. 1229-30.

Tamer Tamed as an audition for the role of Shakespeare's co-writer or successor, but if so, it did not succeed.

Our sense of the strong connection between *The Tamer Tamed* and *The Taming of the Shrew* may, in fact, have been retrospectively, posthumously constructed as a marketing ploy. If, as I have argued, Fletcher's play was originally written for the Whitefriars, it almost certainly did not come into the repertory of the King's Men until after Shakespeare's death. In 1633, our first documentary evidence of their ownership of the play pairs its revival, in a court performance, with Shakespeare's play. It is thus possible that the title *The Tamer Tamed* originates with that pairing and thus postdates Shakespeare's death. The alternative title "*The Woman*'s Prize" would, instead, have connected it to "*The* Silent *Woman*".

And if the title of Fletcher's play was retrospectively modified in order to link it more clearly to Shakespeare's, it is possible that Shakespeare's play was also retrospectively modified to link it to Fletcher's. The King's Men might have owned Fletcher's play for six years between Shakespeare's death (1616) and the typesetting of *The Taming of the Shrew* (1622) for the First Folio, completed and published in 1623. That Folio text is full of contradictions and complications that have puzzled editors. One puzzle is a reference to one of the traveling players in the Induction having performed the role of "Soto" (i.80-85), which seems to fit the circumstances of a character with that name in Fletcher's *Women Pleased* – a play which Wiggins and almost all other scholars assign to the year 1620. Is *The Taming of the Shrew,* the text that we assume inspired Fletcher, instead, at least in some of its details, actually also a text later modified in response to Fletcher?

The Global Popularity of William Shakespeare in 303 Wikipedias

Jacob Blakesley

This paper aims to present empirical research on the contemporary popularity of Shakespeare around the world. For a comprehensive appraisal of the circulation, transmission, translation, and reception of Shakespeare's plays, we would need a comprehensive database with listings of all staged plays, all published translations, and all films and programmes based on his plays. In the absence of this information, however, there is a singular source that we can draw on: Wikipedia. There are 303 Wikipedias in as nearly as many languages

across the world[1]. The 2017 article *World Literature According to Wikipedia: Introduction to a DBpedia-Based Framework*, written by Christoph Hube, Frank Fischer, Robert Jäschke, Gerhard Lauer, and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen[2], showed how Wikipedia statistics can be fruitfully analysed to reveal the canonicity of world authors. Following their lead, by analysing the data of how many people consulted the various entries on Shakespeare, on his plays, and on his poetry in the 303 Wikipedias, we can distinguish different levels of popularity of his works in different settings. We will first examine the reception of his biographical entry in the various Wikipedias, and then move on to the entries dedicated to his plays and poetry[3]. We will not be hazarding here any guesses into the reasons behind particular linguistic and cultural preferences for certain plays, leaving that for specialists in the field. Yet this empirical investigation is important, because it will allow us to have a birds' eye view of the contemporary popularity of Shakespeare, measured in pageviews, across the globe.

Wikipedia

Wikipedia began in 2001 with one English encyclopaedia and now, seventeen years later, there are official Wikipedias in about 300 national and regional languages, minority languages and dialects, classical languages like Latin and Sanskrit, and constructed languages like Esperanto, with tens of articles to over five million articles (English). An immense resource, Wikipedia includes "46 million articles accessed by 1.4 billion unique devices every single month, while an army of 200,000 editors and contributors patrol this

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[1]   There are a pair of Wikipedias for the same language: English and Simple English; Belarusian in two different orthographic systems (standard Belarusian and Taraškievica).

[2]   Christoph Hube, Frank Fischer, Robert Jäschke *et al.*, "World Literature According to Wikipedia: Introduction to a DBpedia-Based Framework", available at: https://arxiv.org/abs/1701.00991.

[3]   Just to make clear: I am not analysing the readership of his specific plays or poems, but rather the readership of the different entries dedicated to his plays and poems.

vast repository of online knowledge 24 hours a day"[4]. There are more than 6,000 new articles a day across all Wikipedias[5]. The 303 Wikipedia editions exist in 92% of all the 103 official languages of nations in the world, and among the top most 100 popular Wikipedias, people view anywhere from a minimum of eight million Wikipedia pages (Ghana) to over 3.4 billion Wikipedia pages (USA) per month. Wikipedia is viewed around the clock to a perhaps unimaginable degree. It is the fifth most visited website in the world[6]. Meanwhile, there are very few cases of Wikipedia censorship, with the most recent data indicating that only four governments currently censor Wikipedia in some form (China, North Korea, Thailand, and Uzbekistan)[7].

The most serious objection raised about studying literary reception through Wikipedia is the question of the quality. While Wikipedia may consider itself the so-called people's encyclopaedia, its symbolic capital is not that of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and it is generally not accepted in academia. However, a notorious 2005 article in *Nature,* "Internet Encyclopaedias Go Head to Head", found little difference in error between a small sample of articles in Wikipedia and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*[8], a conclusion similarly reached in a 2012 Oxford University study, "Assessing the Accuracy and Quality of Wikipedia Entries Compared to Popular Online Encyclopaedias"[9], as well. This certainly suggests that our

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[4]   David Barnett, "Can We Trust Wikipedia? 1.4 Billion People Can't Be Wrong", *The Independent*, Sunday 18 February 2018, available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/wikipedia-explained-what-is-it-trustworthy-how-work-wikimedia-2030-a8213446.html.

[5]   See: https://stats.wikimedia.org/EN/TablesArticlesNewPerDay.htm.

[6]   Włodzimierz Lewoniewski, Krzysztof Węcel and Witold Abramowicz, "Relative Quality and Popularity Evaluation of Multilingual Wikipedia Articles", *Informatics*, 4:43 (2017), pp. 1-24.

[7]   Justin Clark, Robert Faris and Rebekah Heacock Jones, "Analyzing Accessibility of Wikipedia Projects Around the World", *Berkman Klein Center Research Publication Series*, 4 (May 2017), available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2951312.

[8]   Jim Giles, "Internet Encyclopaedias Go Head to Head", *Nature*, 438 (15 December 2005), pp. 900-1, available at: https://www.nature.com/articles/438900a.

[9]   Imogen Casebourne, Chris Davies, Michelle Fernandes and Naomi Norman, "Assessing the Accuracy and Quality of Wikipedia Entries Compared to Popular Online Encyclopaedias: A Preliminary Comparative Study Across Disciplines in

preconceived notions about quality in encyclopaedias need to be reflected upon. Nevertheless, in this paper, we are not dealing with the quality of the encyclopaedia entries: we are dealing specifically with the number of times readers consulted various webpages dealing with Shakespeare and his works. The calculations of pageviews of each Wikipedia page come from the Wikimedia Foundation Analytics[10] and the Pageviews analysis suite of tools[11]. Because of privacy reasons, Wikipedia does not track individual users, so it is technically impossible to say how many visitors viewed each webpage; thus we will be speaking about 'views' rather than 'viewers' over the calendar year 2017. The choice of using one calendar year is motivated by two factors: first, current Wikipedia statistics go back only to 2015; and second, a one-year period has been shown by Hube *et al*. in their paper to be a stable measurement, with 95% correlation with adjoining years.

Shakespeare's biographical entry

During 2017, Shakespeare's biographical page entry was viewed over twelve million times in 186 Wikipedias, including the English Wikipedia. This amount is more than every single winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature (except for Winston Churchill), and more than canonical authors like Homer and Virgil. We can note that there were far more Wikipedias with a biographical entry on Shakespeare – namely, 186 – than Wikipedias with one or more entries on Shakespeare's plays and poetry – 109. In other words, there were 77 Wikipedias in which there was a 'William Shakespeare' biographical entry but no entry for any of his works: clearly, in languages like these, we can hypothesize that the interest of readers is lower than in languages where there do exist entries on Shakespeare's works as well. On the contrary, there were only five Wikipedias with at least

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English,   Spanish   and   Arabic"   (2012),   available   at: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/29/EPIC_Oxford_report.pdf . It must be acknowledged that the Oxford study was funded by Wikipedia.

[10]   See: https://stats.wikimedia.org/EN/Sitemap.htm.

[11]   See: https://tools.wmflabs.org/langviews/?project=en.wikipedia.org. 'Bot' or web crawler views are not included in these statistics.

one entry on his works but without any 'William Shakespeare' biographical entry[12]. In total, then, he and his work were viewed in a total of 191 Wikipedias last year. Nonetheless, even if there were more Wikipedias with a biographical entry on Shakespeare, there were twenty million more views of the pages dedicated to his works: 33.1 million. This equates to over 90,000 *daily* visits to his works in 109 different languages. If we add those to the 35,000 *daily* visits to his biographical entry in 186 different languages, we thus have a total of over 125,000 daily visits to Shakespeare and his works in the 191 Wikipedias. One very important result immediately emerges from this data: the majority of views of Shakespeare's biographical entry and his 43 works across the world are foreign: 56% in the case of 'William Shakespeare' and 52% in the case of his works; the other 44% and 48%, respectively, are visits to his pages in the English Wikipedia. Figure 1 shows the foreign Wikipedias with the most visits to Shakespeare's biography entry.

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[12]   There was no bio-page in the Cebuano, Kyrgyz, Lak, Ripuarian, or Somali Wikipedias.

2017 Wikipedia pageviews of 'William Shakespeare'
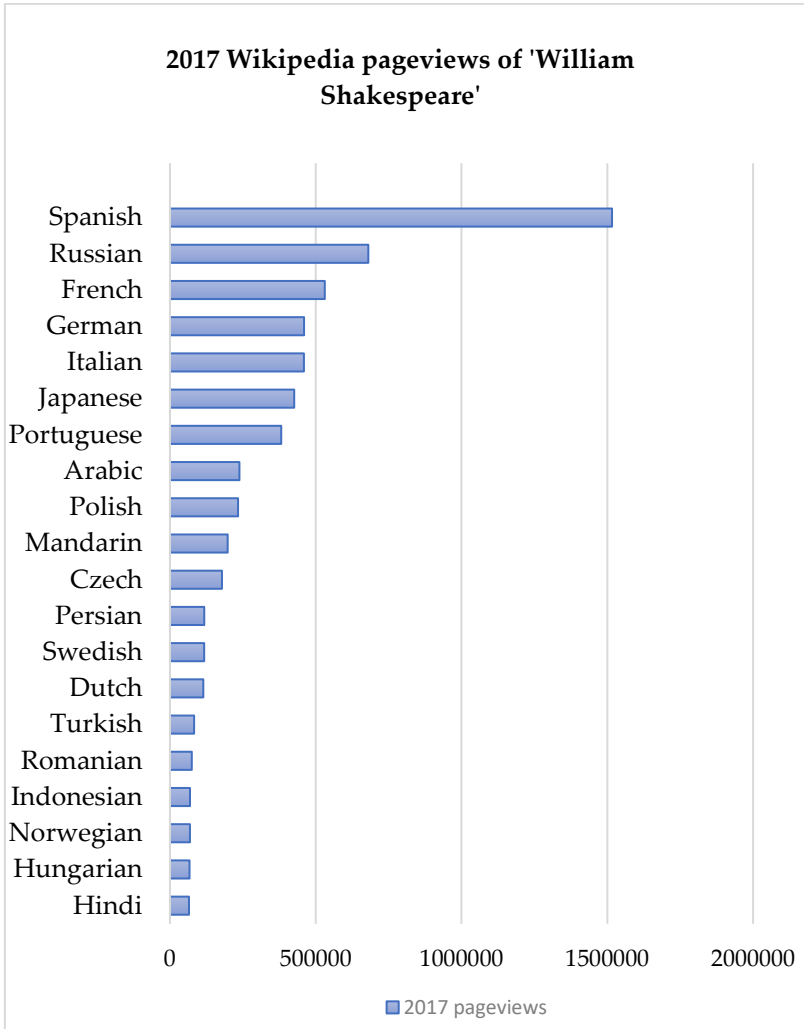
Figure 1. 2017 pageviews of William Shakespeare in 303 Wikipedias

