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SHAKESPEARE'S ANCIENT EPHEBUS IN EARLY MODERN CONTEXT

by

PHILIP GOLDFARB STYRT

What Ephesus Is, Isn't, and Was

Ephesus is no longer a great city: it is a ruin, albeit one with status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. But in the ancient world Ephesus was a major city, and this reputation remained throughout the early modern period. Shakespeare's characters visit Ephesus twice: *Comedy of Errors* takes place entirely within the city, while Thaisa washes ashore there in *Pericles* and so the final reunion takes place in that city. In this paper, I argue that Shakespeare's depiction of the city in both plays draws on ideas circulating in early modern England about classical Ephesus in its position among the squabbling Greek city-states of ancient Asia Minor.

In particular, I suggest that this allows Shakespeare to depict Ephesus as part of this older, more co-equal set of polities, rather than as part of the larger Roman or Ottoman empires as it appeared in Biblical narratives in the Acts of the Apostles or in contemporary early modern travelogues. Ephesus thus occupies a position similar to Shakespeare's contemporary Italianate city-states (about which he wrote frequently), which draws our attention to the close connections between the themes of these plays: the power of seclusion, the importance of hospitality and the peculiar authority of dukes and princes. This in turn allows us to read the plays alongside those Italian plays, and to consider how Shakespeare's Greek plays might contribute to our understanding of Shakespeare's plays about city-states as a whole, particularly the role of the prince or duke who is not a king.

For a city that was no longer politically significant or even particularly present in the early modern world, Ephesus was mentioned frequently in early modern England. Many of these references centered on its role in the early Christian church, particularly as the site of Paul's travels in the Acts of the Apostles. Others emphasized its place in pre-Christian religious ritual, with particular emphasis on the significance of the Diana cult, including the famous Temple that was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Both of these religious elements are relevant to the Ephesus that Shakespeare put on the stage, and many critics have noted the connection between Shakespeare's Ephesus and both Paul (Levin; McCoy; Dutton; Whitfield) and Diana (Matei-Chesnoiu; Whitfield; Bicks; Weinberg) over the years. Clifford Leech even had two separate papers on Pauline Ephesus in 1963 alone ("Shakespeare's Greeks"; "Ephesus, Troy, Athens"). These connections are clearly relevant. After all, both of Shakespeare's plays set in Ephesus end with a scene at a major religious center: an abbey in *Comedy of Errors* and the Temple of Diana itself in *Pericles*.

But these religious references are not the only appearances of Ephesus in early modern English commentary, nor are they the only ones with a connection to Shakespeare's Ephesian plays. As Linda McJannet has noted, "the geography of the two

plays is that of the Greek diaspora” (88). Ephesus was known to have had a long history of being a significant city in Hellenic world as a major Greek colony in Asia Minor, predating the Roman imperial context of *Acts* by centuries. This political history was widely recognized in early modern England and particularly referenced by authors whose texts we have reason to believe may have been significant to Shakespeare's plays: most obviously by George Wilkins, believed to be Shakespeare's collaborator on *Pericles* (along with other extant versions of the *Pericles* story), but also by Plutarch in both the *Moralia* and the *Parallel Lives*. As Sara Hanna has observed, the squabbling of Greek city-states was a common topic for Plutarch, and one that would have been difficult for Shakespeare to miss in the source material (116). Thus, while it may be true that, as Lisa Hopkins has suggested, “[w]hat we find in *Pericles* is not so much a Greece of the atlas as a Greece of the mind” since there are few specifically geographical details given (228), that Greece of the mind is not abstract or undefined but rooted in a specific set of thoughts and ideas about how politics worked in that place, at least in Ephesus.