The data reveals that by far the most readers consulting Shakespeare's entry in a foreign Wikipedia are Spanish, with over 1.5 million pageviews in 2017, or over 4,000 daily pageviews. Russian comes next, with less than half the amount of Spanish pageviews, and slightly fewer than 2,000 daily visits. French follows behind, with a bit over 500,000 pageviews. German and Italian are practically tied at slightly under 460,000 pageviews, or about 1,260 pageviews a day. Japanese is the first Asian language to appear here, with 426,000

pageviews, over 1,150 pageviews per day, followed by Portuguese, the only other Wikipedia edition with more than 1,000 daily pageviews of Shakespeare's entry, having a total of 381,000 pageviews. Meanwhile Arabic, Polish, and Mandarin Chinese are the only other three Wikipedias with more than 500 daily pageviews of Shakespeare, ranging from some 230,000 annual pageviews in the case of the former two, and 197,000 in Mandarin. Even Turkish, Indonesian, and Hindi appear on this top-20 list – with anywhere from 65,000-82,000 yearly visits, and between 178-226 daily visits. Indeed, the statistics clearly demonstrate that readers in national European languages such as Belarusian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Danish, Croatian, Estonian, Finnish, Greek, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovak, and Slovene view Shakespeare's biographical entry far less than their non-European peers. These surprising statistics suggest that we should be studying more often the vast interest in Shakespeare in Arabic-speaking countries, China, India, Indonesia, Japan and Turkey. In other words, the popularity of Shakespeare will not be found so much in Balkan or Baltic countries, but much farther afield both linguistically and culturally.

Shakespeare's plays

One critic, citing the popularity of *Romeo and Juliet* in the USA compared to the numerous stagings of *King Lear* abroad, asks: "Does the popularity of *King Lear* over *Romeo and Juliet* mean that the rest of the world is brooding over parental relationships and family dynamics […] while Americans are just running around thinking about sex all the time?"[13] In fact, as Table 1 illustrates, *Romeo and Juliet* is the most viewed Shakespeare play not only in the English Wikipedia, with nearly two million total pageviews last year, but also in foreign-language Wikipedias overall, with more than four million pageviews there combined.

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[13]   Mya Gosling, cit. in Dan Kopf, "What Is Shakespeare's Most Popular Play", available at: https://priceonomics.com/what-is-shakespeares-most-popular-play/.

Table 1. 10 Shakespeare plays with most total 2017 pageviews					
Play	Languages	2017 Pageviews (millions)	English pageviews (millions)	Foreign pageviews (millions)	% Foreign pageviews
Romeo and Juliet	84	6.21	1.91	4.30	69%
Hamlet	86	4.55	1.67	2.88	63%
Macbeth	69	3.42	1.67	1.75	51%
A Midsummer's Night Dream	60	2.30	0.98	1.32	57%
Othello	66	2.02	0.97	1.05	52%
Merchant of Venice	49	1.47	0.73	0.74	51%
King Lear	58	1.46	0.70	0.77	52%
The Tempest	49	1.38	0.78	0.60	44%
Twelfth Night	39	1.16	0.75	0.40	35%
The Taming of the Shrew	39	0.99	0.56	0.43	44%

Second comes *Hamlet*, with four and a half million total pageviews, including almost three million foreign pageviews. Third is *Macbeth*, which has the same amount of English pageviews as *Hamlet*, but only 1.7 million foreign pageviews. Fourth is *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, the most popular comedy, at 2.3 million total pageviews. *Othello*, fifth, is the only other play to reach 2 million pageviews: while having about the same number of English pageviews as *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, it is viewed considerably less in foreign Wikipedias. *The Merchant of Venice* and *King Lear* are in sixth and seventh places, each with around the same number of overall pageviews, slightly under 1.5 million. The eighth and the ninth-place plays, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*, actually have more English pageviews than either *The Merchant of Venice* or *King Lear*, but have significantly fewer foreign pageviews, with consequent lower overall pageview numbers. *The Taming of the Shrew* is in tenth place,

with slightly fewer than 1 million total pageviews, although with a few more foreign pageviews than *Twelfth Night*.

Two genres of Shakespeare plays are represented in Table 1: tragedies *(Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*) and comedies (*A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Taming of the Shrew*), but surprisingly no history plays. All the same, genre is not the only variable here, since the three most popular tragedies – *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* – easily surpass the other seven plays (including the other two tragedies) in combined pageviews. The role of foreign appeal is evident, since for seven of the ten plays in the table the majority of their pageviews are in foreign Wikipedias: *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*; the only other such Shakespeare play in our corpus, with a majority of foreign pageviews, is *Richard III*.

Overall, *Romeo and Juliet* is the tragedy with the highest percentage of foreign pageviews, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the comedy with the highest percentage, and *Richard III* the history play with the highest percentage. These are the three plays that have travelled best across languages. The question, then, is why these plays are most popular for Wikipedia readers in other cultures: what is it about *Richard III*, for example, that makes it more appealing to foreign readers, compared to other history plays by Shakespeare? The same question can be asked of *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with regard to genre.

This data leads us to categorise those plays more viewed by English-language Wikipedia readers (*The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*), those most viewed by foreign Wikipedia readers (*Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and those plays more or less viewed equally (*Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Othello*). These results, then, suggest that there are certain Shakespeare plays that are much more well attractive to foreign readers, and others much less appealing. Thus, for instance, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* are equally consulted by English-language readers, but there are more than a million additional viewers of *Hamlet* than *Macbeth* in foreign Wikipedias.

Now we have identified the most popular plays, we can start from facts – e.g., the specific plays – instead of unverified hypotheses about what the most popular plays *might* be.

The pendant table to the above is a list of the least-viewed plays: almost all of them, except for *Pericles*, are history plays, as indicated in Table 2. The least appealing Shakespeare play for foreign Wikipedias is *Henry V*, with only 15% of its pageviews arising from non-English Wikipedias.

Table 2. Least-viewed Shakespeare plays across all Wikipedias					
Play	Languages	2017 Pageviews (millions)	English pageviews (millions)	Foreign pageviews	Foreign pageviews %
Henry VI, part 1	16	0.11	0.08	0.03	25%
Pericles	21	0.09	0.07	0.03	30%
Henry VIII	22	0.09	0.06	0.03	32%
King John	23	0.08	0.05	0.03	37%
Henry IV, part 2	17	0.07	0.06	0.02	21%
Two Noblemen Kinsmen	15	0.05	0.04	0.01	25%
Henry VI, part 3	14	0.05	0.04	0.01	21%
Henry VI, part 2	15	0.05	0.04	0.01	21%
Edward III	13	0.03	0.02	0.01	30%
Henry V	10	0.02	0.02	0.00	15%

There were, in fact, only 3,000 some pageviews of this play last year in foreign Wikipedias. Most of the other Henriad plays – *Henry IV, parts 1 and 2*, and *Henry VI, parts 1, 2, and 3* – are likewise relatively unattractive abroad: between 75-80% of their pageviews are English. While widely viewed plays like *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appear in between 60 and 86 Wikipedias, these less popular plays – such as the *Henry VI* trilogy –

often exist in fewer than twenty languages, with *Henry V* in a mere ten Wikipedias, including the English Wikipedia. If we compare the two tetralogies – the First Tetralogy (*Richard III* and *Henry VI, parts 1, 2, and 3*) and the Second Tetralogy (*Richard II*, *Henry IV, parts 1 and 2*, and *Henry V*), the numbers reveal that the First Tetralogy is more than twice as often viewed as the Second Tetralogy, with 391,000 pageviews in 2017, compared to only 141,000. The only such plays with 100 or more daily views are *Richard III* (947 views), *Richard II* (197), and *Henry IV, part 1* (140). Future investigations should seek to understand why Shakespeare's history plays are less interesting to foreign readers.

I will now address the pageviews of each play by genre across the whole range of Wikipedias. The tragedies are the most viewed in the Spanish Wikipedia, with very near 2 million pageviews, almost double the amount of the second-place Russian and Italian Wikipedias (these two are practically tied). German, Japanese, and French are the next three Wikipedias, with a 100-150 thousand fewer pageviews than Russian and Italian. Portuguese and Mandarin are the only other Wikipedias with more than 500,000 pageviews of Shakespeare's tragedies. The last two in Figure 2, Arabic and Polish, are far behind at fewer than 300,000 pageviews.
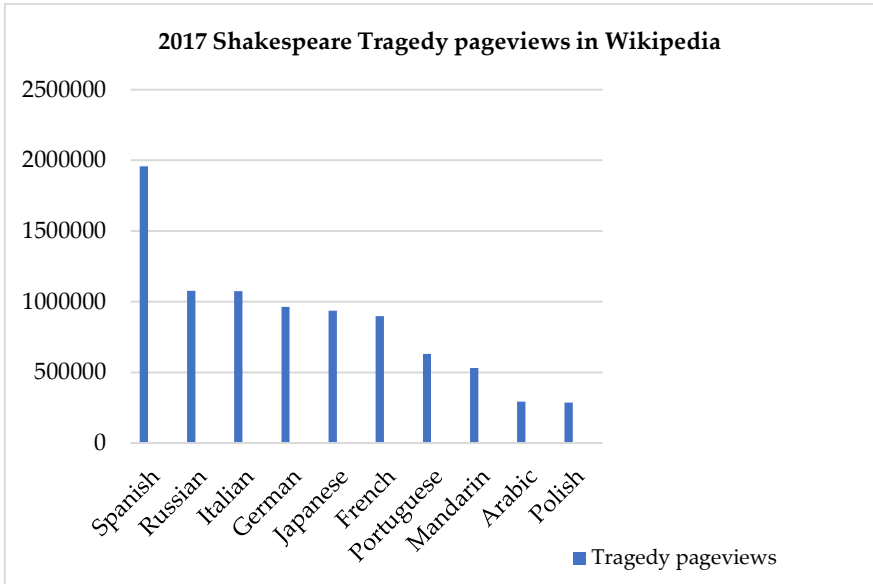
Figure 2. Most 2017 pageviews of Shakespeare's Tragedies among 303 Wikipedias

Overall in the corpus, 105 out of the 109 Wikipedias have more tragedy pageviews than comedy or history pageviews. This allows us to clearly see that tragedy is the most appealing genre for foreign Wikipedia readers.

In Figure 3, the discrepancy between Wikipedias that favour Shakespeare's tragedies and those that prefer his comedies becomes evident. So, while Spanish, German, and French remain at the same rankings (first, fourth, and sixth), Japanese, Italian, Mandarin, and Polish rise up in the ranks; whereas others like Russian, Portuguese, and Arabic descend.

2017 Shakespeare Comedy pageviews in Wikipedia
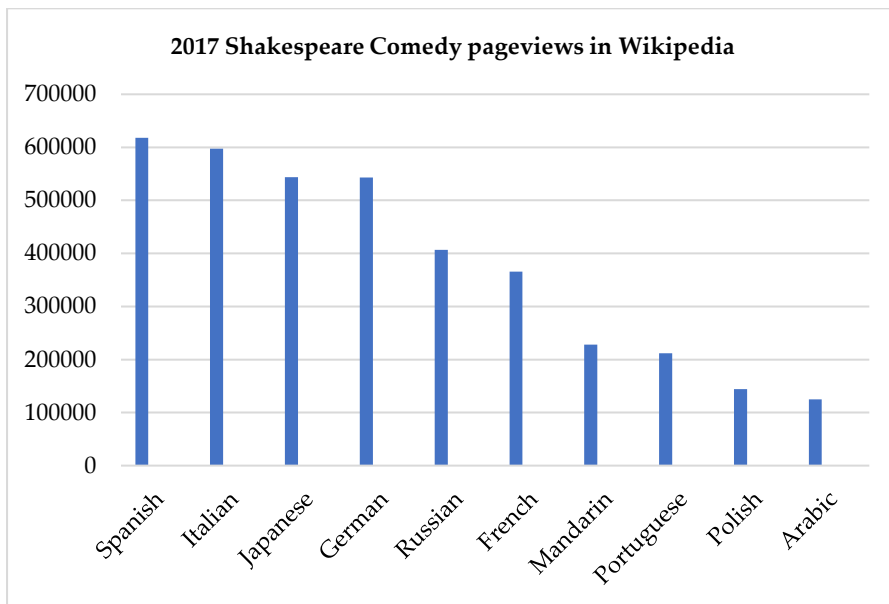
Figure 3. Most 2017 pageviews of Shakespeare's Comedies among 303 Wikipedias

Nonetheless, we note that there are no new entrants: the top ten Wikipedias in tragedy pageviews, even in a different order, remain the top ten here too. Be that as it may, comedy was the number one genre in only four languages: Breton, Low Saxon, Maltese, and Sicilian.

Meanwhile Figure 4 shows the Wikipedias with the greatest number of views of Shakespeare's history plays.
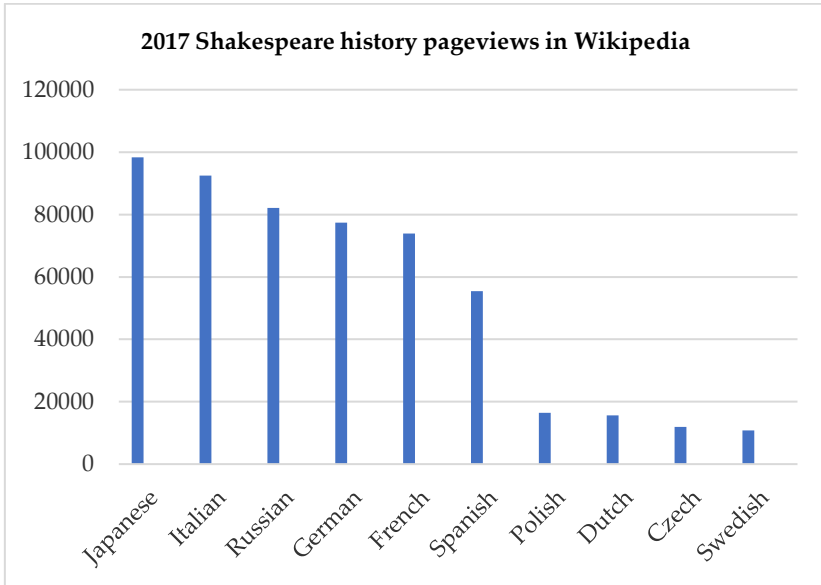
Figure 4. Most 2017 pageviews of Shakespeare's Histories among 303 Wikipedias

In fact, the history corpus of entries shows an immense divergence from the other two corpora: the only Wikipedia to remain in the exact same rank is German, at number four. Japanese has risen to first, Italian has risen from third in tragedy to second here, Russian has ascended to third, French to fifth, and Polish to seventh, whereas Spanish has dropped from first to sixth. Meanwhile we see the entrance of three new Wikipedias: Czech, Dutch, and Swedish, which weren't in the top lists of tragedies or comedies. On the contrary, Wikipedias like Arabic, Mandarin and Portuguese have fallen by the wayside: they have fewer pageviews of history plays than their competitors. Not one language leads in history pageviews in the entire corpus.

We will turn to the most viewed plays in an individual non-English Wikipedia: the ten most viewed plays in a single Wikipedia (excepting English) in 2017 are included in Table 3.

Table 3. 10 most viewed plays in one foreign Wikipedia during 2017

Wikipedia	Play	2017 pageviews	2017 daily pageviews
Spanish	*Romeo and Juliet*	863,821	2,367
Spanish	*Hamlet*	488,838	1,339
French	*Romeo and Juliet*	410,843	1,126
Russian	*Romeo and Juliet*	384,813	1,054
Italian	*Romeo and Juliet*	336,304	921
German	*Romeo and Juliet*	318,916	874
Japanese	*Romeo and Juliet*	294,051	806
Portuguese	*Romeo and Juliet*	281,092	770
Russian	*Hamlet*	250,814	687
Spanish	*Macbeth*	250,064	685

The most viewed play is *Romeo and Juliet*: it accounts for seven out of the ten most viewed plays, in four Romance languages, along with German, Japanese, and Russian. *Hamlet* appears twice on this list, in Spanish and Russian, with *Macbeth* the other most widely viewed play, in Spanish. The predominance of *Romeo and Juliet* is clear, and this predominance is confirmed if we look at the top five works viewed in the 25 Wikipedias with the most Shakespeare pageviews (Table 4).

Table 4. Top five works per Wikipedia in 2017 pageviews					
Wikipedia	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**5th**
Arabic	Romeo	Hamlet	Merchant	Othello	Macbeth
Czech	Romeo	Hamlet	Othello	Taming of the Shrew	Macbeth
Dutch	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Othello	Midsummer
Finnish	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Midsummer	Othello
French	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Midsummer	Othello
German	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Midsummer	Othello
Greek	Hamlet	Romeo	Macbeth	Midsummer	Othello
Hebrew	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Midsummer	As You Like It
Hindi	Macbeth	Hamlet	As You Like It	Julius Caesar	Romeo
Hungarian	Hamlet	Midsummer	Romeo	Twelfth Night	King Lear
Indonesian	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Othello	Tempest
Italian	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Midsummer	Othello
Japanese	Romeo	Hamlet	Midsummer	Macbeth	Merchant
Mandarin	Hamlet	Romeo	Macbeth	Midsummer	King Lear
Norwegian	Romeo	Hamlet	Midsummer	Macbeth	As You Like It
Persian	Romeo	Hamlet	Othello	King Lear	Macbeth

Polish	Romeo	Macbeth	Hamlet	Midsummer	Othello
Portuguese	Romeo	Hamlet	Midsummer	Macbeth	Othello
Romanian	Romeo	Hamlet	Midsummer	King Lear	Othello
Russian	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Othello	King Lear
Spanish	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Midsummer	Othello
Swedish	Hamlet	Romeo	Midsummer	Othello	Macbeth
Turkish	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Othello	Midsummer
Ukrainian	Romeo	Hamlet	King Lear	Sonnets	Othello
Vietnamese	Romeo	Hamlet	Macbeth	Othello	King Lear

There are twelve different plays in this table, with the *Sonnets* making one appearance here as well. The most regular order, on average, is *Romeo and Juliet* number one, followed by *Hamlet* in second place, and *Macbeth* in third. *A Midsummer's Night Dream* is most often fourth, with *Othello* fifth. This exact order is evident in Finnish, French, German, Italian, and Spanish Wikipedias, and another six Wikipedias have all these identical plays in the top five. Sometimes the order changes, however, so we have *Hamlet* first and *Romeo and Juliet* second (Greek, Hungarian, Mandarin, and Swedish). With that said, in other Wikipedias, other plays also do appear: *King Lear* seven times; *As You Like It* and *The Merchant of Venice* twice each; and *Julius Caesar*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Tempest*, and *Twelfth Night* all with one appearance. Thus, we see *King Lear* instead of either *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (Persian, Russian, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese), *Macbeth* (Hungarian and Romanian), or *Othello* (Mandarin); *As You Like It* instead of *Macbeth* (Hindi and Norwegian); *The Merchant of Venice* instead of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (Arabic) or *Othello* (Japanese).

Yet what is astonishing, perhaps, is that the order most common among the top 25 Wikipedias – *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Othello* – is the exact same order in the

native English Wikipedia. Thus, in many foreign Wikipedias, the popular preference for plays is identical to that of the source culture.

If we analyse the entire corpus of Wikipedias, not merely the above list of 25, *Romeo and Juliet* is the leader, in nearly 50 Wikipedias. The most obvious preference for this is evident in the Tagalog Wikipedia: there are 87 daily views of *Romeo and Juliet* in Tagalog, but only seven of second-place *Hamlet*. A remarkable discrepancy is also clear in Thai, where there are about five times more views of *Romeo and Juliet* than of the next leading play. Ukrainian, as well, shows a significant preference, with about three times more views of *Romeo and Juliet* than its closest competitor. In Arabic, while there may be 200 visits a day to *Hamlet*, there are 50% more visits to *Romeo and Juliet*. Overall, *Romeo and Juliet* is first in the Wikipedia editions of languages such as Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Catalan, Czech, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, Georgian, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Latvian, Norwegian, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovene, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.

In contrast, there are 37 languages in which *Hamlet* is the leading play by pageviews, including such languages as Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, Mandarin Chinese, Croatian, Danish, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Korean, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovakian, and Swedish. Most of these languages are Central, Eastern, or Northern European, in fact, including almost no Western European languages. Thus, for instance, in Croatian, *Hamlet* has five times as many page views as the next play. In Lithuanian, Macedonian, and Slovakian, *Hamlet* is clearly number one. In Albanian, *Hamlet* is viewed four times as much as its competitor. There are more views of *Hamlet* in Chinese than any other play.