Using Ephesus serves as an entry point for Shakespeare into a larger context of ancient Greek city-state squabbles that makes the settings of *Pericles* and *Comedy of Errors* significant in several ways. First, it provides an explanation for certain details in the plays, most notably the rivalry between Ephesus and Syracuse in *Comedy of Errors*. Second, it encourages us (and Shakespeare's audience) to think about how those Greek city-states might relate to those in Shakespeare's Italianate plays, and how these plays might explore similar themes to those. Most significantly, I suggest, it allows the plays to consider the limited power of ruling dukes as contrasted with the more plenary power of the kings and emperors by which early modern England and its rivals were ruled. This ducal power is, I argue, located not in the law but outside it—a possibility that would be substantially more dangerous in Shakespearean England, or imperial Rome, than in the ancient Mediterranean.

Why City-States? Why Greece?

When we look at *Pericles* and *Comedy of Errors* with the pre-imperial Mediterranean in mind, it becomes immediately clear that this political context is highly relevant to both plays. *Pericles*, as Prince of Tyre, travels widely around the Mediterranean in a Hellenistic world that seems most closely drawn out of the Seleucid period, as McJannet states, with overlapping and potentially conflicting loyalties between the various states and city-states of the region (95). *Comedy of Errors*, on the other hand, is emphatic that it takes place in a time of competing city-states: the Duke starts off the play by informing Aegeon that Ephesus is engaged in a trade war with Syracuse (1.1.3-25).¹

I disagree strongly here with Richard Dutton's suggestion that the Ephesian dislike of Syracuse stands in for early modern religious divisions, thus placing the setting of *Comedy of Errors* in the early modern period. Ancient city-state rivalries provide a much more convincing backdrop for why a specifically Ephesian duke would hate a specifically Syracusan one; Dutton's proposal that they stand in for Christianity and the

¹ All references to the play are from the *The Complete Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Turks loses this detail of local origin, leaving no reason why it should be a Syracusan particularly who is doomed, rather than any Christian (37). I suggest that Syracuse, and particularly Ephesus, are distinct entities in this world, and that the distinction matters beyond their general location in the Mediterranean or broader associations with Christian Sicily and Muslim Anatolia. To borrow Geraldo de Sousa's term, there is a "legal wall" between these two specific city-states of Ephesus and Syracuse, and that wall was erected by the individual states themselves, and not by any larger geopolitical power (148). The same might be said for the various cities of *Pericles* as well, which are likewise independent of any overarching imperial power. Thus, Pericles's and Aegeon's journeys and troubles do not track the existing stories of travel between the relevant locations in the early modern period itself, when Ephesus and most of the eastern Mediterranean were in the hands of the Ottomans; neither do they reflect Paul's experience of traveling through a united Roman empire in the same locations fifteen hundred years before.

Instead, both *Pericles* and *Comedy of Errors* are set in the even earlier pre-Roman eastern Mediterranean and its hodgepodge of competing city-states, all linked by a common Hellenic culture but not owing allegiance to a larger empire. In doing so, they connect to a long-standing English interest in imagining and representing polities organized along different political lines than their own, an interest that I have elsewhere argued is strengthened by the specificity of that representation (Goldfarb Styrte). By asking audiences to imagine a (somewhat) specific place and time, early modern playwrights could induce audience participation and increase pleasure, as David McInnis has argued (41). By making his Ephesus this specifically pre-imperial city, then, Shakespeare both advanced the thematic elements of the stories themselves (as I will discuss below) and allowed his audience to more precisely imagine the world to which the play asked their minds to travel.

The two plays approach this in different ways. *Pericles* does so by implication: we see Pericles and his family travel repeatedly among a variety of little statelets on the margins of the eastern Mediterranean, starting with a visit to Antioch where the Seleucid dynasty would have been in power, but there is no real suggestion that there is a common government overseeing any of these locations except a gesture at the very end towards Pericles' own dominion. *Comedy of Errors*, on the other hand, makes the earlier, pre-imperial setting more explicit through the tension between Syracuse and Ephesus. The kind of aggressive legal violence Ephesus offers to Syracusans would have been highly unlikely in the time of the Roman empire, as both Sicilians and Ephesians would have been Roman subjects (one thinks of Paul's own assertion of his Roman citizenship rights in Acts 22 against the threat of state violence). On the other hand, in Shakespeare's own time such violence would have been imperial policy, rather than the Duke's own, given that Syracuse was on Sicily, part of the Spanish empire at the time (as Shakespeare dramatized in *Much Ado About Nothing*) while Ephesus was in Ottoman Turkey. Certainly some of the audience would have taken what Randall Martin has called a "transhistorical" approach to understanding Ephesus (367), but the political realities described in the play at least are more precise than general. Duke Solinus's assertions about his own powers and relationship to the Duke of Syracuse emphatically place