The only other plays besides *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet* to be the leader in pageviews are four tragedies and two comedies. *Macbeth* is the first in seven languages (Breton, Hindi, Igbo, Irish, Kannada, Malayalam, Picard, and Swahili); *Julius Caesar*, first in five languages (Esperanto, West Frisian, Latin, Nepali and Western Punjabi); *Othello*, first in three languages (Faroese, Ligurian, and Punjabi); *King Lear* (Egyptian Arabic and Kurdish), and *Antony and Cleopatra*, first in Cebuano. The two comedies which lead in pageviews are *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream, the leader in Low Saxon and Maltese, and *As You Like It*, the leader in Tamil.

Shakespeare's poetry

Yet we have almost forgotten about Shakespeare's poetry. In all the Wikipedias, views of Shakespeare's poetry always account for a small percentage of total pageviews, under 8% in all cases, except for the Sicilian Wikipedia[14]. However, there are quite a few languages where there are more visits to Shakespeare's poetry pages than to his history plays, owing often to the fact that there are no history pages at all in the respective Wikipedia editions: Arabic, Armenian, Bengali, Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Malayalam, Persian, Sicilian, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese, and Welsh. Numerically speaking, Russian has the most poetry page views, over 50,000. Three other Wikipedias have a little more than 30,000 poetry views each: Italian, German, and Japanese. Spanish and Mandarin are in the upper and lower 20,000s, respectively. French is seventh, with around 16,000, and the next three languages, eighth, ninth, and tenth, are all jumbled together: Persian, Polish, and Czech, around 14,000 pageviews. No other Wikipedia has 10,000 or more poetry pageviews.

Russian is the leading foreign Wikipedia for Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (as well as *A Lover's Complaint)*; the Wikipedia page of his *Sonnets* is consulted more in Mandarin than in Spanish, and more in Japanese than in French. Shakespeare's other narrative poems show interesting receptions too: Japanese is the leading foreign language in pageviews for *The Rape of Lucrece*, Persian is the leading language in pageviews for his poem *Venus and Adonis*, and Italian is the leading language for *The Phoenix and the Turtle*.

The *Sonnets* are fifteenth in total pageviews (562k) and in foreign pageviews (226k): they beat out such popular plays as *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Richard II*. The narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, meanwhile, have more foreign pageviews (47k and 35k, respectively) than ten

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[14] The Sicilian Wikipedia has only two pages dedicated to Shakespeare's works: one to the *Sonnets* and one to *Much Ado About Nothing*. There were 187 views of the *Sonnets* and 100 of *Much Ado About Nothing*.

plays, mostly history plays. Nevertheless, the two narrative poems, *The Phoenix and the Turtle* and *A Lover's Complaint* have the lowest foreign pageviews of any of Shakespeare's works (both with 5k).

These statistics thus indicate that the popularity of Shakespeare's poetry generally outruns the popularity of his history plays; consequently, a fruitful line of approach would be looking into how they are translated, and how the Shakespeare sonnet has influenced many foreign literary traditions. The fact is that plays are staged and adapted much more than a piece of poetry, so it makes these statistics even more striking.

Conclusion

This paper has set the stage for an overall appraisal of popularity of Shakespeare and his works through the analysis of their reception in the 303 global Wikipedias. Results have shown that there is no common popularity of Shakespeare across languages, either in terms of plays or poems. Some Wikipedias wholeheartedly prefer his tragedies, to the tune of over 90% of all pageviews (Bosnian, Croatian, Lithuanian, Tagalog, and Vietnamese). Others show a much higher-than-average number of visits to Shakespeare's comedies (Hebrew and Hungarian). Some Wikipedias show no interest in Shakespeare's poetry (from Albanian and Greek to Hindi and Turkish). Others show a clear interest in his verse (Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Dutch, Persian, Polish, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian). For a plurality of Wikipedias, almost 50, *Romeo and Juliet* is number one in pageviews; in many others, it is *Hamlet*. In seven more, *Macbeth* is number one, while *Julius Caesar* is first in several others. *Othello*, *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* are the other rare leaders.

We have seen that the overall statistics demonstrate that tragedies are the most viewed, especially *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. This is not surprising, considering that tragedies account in the average Wikipedia for 73% of pageviews, with comedies consisting of only 24%. However, the genres of history plays and poetry are much less viewed, each accounting for less than 2% of total views, on average.

Certain languages show predilections for certain genres. Some Wikipedias evince a preference for tragedies. Russian is number two in tragedy pageviews, but only number five in comedy page views. Vietnamese does better than average in tragedies – at 18th – but falls all the way to 37th in terms of comedies. Spanish is number one in pageviews of tragedies (and comedies), but falls to sixth in pageviews of histories. Likewise, Portuguese, while well inside the top ten of tragedies and comedies, drops to 12th in histories. And Arabic, ninth or tenth in terms of tragedies and comedies, is only 16th in histories. On the other hand, some Wikipedias, like the Hebrew and Hungarian ones, do better in comedies than tragedies (13th/14th instead of 20th/23rd). Others, like Dutch and Japanese, do better in history plays. Japanese is number five in terms of tragedy page views, but number one in history page views. Dutch may be only 13th or 15th in comedies and tragedies, but it rises all the way to number eight in histories. This suggests that certain literary and cultural traditions are potentially more attuned to specific literary genres.

Likewise, we have found out which plays are the most viewed in non-English Wikipedias – the most popular tragedies, from *Hamlet* and *King Lear* to *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*, along with *Richard III*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *The Merchant of Venice* – and which are less viewed, namely the least viewed overall in the corpus, mostly history plays, along with several comedies and one tragedy (*Titus Andronicus*).

Using an approach based on Wikipedia allows us to clearly identify broad patterns of popularity – e.g., the readership of Shakespeare's tragedy, history or comedy plays, by genre – as well as pinpoint specific plays' popularity – e.g., *Hamlet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – across 300-some languages. This empirical data provides a foothold into the concrete reception of Shakespeare texts worldwide. Rather than having to depend on misguided hypotheses – e.g., *Hamlet* is the most popular play worldwide – we have data that demonstrate the facts.

With these results, this paper can suggest further paths of research and indicate possible lines of enquiry. Now that we know which pages – and works – are the most viewed, we can begin to look more deeply into literary, cultural and political reasons behind these preferences. We now definitively know that Shakespeare's history

plays are neglected abroad. We can now proceed to examining why this is the case, since it is not specific to a single history play, but to a genre of play. Likewise, we can pursue investigations into why certain tragedies and comedies fared much better than others. In short, now that this article has presented the basic information about the global popularity of all of Shakespeare's works, we can proceed to more detailed levels of examination of Shakespeare's canonicity in different contexts across the globe.

Appendix A. All Shakespeare works in corpus by number of combined 2017 pageviews in 303 Wikipedias.

2017 Views	**Daily views**	**Play**
6,210,673	17,016	*Romeo and Juliet*
4,554,556	12,478	*Hamlet*
3,417,277	9,362	*Macbeth*
2,303,859	6,312	*A Midsummer's Night Dream*
2,021,790	5,539	*Othello*
1,468,230	4,023	*The Merchant of Venice*
1,461,785	4,005	*King Lear*
1,384,333	3,793	*The Tempest*
1,155,872	3,167	*Twelfth Night*
988,252	2,708	*The Taming of the Shrew*
850,164	2,329	*Much Ado About Nothing*
773,522	2,119	*Julius Caesar*
702,740	1,925	*As You Like It*
663,131	1,817	*Richard III*
562,637	1,541	*Sonnets*
459,966	1,260	*Titus Andronicus*
438,258	1,201	*Antony and Cleopatra*
385,153	1,055	*The Winter's Tale*
294,954	808	*Coriolanus*

287,247	787	*The Comedy of Errors*
232,274	636	*All's Well that Ends Well*
225,796	619	*Measure for measure*
220,393	604	*Love's Labour Lost*
215,082	589	*Richard II*
213,431	585	*Two Gentlemen of Verona*
207,913	570	*The Merry Wives of Windsor*
202,114	554	*Cymbeline*
198,460	544	*Henry IV, part 1*
121,049	332	*Timon of Athens*
111,661	306	*Henry VI, part 1*
106,881	293	*Venus and Adonis*
105,026	288	*The Rape of Lucrece*
94,059	258	*Pericles*
89,144	244	*Henry VIII*
77,528	212	*King John*
71,961	197	*Henry IV, part 2*
52,039	143	*The Two Nobel Kinsmen*
50,028	137	*Henry VI, part 3*
49,296	135	*Henry VI, part 2*
33,627	92	*Edward III*
28,276	77	*The Phoenix and the Turtle*
25,579	70	*A Lover's Complaint*
22,525	62	*Henry V*

Selected Publications in Shakespeare Studies

Corcoran, Neil, *Reading Shakespeare's Soliloquies: Text, Theatre, Film*, **London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018, 230 pp.**

Nordlund, Marcus, *The Shakespearean Inside: A Study of the Complete Soliloquies and Solo Asides*, **Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2017, 256 pp.**

What's a soliloquy? What's in a Shakespeare soliloquy? Why is a character given this type of speech? Do Shakespeare soliloquies vary in time? Marcus Nordlund's and Neil Corcoran's volumes try to address these and more problems, investigating the same corpus, i.e. Shakespearean soliloquies, with a difference though, given that Nordlund also takes solo asides into consideration, calling the former and the latter simply 'insides', while Corcoran is interested mainly in the 'classical' monologues. But the methods of analysis, the declared purpose, the range of evidence and the readership itself of these two books are definitely different. And the results as well, as a consequence of the just mentioned aspects.

Nordlund's work, which – as the volume's subtitle reads – claims to be "a study of the complete soliloquies and solo asides", is based on a quantitative search through Shakespeare's whole dramatic corpus by means of the NVivo software that allows to carry out a certain number of queries in complex corpora. As the author explains in the first of four appendices to his book, after preparing the texts (i.e. the file containing all insides) and coding them, he proceeded to explore them by means of the software and, finally, to interpret the results (p. 205). It is clear, from this brief description, that Nordlund's

digital-humanities approach does not confine the 'human' to a mere clerklike task, but that he resorts to machine-aided exploration to accelerate his own research and to avoid biased hypotheses as much as possible. This position, which is made clear as early as the very beginning of the "Introduction" (p. 1) where the author also declares that "the resulting *Shakespearean Inside Database* […] will be made freely available online" to NVivo users (p. 2), is exemplified along the whole volume, but in particular in chapters 3 ("Dialogue", pp. 107-53) and 4 ("Distribution", pp. 154-201), enriched as they are with illustrative tables. Tables are useful to visualise data in a comparative way (for example Table 3.3, p. 118, that shows the relevance of the function of 'reporting' in the five plays ranking highest in the results independently of their subgenre). Nevertheless, Nordlund works by calculating the word count of the various insides, whereas one never encounters a table with 'simply' the numbers of soliloquies and/or solo asides taken into account in individual plays. Certainly it is interesting to see how many words are spoken in insides, but it would also be relevant to establish how many times a character resorts to these conventions of dramatic speech, and how many of these times they use soliloquies proper or solo asides. And this, not only for the sake of accumulating numbers, but, on the contrary, to offer further elements for the characterization of the *dramatis personæ*.

One of the points stressed by the author is that his type of computational analysis is also useful in defining authorship problems, since numbers can reveal Shakespeare's and/or his co-authors' tendency when using a certain rhetorical structure (the apostrophe, for example). It must be said that Nordlund does not advance any hypothesis of his own concerning this issue, while always relying on textual scholars' suggestions which he tries to verify.

The starting point of Nordlund's analysis (especially visible in the first two chapters), though, is James Hirsh's *Shakespeare and the History of Soliloquies* (2003). In his book Hirsh clearly takes side in favour of soliloquies as self-addresses and expression of a character's individuality. Nordlund, on the other hand, often highlights the fact that some monologues are not self-addressed, since they show marks of direct address to the audience, in this way bridging the gap between the internal and the external axis (or 'level', as Nordlund

calls it) of theatrical communication (esp. in chapter 1, "Direction", pp. 15-60). In doing so, Nordlund affirms to side with "the modern tendency of scholars, actors, and directors to return Shakespeare to his medieval, audience-addressed roots" (p. 8). It remains to be checked, however, how far medieval and early Tudor drama and theatre really tended to always include the audience in solo speeches. For example, Everyman's monologues in the homonymous play (ca. 1485) are cases of hybrid forms of 'inside', given that the protagonist now prays, then recapitulates his sorrows, then reveals his future actions: the soliloquy starting with "O, to whom shall I make my moan" (ll. 463-84) is an interesting illustration of pre-Shakespearean monological speech where no audience is addressed[1]. And so is judge Apius' after he has been taken by the foul desire to have Virginia, a soliloquy very similar indeed to Angelo's analysis of his sudden yearning for Isabella in *Measure for Measure*: "now my force is done: / I rule no more, but ruled am" (*Apius and Virginia*, 1575, ll. 348-49)[2]. Obviously these Tudor plays were composed for performance, but both speakers do not address the spectators. On the contrary they dig deeply into their feelings and speak to themselves. So, Nordlund's attribution of medieval roots to Shakespeare's monologues should have been better researched and, as a consequence, his self-confidence as to this point should have been more limited.

Nordlund's study reveals to be quite useful when it shows Shakespeare's "habitual practices" (p. 3) along the playwright's career, i.e. when it reads the tables showing how certain stylistic facets characterise the plays of a given period, even if the author is well aware of the always uncertain dating of single texts. For example, when writing about Shakespeare's use of "illeism" and "tuism" in the insides as a way speakers adopt to "*detatch* themselves from their own person", Nordlund says that "they [illeism and tuism] were used more frequently in the first phase (3 per cent in 1590-4) and then trailed off before disappearing almost completely in the last phase (0 per cent in 1610-14)" (p. 130; the corresponding

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[1] *Everyman*, in *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, ed. A.C. Cawley, London, Dent, 1977.

[2] R.B., *Apius and Virginia*, in *Tudor Interludes*, ed. Peter Happé, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972.

tables, 3.6-3.8, are on pp. 131-32). Gender, as well, is one of the categories employed to analyse the distribution of insides among Shakespeare characters: to this issue Nordlund devotes great part of chapter 4, in which he zeroes in on *The Two Noble Kinsmen, The Taming of the Shrew*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*, that is, on plays whose heroines are given a certain number of insides. The study of these plays, which goes together with that of *Hamlet* and *Othello* in other parts of the volume, is carried out with the usual tools of close reading and text analysis.

By stressing that his book does not want to investigate "Shakespeare's literary *intentions*", Nordlund succeeds in clarifying the playwright's "literary *habits*" (p. 180), and sometimes also in opening new perspectives on the Bard's writing strategies. One might object (as I've done myself) to some of Nordlund's opinions, but the results of this study appear insightful and may be of help in understanding not only Shakespeare's "usual practices", but also – as a consequence – his deviations from the former so as to attribute meaning to them and shed light on ambiguous passages. The readership of this volume appears to be mainly scholarly, although Nordlund here and there touches on performance problems (therefore imagining actors and directors as possible readers) and often speaks about the texts' skill in maneuvering audience's responses. An evidence of this is detectable in the total absence of actors' or directors' names in his analysis of Shakespearean insides and the complete avoidance of any mention to modern and contemporary performances and/or films. After reading this volume one might perhaps lament that its author has not exploited his data more extensively and that, on the other hand, he has allowed himself to rely too much on 'traditional' approaches to the plays, even if he shows successfully how digital humanities can be of help to literary and dramatic scholarship.

Neil Corcoran, too, mentions Hirsh's book on Shakespeare soliloquies (a study unavoidable for everybody interested in this Elizabethan drama convention), but his main aim is not to show that many Shakespeare monologues are not self-addressed, even though he also criticises Hirsh's "inflexibility" (p. 86) about the nature of soliloquies, some of which – he writes – "distinguish themselves from others by the extent of their apparent inwardness, interiority,

intensity and so on, and must have seemed then, as they do now, much less like talking to oneself and much more like internal reflection" (p. 86). Corcoran 'reads' the soliloquies with his personal craft of close analysis, but at the same time he encompasses a wide range of information and his own readers' presumable knowledge and direct experience of Shakespeare drama. Actors, directors, performances and films play a great role in this volume and not only because they are mentioned, analysed and compared, but also because of the structure itself of Corcoran's research.

The volume is divided into four parts. In the first ("Soliloquies in practice", pp. 1-54) and in the second ("Soliloquies in theory", pp. 55-120) Shakespearean monologues undergo the author's refined close reading that always goes hand in hand with a vast knowledge of past performances and successful cinematic adaptations, so as to bring the reader to a multi-faceted understanding of the specific soliloquy Corcoran is working on at that moment. In "Soliloquies in practice" readers are also guided – sometimes even too didactically – by statements conspicuous on the page since they are printed in light-grey squares. For example, we get to know (but aren't we supposed to be already in the know?) that "Soliloquies employ many elements of what the Renaissance understood by 'rhetoric'" (p. 31), and that "Some soliloquies take the form of prayers, although not necessarily in any straightforward way" (p. 32). In these 'boxes' the author intends to identify "some persistent attributes of soliloquies" which help him in his analytical process. Another 'box' tells us that "Cinema finds soliloquies difficult to cope with but can be inventively responsive to the difficulty in ways that may influence our sense of them more generally" (p. 18); it is then followed by a perceptive discussion of Laurence Olivier's film version of *Hamlet*, of *Richard III* by the same actor and by Ian McKellen, and of Orson Welles's *Othello* (pp. 19-22). That is, the investigation is subtle, but the introductory remarks in the grey boxes sound sometimes inopportune.

The second part – "Soliloquies in theory" – actually deals rather with history than with theory. In it this speech convention is seen and investigated along its historical development. The principal working tool is close reading once again, enriched with the author's rhetorical and textual erudition and scholarship. However, here, too, there are points which – although perhaps relevant to a less knowledgeable

readership – become obtrusive to others. When Corcoran explains that the Good and Evil Angels in Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* are a "direct inheritance from allegorical characterizations" (p. 68), he does not even consider that many of his readers already possess this information and, therefore, does not hedge his statement in an appropriate rhetorical way. Some imprecision can also be detected on the following page when the author paints the historical background of such characters as Richard III and Iago, connecting them to the Vice of early Tudor drama "sometimes called Haphazard, Iniquity or Ambidexter". The legacy of the Vice on these Shakespearean *dramatis personæ* has long been established, while Corcoran writes about this not as a *given*, but as something *new*, forgetting, by the way, to say that the names he mentions are not general names for Vices, but each of them the name of a specific Vice in three different plays (Haphazard in *Apius and Virginia*, Iniquity in *King Darius*, and Ambidexter in *Cambises*).

The third part ("Soliloquies in performance", pp. 121-66) stands alone because it consists of the answers given by eight actors to a list of questions prepared by Corcoran. This allows readers to understand some performers' views about Shakespeare's plays and about soliloquies, although – as the author notes – what actors say is not "enough to establish any significant contemporary performance criteria" (p. 125). One might at this point reconsider the controversial issue whether a soliloquy is self-addressed or addressed to the audience, in the light of actors' perspective. What actors declare about their performances as soliloquists is quite interesting because it contributes to adding internal, so to say, points of view. For example Noma Dumezweni says that she "loves looking at the audience when I'm talking" (p. 129); Mariah Gale observes that, performing Isabella's monologue in *Measure for Measure* (II.iv.170-86), she felt instinctively "that it was the audience I was speaking to" (p. 134). Pippa Nixon even states: "That's what a soliloquy and an aside should be. It's a flirt [with the spectators]" (p. 144), and Alex Waldmann adds that "my way in to any soliloquy is always a conversation, so the audience is absolutely another character in the play" (p. 157). Corcoran summarises that "for all these actors, soliloquy is a matter of engagement with an audience […] the audience may, for the actor-soliloquist, variously and at different

times, be figured as any of the following: mirror, shadow, energy, point of focus, recruit, subject, judge, conscience, another character in the play, the location of the next thought to be discovered" (p. 125). For a differentiated readership willing to 'read' into actors' understanding and practice of soliloquies this part certainly adds, and sometimes confutes, any theoretical and scholarly interpretation, or – better – it helps us test how theory merges with (or contrasts) the 'real thing', i.e. theatre.

The fourth part of the book ("Soliloquies in play", pp. 167-214) hosts the close reading of Richard's monologues in *Richard III* and in *Henry VI, Part 3*, of Juliet's in *Romeo and Juliet*, and of the main characters' soliloquies in *Othello*. It is presented by Corcoran as the conclusion of a "kind of dialogue between performer and critic and between performance and text" (p. 169), which might also explain aspects connected to the development of Shakespeare soliloquy. In this section, even more than in Part 1 and 2, Corcoran shows his awareness of modern and contemporary critical stances such as cultural, post-colonial, and textual studies, even though his main approach to the plays remains firmly grounded on close reading (no attempt is made at employing digital-humanities approaches, though), so that the title of the book "*Reading* Shakespeare's Soliloquies" finds its explanation and justification not only in the investigating process, but also in the main analytical tool chosen by the author.

The volume has an "Index" and a "Select Bibliography", but no notes. This is also a relevant signal that the readership it envisages is a general one made of people interested in Shakespeare, but not necessarily in specifically academic approaches to the plays, somebody also interested in the way theatre operates and how actors react to the challenge of performing a Shakespeare soliloquy (performers and directors included), somebody, furthermore, who attends theatres, cinemas and watches TV (or DVDs), so as to be reminded of various past visual experiences. To this gaze towards non-Shakespeareans Corcoran's at times unseemly 'guides' are also attributable. Some endnotes, though, might have helped.