Comedy of Errors in that cultural context of competing Greek city-states, and not the later one of Paul and Acts or of the Ottoman and Spanish empires.

What, then, should we make of this? Why does it matter that the Ephesus Shakespeare gives us is politically distinct from the context we might expect from the religious references that have usually been used to understand the play's Ephesus, since both were distinct from Shakespeare's own England? I argue that the choice of the squabbling Greek city-states as a setting serves to draw both *Pericles* and *Comedy of Errors* close to a larger body of Shakespearean plays: the Italianate plays, which also feature just this sort of semi-to-fully-independent city-states jostling alongside each other. As a result, I suggest, we should read both *Pericles* and *Comedy of Errors* with those other plays in mind. This draws our attention to thematic elements of the two plays (and particularly *Comedy of Errors*) that recur in those plays as well: the place of the stranger, the effects of seclusion and isolation, and particularly the role of the duke or prince in an independent state.

Hospitality, Strangers, and Travel

Here I want to focus on that last theme, though the others also raise valuable questions in the context of competing city-states. For hospitality to strangers: how does the danger Antipholus of Syracuse and even more extremely, his father Aegeon experience as Syracusans in Ephesus relate to the worries Viola, Sebastian, and especially Antonio undergo when visiting Illyria in *Twelfth Night*? Admittedly, Illyria is not itself a setting in Italy, but it is directly across the Adriatic, part of the same geopolitical constellation, a point that Lee Pulcan Juric has treated at more length in terms of both classical and early modern Illyria (96-8). Or, from another angle, how might we think of the difference between Antipholus of Ephesus's ease of integration into Ephesian society as a stranger as opposed to Shylock's position (or Othello's) as a stranger in Venice? How do both compare with how Marina ends up fitting into Mytilene and Thaisa and Emilia in Ephesus?

I would suggest, for instance, that there is a strong parallel between Aegeon's experience in Ephesus and Antonio's at Orsino's court, down to the imminent threat of death. Likewise, of course, Marina too ends up greatly threatened when she moves cities in *Pericles*, though of course that is in the distinct context of a brothel. As I will argue below, I think the setup and resolution of this issue of traveling foreigners is closely related to the question of the duke's power (or lack thereof), but the repeated danger of being a stranger in a strange city might also show us that Viola's need to hide her identity is not merely a gendered decision (though it certainly is that as well) but also basic geopolitical prudence—prudence that Sebastian does not show. In fact, it is Sebastian who stands out most here, saved from his own imprudence by events he could hardly have predicted (Olivia's love for Cesario). He could not, certainly, have envisioned the specific form that danger took (being mistaken for his lost sister who is disguised as a boy and then being hauled before the local magistrate for assault when he fought back) but the idea that traveling between these kinds of city-states was dangerous in *some* way should not have been a surprise to him. Antonio specifically warned him about his own exposure to that kind of danger, and Sebastian fails to recognize that he might suffer

anything similar (even if he is not in Antonio's precise situation). This contrast between cautious Viola and her more happy-go-lucky brother is of course present in the play without this context, but I would suggest that it appears more as a gendered element (the safety of maleness) when we do not see it in the city-state context that *Comedy* and *Pericles* provide.