Nordlund's and Corcoran's volumes could somehow be read as two sides of the same coin, Shakespeare soliloquies being the interface between them. Each of them contributes – for different

readers – to the understanding of the always defying and enriching complexity of Shakespeare's plays.

<div align="right">Roberta Mullini, University of Urbino Carlo Bo</div>

Dustagheer, Sarah and Woods, Gillian, eds, *Stage Directions and Shakespearean Theatre*, **London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2018, 350 pp.**

This is an important book, both for the level of contributors, mostly editors of Shakespearean and early modern texts, and for the relative virginity of the theme (only two book-length studies have been dedicated to its exploration in 1999: Alan C. Dessen and Leslie Thomson, *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama: 1580-1642*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, and Linda McJannet, *The Voice of Elizabethan Stage Directions: The Evolution of a Theatrical Code*, Newark, University of Delaware Press, both amply quoted in this work).

Stage directions are in themselves a sort of genre, a code that has "a particular grammar and rhetoric" (p. 7), and which provides the structure of the play. Its treatment involves central themes, such as early modern and contemporary readings of the Shakespearean texts, authorship, editors' interpretation (starting from Rowe in 1709 and arriving at the present) and their effects on production. The relationship between editors, producers and readers is also discussed throughout.

As the "Introduction" by the two editors underlines, most essays in this book stress the "mutable", "enigmatic" quality of stage directions as texts (p. 2), their "liminality" as "boundary crosser[s]" having a mediating function (Laurie Maguire, "The Boundaries of Stage Directions", p. 46 and *passim*, and Sarah Lewis, specifically about *The Duchess of Malfi*). Their complex historical origin and status are underlined, as texts which might have been inserted by copyists, often in different ink and in a marginal position. It is pointed out that even the first editors might have written some of them (harking back, therefore, to Heminges and Condell themselves). Stage directions (henceforth SD) are defined in opposite terms: from the "crabbed"

hints of Bradbrook (*Themes and Conventions in Elizabethan Tragedy*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1932, quoted by Andrew Hiscock, p. 244) or, on the contrary, narrations highlighting aspects that even the audiences are not aware of (of this later).

Most contributors underline their character of paratext or *Nebentext*, but even this seemingly objective quality is fruitfully denied by others, who claim for SD a more intense relationship of the playwrights with their addressees (actors, directors, readers).

Most scholars, differently from what happened in the past, notice their *narrative* quality: the fact that they are inserted *for the reader* (even those first readers who were the actors, being read aloud the text to be performed, before receiving their partial 'lists' containing their parts). Emma Smith underlines how SD are an attempt – an almost moving one, I would add – on the playwright's part to remain in contact with the audience, trying to shape the text for it beyond the interpretation of the director. This idea, in Smith's essay and in others, provokes a reference to Shaw and Beckett: the first, probably the most relevant instance of how SD take a life of their own, unravelling for pages, and connected to the narrative habits of nineteenth-century novels; the second trying to indicate *one* solution for performance, with the symphonic quality of a musical score with prescribed *tempo*, music and silence.

The book takes as its starting point the two important scholarly works about stage directions I have mentioned, Dessen-Thomson's and McJannet's. It is divided into six parts: "Introduction", "Taxonomy", "Text", "Editing", "Space" and "Plays". Each contains essays by widely known Shakespearean scholars, from Tiffany Stern to Emma Smith or Douglas Bruster, who often refer back to their own experience in editing Shakespearean and early modern texts, or in their production. In Emma Smith's case, it is her years-long study of the Folio (*Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, ppb. 2018) which shines through her study.

As Dustagheer and Woods announce in their "Introduction", the part about taxonomy somehow closes with an anti-taxonomy, with Paul Menzer and Jess Hamlet's essay: here they discuss the previous attempt at systemization of SD in Dessen and Thomson's *Dictionary*, challenging the foundations underlying it: the hypothesis that a kind

of industry of theatre existed at the time, and that it shared a common vocabulary and common conventions. They find the hypothesis unconvincing, as the "nonce stage directions" (*hapax legomena* only employed once, and often highly idiosyncratic, as in Heywood) seem to indicate that individual choices used to prevail over systematized usage. The two contributors state that a more likely case, in their opinion (based on careful examination of SD that are *hapax legomena*), is that each company "had its own shorthand" (p. 74), and that idiosyncratic use by some playwrights was the most normal case, instead of the opposite. I cannot resist the temptation to underline, without in the least trying to undermine the huge research carried out by the two critics, that the typical "nonce stage direction" which is quoted in the title, "*Peter falls into the hole*", might be unique, but that it is echoed quite strongly in Middleton and Dekker's *The Bloody Banquet*, where the reformed villain Lapyrus "*falls into the pit*" (II.i.13).

Coming to more general and relevant aspects, the book describes SD from many points of view, mostly accepting the old definition (by Dover Wilson and his contemporaries) and the one by Hosley (Richard Hosley, "The Discovery-Space in Shakespeare's Globe", *Shakespeare Survey*, 12) between technical or "theatrical" and "fictional" or "narrative" ones. The technical ones limit themselves to illustrating action ("enter X") and instructions on how to interpret the words accompanying them (exit Y, "as by night": that is stumbling and feeling his way, Maguire, p. 53), while the more complex ones are meant to fill for readers the gaps which are not present in performance. Most contributors tend to agree on a fundamental point: SD are "snippets of narrative" (Smith, p. 97), they "describe and direct" (Bruster, p. 116), and they are indispensable for *the reader* to be aware of what is clear to the audience when the individual play is performed. Smith (p. 102) even points at instances where the reader is made to share with the playwright a knowledge hidden both to characters on stage and to the audience: the perfect example is *The Winter's Tale* SD "Hermione (like a statue)", where the fact that the statue *is* Hermione imparts privileged knowledge to the reader, a knowledge which little later will be a turning point in the play, for characters and audience alike.

Authorship is no doubt one of the key questions concerning stage directions; see, as my example of this, Roger Holdsworth's analysis of SD in all extant plays from the Elizabethan to the Caroline canon (in his unpublished PhD dissertation of 1982, University of Manchester, which has been instrumental to reestablishing an interest for Middleton's work in the last century; as well as in his essay in *Memoria di Shakespeare*, 8 *On Authorship*, eds Rosy Colombo and Daniela Guardamagna, 2012), to find evidence of forms which are specific to Middleton and no other author, like 'Enter X with Y', and the like. But the authorship of SD themselves is doubtful, and the contributors have different opinions on the subject.

Some consensus was reached in the past in attributing some SD to scribes (also because of quality in ink and marginal position), in particular to the famous and widely employed scribe Ralph Crane, who took part in the preparation of the First Folio. Douglas Bruster, though, in his essay "Shakespeare's Literary Stage Directions", convincingly shows how many SD attributed to Crane, for example in *The Tempest*, show instead precise Shakespearean features. Bruster underlines that the language in SD is not shared in the little existing Crane canon (p. 128), while it is widely present in the plays' texts, in Shakespeare's undoubtedly authored words: "thunder and lightning" in *Macbeth* (both, of course, in various SD and in the *incipit*, in the Witches' exchange), "banquet", "quaint", "vanish" in *The Tempest*, especially in the mage-playwright-director Prospero's words. Another interesting idea which is expressed by contributors along the same line, therefore attributing SD to the authorial hand, is how the language of the character speaking, or of the protagonist of the play, often 'colours' – as it were – the vocabulary of SD: both Maguire and Smith notice (p. 51, quoting Peter Holland in his Arden edition of the play, and p. 105, respectively), how in *Coriolanus* SD describe the crowds with the derogatory terms Coriolanus himself would employ ("*plebeians*", "*rabble of plebeians*", "*the rabble againe*", and never the "more respectful term citizens", except at the beginning but in the form "*a Company of Mutinous Citizens*", Smith, p. 105); or the dumb show in *Hamlet*, which employs words ("loath", "crown", "years", "decline", "seeming virtuous", "sleeping"), which had been uttered by its original protagonist, that is the royal Ghost of old Hamlet during the narration of his killing in I.iv (Smith, p. 107).

SD are often linked to the other non-verbal important feature of some plays, that is the dumb show. Tiffany Stern's essay ("Inventing Stage Directions: Demoting Dumb Shows") identifies the birth of the term in its derogatory use by eighteenth-century playwright and critic Lewis Theobald, who coins it to attribute it to dumb shows. This genre ("mini-genre", in Stern's apt words, p. 21), is recognizably a difficult one to interpret; Menzer and Hamlet remind us that characters themselves often appear perplexed by it ("What means this, my lord?", asks Ophelia to Hamlet in III.ii.136, and he obligingly answers). Stern underlines that dumb shows were transmitted separately from the text because they needed special treatment in their action (pp. 22-23), not being text to be recited as the rest of the play, but action where actors had to be choreographed towards a precise meaning. The attention to dumb shows as a peculiar form of SD is continued in the last essay in the book, "Understanding Dumb Shows and Interpreting *The White Devil*", where Gillian Woods dwells on the dumb show in Webster, particularly *The White Devil*, clarifying its statute and its importance in the play at the same time.

Suzanne Gossett, in her essay "When Is a Missing Stage Direction Missing?", refers back to her own work both as general editor and as editor (of Middleton's *The Fair Quarrel* in Taylor and Lavagnino's *Collected Wor*ks of 2007, of Chapman, Marston and Ben Jonson's *Eastward Ho* for the Cambridge complete edition of Jonson's works – Bevington, Butler and Donaldson, 2012 – and of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster* for Arden, in 2009). She specifies how some SD need to be inserted in modern editions, and this is to be done without qualms when the instance is that of "clarifying the 'logic of the action'" (p. 150), for example in the specific case when there is the 'exit' of a character who is then to speak, and therefore he obviously needs to be made go back to the stage before doing so. On the other hand, Gossett wisely cautions against inserting SD, though we might feel the need for them, especially where the playwright purposely avoided to do so. The clearest instance is that of Isabella's silence in *Measure for Measure*'s last scene (the *lack* of a SD is here more meaningful than its presence), where the protagonist does not answer the Duke's proposal of marriage, and obviously it is up to the reader, and to that privileged reader who is the director, to decide whether she happily flies into his arms gleefully accepting his

proposal (as she surprisingly did in a few performances), or remains aghast at the prospect of abandoning her cherished plan of retiring to a convent, but of course cannot dare to say so, thus enhancing the bleakness of the play and undermining its so called happy ending. To this sound example, I would add the lack of a SD, and therefore the uncommented ambiguous silence which ensues when Antonio receives Prospero's forgiving words in *The Tempest* V.i.130-34. Here wishful thinking would be satisfied by a clarifying SD, while it is of course wise to leave silence as the most meaningful reception. This highlights Prospero's sadness at his failure, the impossibility for "pains, / Humanely taken" (IV.i.189-90) to alter the human propensity to evil when it is deeply entrenched in the character's soul, be it Caliban's or Antonio's: one of the reasons why Prospero's mind is "vexed" in IV.i.158.

Gossett also specifically clarifies, as hinted by other contributors throughout the book, how any editorial intervention is akin to an act of "critical interpretation" (p. 155), as practically no editorial intervention can be neutral as it would, and is very likely coloured by the editors' reading of the text.

Terri Bourus and Martin White also start from their professional experience to make statements about different aspects of SD. Bourus relies on the one hand on her life-long experience as director and actress, on the other on her work as one of the general editors of the New Oxford Shakespeare (2016-17, 4 vols), with Gary Taylor, John Jowett and Gabriel Egan. Martin White, besides referring back to his study of less widely known early modern texts (such as *The Magnetic Lady* by Ben Jonson, *Believe as You List* or *The Guardian* by Massinger, and others), also brings in his experience as a director at Bristol Sam Wanamaker Playhouse.

In the *NOS*, as she informs the reader in her essay ("Editing and Directing: *Mise en scène, mise en page*"), Bourus has written about her uncommon though interesting practice, that is supplying what she calls "*anachronistic*" SD, where she works on the Shakespearean text providing both reflections about performed actions and elements of history of performance. She quotes her notes about *Antony and Cleopatra*: "Judy Dench [as Cleopatra] conveyed a thoughtful, sad acknowledgement of passing years"; "Vanessa Redgrave, after a pause, and comic turn of the head, expressed embarrassed disdain at

the memory of her own immaturity" (p. 174); "the exit of Octavia overlaps with the entrance of Cleopatra, usually with a strong sense of contrast between the two women" (p. 183). Moreover, she dwells with the fact that act breaks date to performances in private theatres, therefore to 1608 onwards for the King's Men. The theory is well-known, but if an application to practice were to ensue (as in the 2007 *Collected Works* of Middleton and the NOS), this would entail a transformation of the known Shakespearean texts which would amount to a revolution.

Martin White concentrates on act breaks as well, but the main focus of his essay is the quality of lighting in indoor theatres, where his theory is that some actions took place in actual semi-darkness, modifying, therefore, their interpretation for audiences.

Dustagheer's long essay, signed with director Philip Bird, with whom she discussed many critical points and whose interventions are reported in a different font, identifies SD describing 'discovery' of bodies on stage with a deeply entrenched preoccupation about death in Jacobean times. Discussing this solution in various revenge tragedies, from Kyd to Chettle, Marston, Middleton and Webster, she shows how the theatrical and metatheatrical mechanisms are instrumental to expressing the deepest anxieties in the culture of the time.

Hiscock's study ("'*Enter Macduffe, with Macbeths head*': Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and the Staging of Trauma") also deals with the revelation of deep obsessions in the Jacobean period, in particular with the manifest "unslakable desire for the violation of body and community", of violence as a "strategic and constitutive marker of identity" (pp. 249-50), responded to and expressed in *Macbeth*'s SD. The last two essays, dealing with Webster's works, again underline the liminality of SD. Sarah Lewis ("'From the Dutchesse Grave': Echoic Liminalities in *The Duchess of Malfi*") exemplifies this by the embedded liminality of the character of Echo. The circle closes in Wood's analysis of Websterian dumb shows, where the tension between action and words is described again, as the main characteristic of the genre discussed throughout the book.

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Equestri, Alice, *"Armine... thou art a foole and knaue". The Fools of Shakespeare's Romances*, Roma, Carocci, 2016, 200 pp.

Thanks to Alice Equestri's recent book, *"Armine… thou art a foole and a knave". The Fools of Shakespeare's Romances*, published by Carocci Editore (Rome 2016), the 'last plays' of Shakespeare (*Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*), composed between the end of the first and the beginning of the second decade of the seventeenth century, reach us with renewed vigour. Far from suggesting a retreat into fantasy and magic, they engage instead in a search for a new form for modernity, implicitly inserted in a debate on the revision of the canonical dramatic forms that had already been going on in sixteenth-century Italy. It may be worthwhile observing that problems of form are already hinted at in *Hamlet*, with Polonius's often quoted remarks about the "pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited" (II.ii). Ridiculous as they may be, pedantic in relishing scholastic combinations of words, the four basic categories named by Polonius, that is "tragedy", "comedy", "history", "pastoral", in going beyond the traditional distinction between comedies and tragedies, led Heminge and Condell to use "histories" as well for their partition of the Folio, but "pastorals" – a promising opening, in our perspective – was left out, not read into.

However, it is through Shakespeare, mainly, that such formal issues become relevant to contemporaneity, when the breakthrough play of the modern theatre, *Waiting for Godot*, takes up an equivalent dramaturgical category as its subtitle: *A Tragicomedy in Two Acts*. In fact, if on the one hand there is a fair degree of certainty over the chronological contiguity of the *romances*, critics cannot quite agree on a label that could denote them. In a way, this is already apparent in the Folio, where Shakespeare's theatrical works are arranged in subgenres, and where – whilst *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is missing, for reasons of doubtful *authorship* – *Cymbeline* and *Timon of Athens* are placed in the group of the "Tragedies", whereas *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* are placed in the group of the "Comedies" (respectively at its beginning and end). Such a formal elusiveness points out to their experimental quality and openness: the label of 'tragicomedies'

is one of the most used; 'romances' suggests complementary ways of interpretation; 'last comedies' is less appropriate because it narrows the focus; 'last play'" is anything but a simple neutral definition, non-committal with respect to the preceding ones: 'last' conveys the 'sense of and ending', and gathers all Shakespeare's previous works in an *oeuvre*.

In Shakespeare's *oeuvre* the *fool*, given its shifting embodiments, is certainly a *leitmotiv*. A typical character of the theatrical repertory, at the hands of other playwrights the *fool* had previously owed much to the historical figure of the *jester* linked to medieval and sixteenth-century courts, whose duties – theatrical by reflection – consisted in musical and poetic performances, in witty remarks, in parodic imitations, in the displaying all the abilities of a juggler: all features within the boundaries of the comic *relief*. But Shakespeare endows it with a new density of language; makes it a source of concealed, ambiguous, painful truths, and a scourge to stiffened social pretensions; finally, a means of and to knowledge. Hamlet, the unique and totalizing *fool* of his own tragedy, has a clear outline for the previous *fool:* "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times". He goes on, addressing the skull of poor Yorick, both to evoke a private memory and to signal a historical change: "Where be your jibes now? your gambols? your songs? Your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar?" (*Hamlet*, V.i).

Equestri's book joins productively two crucial areas of the critical discourse on the work of the great playwright (the *romances*, the *fool*), inserting organically the figure of the *fool* in the tissue and in the semiotic system of the text. It joins in a well-established trend of Shakespearean studies, aimed at the world of the *performance*, and at unravelling the connections between the text and the material structures of the theatre and its life in the Elizabethan-Jacobean society. The actors, and their companies, are an essential aspect of this picture, and Equestri reasserts it in the first of the three main chapters of her book, dedicated to the actor Armin (significantly, the title of the volume is referred to the actor, while the subtitle to the play itself). After William Kempe left the Chamberlain's Men, at the turn of the century, it was Robert Armin, of a small frame and physically ungraceful, who took over as the new implicit receiver and

assignee of the parts that Shakespeare wrote with Armin's actorial qualities in mind, bound to achieve greater poetic effect. It is justifiable, on this basis, to follow the several features that connect transversally the characters taken over by Armin, that go from Boult, to Cloten, to Autolycus, to Caliban. In the 'servant' Boult – whose name refers to the door hinges, the doors of the brothel of which he's the keeper (the connection is accurately demonstrated, since the pimp had also the task of entertaining the clients with music, and exerting his *wit* to increase the value of the women of the 'bawdy house') – it will then be the case of considering not only the coexistence of the 'knave' and the *fool*, but also of identifying the transition from one to the other guise. Thus, from being the sarcastic lash of his master, Boult ends up a *pimp*. Something similar is argued for a character like Caliban, whose historical culture (Vaughan) is by now extremely rich, starting from the renowned designation in *dramatis personae* of the Folio ("A savage and deformed Slave"). Yet at a certain point, in his association with Trinculo and with Stephano, Caliban as well takes up the typical features of the *fool*.

With philological and historical accuracy Equestri outlines a wide range of forms, meanings and associations of which the word *fool* is bearer (of characters conveying the role: "country rustics", "servants", "knights", "soldiers", "foolish officers", "professional court jesters", or "nobler figures endowed with the wise-fool logic"). Consequently, new perspectives open up in terms of the matching of the four plays taken into consideration. Whereas, starting from the above-mentioned division of the Folio, and according both to chronology and to criteria of critical and theatrical success, one associates *Cymbeline* and *Timon* on the one side, and *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* on the other, the criteria that focus on the specific character of the *fool* – underlining points of contact among equivalent characters – lead here to associate instead *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*, *Cymbeline* and *The Tempest*. As a result, the 'underworld fool' marks the first group, whereas the 'natural fool' characterizes the second, so that these types feature in the titles of the second and the third chapter of the book, respectively.

Equestri draws on valuable and accurate historical documents, providing a list of the critical literature on the social transformation that, in Shakespeare's time, resulted in the marginalization of great

numbers of people who were pushed beyond the limits of poverty and crime. Moreover, her work brings to bear on the literary characters under scrutiny the physiological and medical knowledge of the time in ways that are particularly helpful for other interested scholars and researchers. For example, the 'natural fool' might be attributed jutting eyes, prominent lips in the eversion of the lower lip or in the indent of the upper one, a mouth open and flabby, and a particular cranial conformation, marked by the presence or not of the sutures. Thus a closer bond is unearthed between Cloten and Caliban, who are associated further by their 'devilish mothers'.

The numerous references to its class placement enshrine the *fool* in a realistic aura, as is also testified by the almost synonymous term 'clown'. It is therefore understandable that he is assigned so much of the balancing weight with respect to the equally marked disposition towards the marvellous that is present in the last plays; a marvellous that is both in the alexandrine freedom of the plot (the sea voyage, an improbable geography, pirates…), and in the happy resolution of the fantastic events, in the restoration of order and of life itself: as if by grace – and it has been observed that the term 'grace' has an unusual strength in these plays. The 'masterless' Autolycus proves an example of realistic strain. He is a character that mirrors the upheaval caused by the "enclosures" (p. 72), the proximity between the condition of vagrancy and criminality, and even a documented and historical migration of similarly destitute people from Scotland towards Bohemia (p. 81). On the other hand, he hints at the sometimes very difficult plight of actors and artists, not sufficiently talented to succeed in providing themselves with aristocratic protection. Because he is masterless, a vagrant, and an outcast, Autolycus comes to the foreground as a powerful travesty for the artist, with felicity and ease of linguistic invention, extraordinary rhetorical *wit*, and a peculiar poetic turn ("his use of song ad poetry", p. 75), even though instrumental to 'coney-catching'.