On the other hand, the first Antipholus's easy absorption into Ephesus, along with his mother's in the same play and Thaisa's in the same city in *Pericles*, helps reinforce, I would argue, the oddity of Shylock's and (to a lesser but still present extent) Othello's outsider status within Venice. While travelers in all these city-state plays experience danger and potential violence, those who *dwell* in the city are not as clearly differentiated, at least in Ephesus, marking both Shylock and Othello as unusual. This hardly comes as a surprise, since a great deal of both *Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* is dedicated to the insider-outsider dynamics surrounding those characters. But the contrast is, I think, still informative: by finding Antipholus living as a wealthy burgher in a foreign city and the two mothers in the plays integrating smoothly into the religious life of Ephesus, we are reminded that it is not merely coming from somewhere else that sets Othello apart, and that Shylock's marginal position is not simply natural to an outsider but deliberately maintained and cultivated. Ephesus here serves as a valuable Shakespearean reference point from which to note that Othello and Shylock are racialized and othered over and above whatever settling into their city as a foreigner might be expected to imply. Indeed, these plays share an interest in this issue of the stranger, however, it does seem significant that the details of what constitutes a stranger remain rooted in the specific play and setting, rather than melting into a general sense of foreignness that might invite overt topical application to London in the manner of Shakespeare's contribution to *Sir Thomas More*.

Isolation, Seclusion, and Death

Just as with strangers and hospitality, we might ask questions of these plays in terms of what might at first appear to be an opposite theme: isolation and seclusion. Can we bring Prospero's seclusion on his island in conversation with Thaisa (and Hermione from *Winter's Tale*) and in contrast with Pericles himself, who is definitely not in seclusion but is, like Prospero, isolated from his home because he would otherwise be killed by the ruler of a larger neighboring state (Antiochus and Antonio have very different personalities, but not inherently dissimilar political situations)? Or can we perhaps contrast Thaisa's apparent death with Juliet's—and Pericles' reaction with Romeo's?

To briefly address the first question, I suggest that thinking about Prospero in this context, for instance, helps us see that his case is not as unique as he claims it to be, and that the scale of his forgiveness at the end of the play is therefore markedly less impressive than he wants us to think. Thaisa's husband literally threw her living body off a ship; Hermione's declared her guilty of adultery despite the testimony of a literal oracle and had her son killed. That either of them welcomes a reunion is substantially more significant than that Prospero manages to stop himself from killing his brother, even if that brother did overthrow him and plan his death. Prospero has used his time alone to learn how to get even, and only stepped back from that at the last moment; the

women have gone down a much more thoughtful path. Pericles, likewise, used his exile better: he went on a humanitarian mission to Tarsus and then won the heart of Thaisa while fleeing his city, rather than simply letting his resentment fester. Prospero thus comes across much less positively, I would suggest, when seen in contrast with these plays, which might also change how we consider his final renunciation of magic—perhaps it is less of a parallel to Shakespeare retiring from writing plays and more of a realization of his own failings in how he has spent his time on the island.

On the other hand, Romeo's and Pericles's situations have obvious differences, but in this instance I would like to draw attention to one particular contrast between them that I think comes to light in this city-state context: Romeo's frantic flight from Mantua back to Verona comes about precisely because travel between the cities is not easy (so the message of hope Friar Laurence sent him is not delivered), while Pericles's journey continues on to Tarsus without political difficulty (though there is of course the storm). This in turn gives Pericles ample time to continue living and eventually find Thaisa again, while Romeo, between his exile, his killing of Paris, and his own desire for death, gives himself no time at all to realize that Juliet is alive.

The Powers of Dukes and Princes (or the Lack Thereof)

The previous two sections are more of a sketch of an approach than a full treatment because the core of the parallel between the Italian and the Ephesian plays lies in the third, most explicitly political, comparison that I have suggested. I find the foregoing questions to be enlivened by the parallels between the political worlds in which they take place, parallels which emphasize for us just how insular and self-contained these little city-states can be. Therefore, I wish to focus my attention on the political point that undergirds them all: how thinking of Ephesus as a Hellenistic city-state helps us see the continuity of Shakespeare's thoughts about what a city-state is, and how its political workings differ from larger nations like Rome or Shakespeare's own England. A remarkable number of Shakespeare's plays dramatize this situation, with a duke or prince ruling over a single city and its environs. Most of these are in and around his own contemporary Italy, but when we look at *Comedy* and *Pericles* through this lens, we see that they too fit the model. If we explore that model, in turn, we find that Shakespeare's ruling dukes find themselves in a strange position where their best actions are frequently located outside the law. Unlike kings and emperors, in other words, these dukes cannot rely on formal powers to rule, but must find extra-legal or extra-judicial means to achieve their ends. Yet because these dukes have less power than a king or emperor, this appears less dangerous in these plays than it might in Shakespeare's own England: the dukes are still constrained by the law, even as they sometimes act beyond it.

The common thread running among the rulers of these city-states is not power, but *the lack of it*: despite their nominal authority, they are restricted from doing what they desire to accomplish. This in turn implies interesting things about Prospero of Milan, whom we never see actually acting as a reigning duke, but who only unlocks his power to act freely on the island—and who, before taking up his dukedom again, chooses to *drown his book* and renounce his power. The list includes dukes like the Duke of Venice in both *Merchant* and *Othello* and the Duke of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*, another

play set outside of Italy but repeatedly connecting to Italian tropes and even names, as Gary Taylor in particular has suggested (250-5). It includes the prince in *Romeo and Juliet*. And it definitely includes both Pericles, unable to safely remain in his own city in the face of Antiochus's potential wrath, and Duke Solinus in *Comedy of Errors*, unable to pardon Aegeon. Yet by and large these rulers come to a happy end, either achieving their aims or coming to a new equilibrium that is even more satisfactory than their original design. I suggest that in these plays we see Shakespeare exploring (and the rulers exercising) what political scientists call "soft power" (Nye)—power exercised by influence, persuasion, and deal-making, rather than force or fiat—as a way to produce positive outcomes despite blocking conditions—what we might, in the more legal cases, call justice despite the law. The difference between these two is a common theme in Shakespeare, whose legal systems rarely seem to deliver recognizable justice (Strier).

The law figures as the blocking condition in many of these cases, as it does for Solinus. Even in the cases where it does not appear to be the law as such which prevents ducal action, it is frequently a matter of custom that seems to have the force of law: think of Duke Vincentio's unwillingness to enforce the strict laws of Vienna in *Measure for Measure*, the Duke of Milan's inability to compel his own daughter's preference in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, or Olivia's creative use of the custom of mourning periods against Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*. This kind of blocking condition is not unusual in drama, of course—it is a staple of romantic plots even when set outside of city-states—but it is interesting in these particular cases to see characters seemingly vested with such authority nevertheless run up against the limits of custom and the law. It is one thing to see Juliet, for instance, butt heads with her father's authority, and another to have the highest official in the land throw up his hands and confess his inability to perform his will—as indeed the Prince in that same play does when he describes his own "winking" at the crimes committed by powerful factions of nobles (*Romeo and Juliet* 5.3.293).

This is made all the more interesting by the *resolutions* of these situations, which almost invariably involve no change in the law or customs and yet a complete change in the dramatic situation. In some cases, as in Portia's trick that lets the Duke get around his inability to refuse Shylock's suit in *Merchant*, this may seem to us now malign or at least heavy-handed; in others, as with the good fortune that attends the endings of these Greek plays, we might agree with Shakespeare's characters that it seems the workings of a beneficent providence. But within the mental worlds of the plays, they are all providential; the rulers have achieved a better world than they started in without an actual change in the blocking situation.

This goes even for the tragedy among Shakespeare's city-state plays, *Othello*. There, although the play itself ends quite unhappily, the Duke's own role is part of a comedy, in the sense that he ultimately provides for a marriage. Despite the Duke's promise that, if Brabantio's accusations were accurate, he might read "the bloody book of law" against Othello as he liked (1.3.67), the joint persuasive powers of Othello, Desdemona, and the Duke himself move Brabantio just far enough to grudgingly concede to Desdemona's wedding. The tragedy comes afterwards, but in this moment we and the characters onstage (Brabantio perhaps excepted) are one in cheering the Duke's ability to work around Brabantio's denial of his permission for Desdemona to wed. We recognize justice in his decision to support the couple and applaud his success despite the law.