In this respect one could also underline, in conclusion, how the text magnifies the difference of this type of *fool* from the one we come across in *Lear*. While in that tragedy the satiric function applies itself against the old and dethroned king, Autolycus targets the varied social specimens of a country fair. For a noteworthy historical transition, one could argue that Lear – a king whose catastrophic

stubbornness and blindness warns both audience and readers against the flaws of monarchic absolutism – corresponds exactly to the type of *fool*; instead, the tragicomic dimension of the last plays, to match a more uncertain and protean political and social climate, demands the transformism of Autolycus (p. 73), and a wider field of action, such as the one provided by the fair. Equestri appropriately stresses that Autolycus comes from the court, from which in fact he has been banished (p. 70). It is one of the many critically perceptive remarks that further enhance the value of her book.

<div align="right">Mario Martino, Sapienza University of Rome</div>

Vaughan, Virginia Mason, Antony and Cleopatra: *Language and Writing,* London, Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015, xvii+160 pp.

This volume is part of the "Arden Student Skills: Language and Writing" series edited by Dympna Callaghan, with a view to providing analytical guidance to college students in their reading of – and writing about – Shakespeare's works. The book is beautifully orchestrated: starting with a general historical, cultural and philological introduction and overview of *Antony and Cleopatra*, it then proceeds to a close-reading of the text. The focus on language – a follow up of the author's editorial work on the original Folio text of *Antony and Cleopatra* for the *Norton Shakespeare* – addresses in particular composition techniques matching the rhythm of the poetic line with the emotions being expressed, thus highlighting "Shakespeare's masterful fusion of sound and sense" (p. xiii). The volume is divided into three main sections: 1. "Language in print: Reading and performance", 2. "Forms and uses", 3. "Language through time: Changing interpretations after Shakespeare", each aiming to encourage students to develop their own interpretations and engage in critical writing of their own – openly demonstrated in the crucial "Writing matters" conclusion to each section – providing them with tools to convey ideas "in a clearly written and well researched essay" (p. xii).

The core of Virginia Mason Vaughan's interpretation – blending the plot of a great love tragedy with that of a world-wide political conflict at the outset of Roman Empire – lies in a careful analysis of

anamorphosis as a strategy of Shakespeare's perspective art. Vaughan argues that anamorphosis, typical of Cleopatra's mobility, as well as of Antony's being and not being a Roman hero, is also consistent with the binary structure of Rome and Egypt; therefore it extends to the very form of this play, whose differences are created through language. Not only is such a strategy vital for Shakespeare's figurative language, but it also testifies to the involvement of this major play in the early modern crisis of Renaissance linear perspective; in fact a challenge to the authority of the classical heritage. The lack of a centre, including the formal shift from tragedy to romance as a foreboding of Shakespeare's last plays, is presented as the reason for multiple discordant interpretations of *Antony and Cleopatra* after Shakespeare. Chapter 3 looks at a range of interpretations which affected the play along the history of literary criticism – character criticism, new criticism, deconstruction, new historicism, gender, ethnicity, intertextuality: in fact Vaughan's richly documented investigation into *Antony and Cleopatra* is also a spectrum of research methods and an overview of the history of literary criticism. Moreover, the identity issue as far as characters and genres are concerned hints to a broader philosophical discourse on the concept of time as the founding category of modernity (p. 144).

In addressing this volume to college and university students, of both English and Theatre departments, Virgina Mason Vaughan perfects a change that in the 1980s superseded a long tradition of departmental distance between fields of study, concentrated on restricted and often conflicting specialisms. Like her previous valuable studies on *Othello*: *A Contextual History* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) and on *The Tempest* (The Arden Shakespeare, 2011) – a kind of literary criticism responsible both to the domain of literature and to its changing relationship in the culture surrounding it – this volume is also politically committed to building bridges between an élite of sophisticated readers and a class of younger consumers of Shakespeare, still in their formative years.

The rigorous critical method connected to passionate teaching in which this book is grounded provides an outstanding example of continuity of the "Language and Writing series" with the best British and American tradition in the field of education, conceived as a

strong formative practice, meant to have an impact on the *Bildung* of the new generations engaging in public and cultural life.

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Abstracts

Romeo before Romeo: Notes on Shakespeare Source Study
Silvia Bigliazzi

The article examines a peculiar case of discontinuity in the linear transmission of the story of Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare. Firmly situating the discussion within recent debates on source study, it argues for the interpretation of Shakespeare's sources as products of a broad and multilayered intertextuality, identifying different ways in which linearity may give way to complex processes of textual transformation. In refashioning gender issues with a particular focus on Romeo's ambiguous masculinity, the novellas suggest alternative genetic dynamics, prompting study of how the authors in the source-chain read their own sources and were being read in turn. The discussion challenges orthodox genetic views while inviting further reflection on the idea itself of source.

Keywords: Romeo and Juliet, Source study, Masculinity, Intertextuality, Novellas

The Global Popularity of William Shakespeare in 303 Wikipedias
Jacob Blakesley

There are no reliable figures on contemporary Shakespeare reception around the world. However, we can provide such figures by analysing which of the 303 global Wikipedias (in about as many languages) have Shakespeare entries and how often these entries have been viewed. These statistics enable us to concretely identify which works are the most viewed in different contexts around the world. We will see, for instance, which cultures are more interested in Shakespeare's tragedies, comedies, histories, and poetry. We will find out which single plays are preferred in different cultures, and which plays, instead, are practically ignored abroad. In short, we can distinguish different levels of popularity of his works in different settings. Thus, we will discover that for a plurality of Wikipedias, almost fifty, *Romeo and Juliet* is number one in pageviews, while in many, but fewer others, it is *Hamlet*. In

seven Wikipedias, on the other hand, *Macbeth* is number one, while *Julius Caesar* is first in still several others. *Othello, King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, and *Antony and Cleopatra* are the only other rare leaders in specific Wikipedias. In short, this article will present the basic popular global reception information about all of Shakespeare's works, filling a lacuna in critical research; this will allow researchers to pursue more detailed levels of investigation of Shakespeare's canonicity in different contexts across the globe.

Imbalanced Friendship and Gendered Bonds in Timon of Athens
TOMMASO CONTINISIO

This article aims to investigate the polymorphic nature of Shakespeare's and Middleton's *Timon of Athens*, with an attempt to show how the remarkable complexity of this play, namely its systematic refractions and mirrorings, and the subsequent crack in communication, are the result of a crisis of signification and of different epistemic systems which overlap each other. This study is set against the backdrop of classical inquiries into amity as well as the early modern performance of utilitarian friendship that help read Timon's misanthropic tirade through the lens of homosocial dynamics triggered by perverted enactments of male friendship.

Poisonous Language: Timon of Athens *and the Scope of Invective*
DAVIDE DEL BELLO

Recent research on Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* has addressed mainly the nexus between usury, gold and excess within an aristocratic system of patronage that was fostered in early modern England by the emerging paradigms of commercialism. While the issues of money and debt are certainly relevant, I would shift focus on the titular theme of misanthropy, by reflecting on vituperation as a key element in the rhetorical and dramatic economy of the play. Rhetorical invective, rooted in the tradition of argumentative *exclamatio*, was kept alive in late-medieval manuals of rhetoric and in the educational setting of Shakespeare's time. Yet, by the second half of the sixteenth century, the scope of invective was being seriously challenged by Elizabethan and Jacobean legislation against libel. I submit that *Timon of Athens* should also be read as a theatrical response to this fraught rhetorical and political juncture. Its staging of unregulated

invective is the dramatization of emotion, a radicalized instance of *ecphonesis*, the figure 'of vehement affection or passion', ill-fitted to the cultural priorities of efficiency and analytical thinking on the rise at the time.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Rhetoric, Vituperation, *Ecphonesis*, Late plays, Romance

Anti-Comedy in The Two Noble Kinsmen
Roger Holdsworth

This essay takes further the view of recent critics that *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, a late collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher, differs in fundamental ways from the other comedies of the period, including those of its two authors. The departures from the conventions of romantic comedy are deliberate, radical, and systematic, and bring the play closer to the satirical tragedies of John Webster, performed just a few years earlier, than to anything resembling Shakespeare's standard comic practice. The authors reject the optimism and festive atmosphere of comedy in favour of a bleaker vision, in which human beings are at the mercy of chance, and incapable of understanding themselves or making sense of the world around them.

Keywords: Comedy, Tragicomedy, Fletcher, Collaboration, Romances

A Bitter Comedy of a Midsummer Night
Marisa Sestito

"The Most Lamentable Comedy and Most Cruel Death of Pyramus and Thisbe", the play the workers are going to perform to celebrate the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta, has many significant functions in the dramatic architecture of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Most of all it raises questions on the relation of comic and tragic modes, being the 'comedy' a tragic story interpreted by a clumsy group of would-be actors on a festive occasion. The clowns strangely honour the triple wedding of the Athenian characters and the happy conclusion of the *Dream* with a performance ending on the double suicide of the lovers – as it were comically revisiting the tragic end of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Keywords: Ovid, Metatheatre, Tragicomedy, Contradiction, Change, Silence

The Tamer Tamed: *Dating Fletcher's Interactions with Shakespeare*
GARY TAYLOR

Although the date of *The Tamer Tamed; or, The Woman's Prize* affects interpretation of the play and its relationship to Fletcher's career and Shakespeare's, there has been no full-length analysis of the evidence since 1938. This essay connects the play not only to *The Taming of the Shrew* and Jonson's *The Silent Woman; or, Epicene,* but also to transatlantic voyages, political events in Ireland, France and the Netherlands, the East India Company, Midlands riots, plague outbreaks and food shortages. It concludes that the play was written in 1609 or the first months of 1610 for the boys company at Whitefriars, that the King's Men did not acquire it till after Shakespeare's death, and that both Fletcher's play and Shakespeare's may have been retrospectively altered to market the two plays as a diptych.

Keywords: *Tamer Tamed*, Fletcher, Shakespeare, Jonson, Chronology

Shakespeare the Presider
MARIA VALENTINI

This brief paper aims at indicating the essential points of contact between Shakespeare and Keats in order to try to understand what kind of relationship the romantic poet established with the Elizabethan playwright. In 1987 Robert White wrote the book *Keats as a Reader of Shakespeare*, which remains, in my view, the most exhaustive study on the topic, and this definition seems to me the most appropriate way to define this connection since Keats appears to be primarily a 'reader', a reader who is powerfully affected and inspired by his contact with Shakespeare's works, rather than a scholar who interprets. This does not mean that Keats does not offer what we could define as critical comments in his letters, in reviews or even in some of the annotations on his own copy of Shakespeare's plays, but he is not a Hazlitt or even a Coleridge; I think we could speak of reactions rather than analyses. In this light the paper attempts at examining the Shakespearean 'traces' present in Keats' works.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Keats, Hazlitt, Influence, Harold Bloom

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