An exception to this might seem to occur in *Two Gentlemen*, where the success comes about despite the Duke of Milan's efforts and against his will. That worthy first tries to give Silvia to Sir Thurio, then to Proteus, and only accedes to Valentine's better claim at the very end. In that sense, in the play as a whole he stands more as the blocking condition himself than as the one blocked. But in this sense, while we do not see the duke work for a better result against the law, we do see once again the limits of a duke's authority in his inability to stop Valentine. And ultimately, he too is reconciled to the new match, and beyond that, to pardoning Valentine and his whole band of "banished men" (5.4.150). In this we see the crucial element of this kind of ducal or princely power: knowing which way the wind is blowing and bending to it, even when, as in this instance, it might go against the character's first inclination.

We see this work itself out in both *Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*. In *Comedy*, the duke does nothing, but the problem resolves itself—and not through the law. Despite the fact that he is now presented with *three* Syracusans who ought by rights to be condemned for visiting Ephesus, instead of one, he neither demands the payment of the penalty from the Ephesians present nor explains a loophole that would allow him to forgive it. Yet no one suggests that Aegeon, Antipholus, or Dromio should die. He simply accepts that this is how the world has developed and moves forward on that basis. Likewise, in *Pericles* the threat to Tyre has somehow lifted by the end of the play despite Pericles also not doing anything in his role as prince, and his inability to return to his city even after its safety is secured (due to his depression over his child and wife) only reinforces the degree to which his power or action has little to do with the play's happy ending. He did not even know that Thaisa had inherited her father's kingdom on his death. Thus, when at the end he and his family decide to divide their various territories among them, with Pericles and Thaisa ruling her father's kingdom and Marina and her husband commanding Tyre, he is merely going along with the flow—his own action has had little to do with the play's resolution.

The cumulative effect of these plays, I argue, is that while we are introduced to all these rulers as possessing authority and exercising judgment according to custom, circumstances, and the law, the plays ultimately reveal that the dukes and princes operate most effectively *outside* the realm of formal authority, and that it suits them better to read the room and strategically delay than to get behind their power and push. The rulers triumph by cajolery, patience, and especially good fortune, and law and custom serve primarily as blocks rather than stepping stones to their desires. However, we as an audience do not see their overcoming of these customs, laws, and circumstances as a tragedy or a misstep. We are, generally, on their side. As such, I suggest that while the plays may depict the rulers achieving *good ends*, those good ends are largely distinct from or even opposite to *the means* that they ought to have taken to achieve them. This in turn is a situation particularly appropriate to these rulers, who were simultaneously the highest authority within their political spheres and yet still (as indicated by their very titles) occupied a lower sphere of authority than a king, queen, or emperor. Precisely because they stand in this ambiguous middle ground of authority, we are primed to expect this kind of middling response from them: not ineffectual but likewise not all-powerful; capable of achieving just and desirable results, but doing so without the full support of the law. Whereas as a king or emperor acting beyond the law might become

all-powerful, the limited position of these dukes keeps their power in check despite their willingness to exceed their formal authority. This is a key aspect of both the Italianate plays and the Ephesian ones: because the politics they depict are those of independent city-states, the stakes differ from those of larger polities. These politics do not simply resolve to the topical concerns of Shakespearean London, but rely on the distinct situation of the independent or quasi-independent city-state.

By fitting the Ephesian Greek plays into this formula, I suggest, we not only see this process play out clearly in them both, but also open up a potential to connect these themes—both political and social—further, to other Greek plays of Shakespeare's: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*, both set in Athens under Theseus, or of course *Timon of Athens* (though that play, unlike the others, does not feature Theseus or any other Duke of Athens). While considering early modern English views of mythical Athenian society is beyond the scope of this paper, exploring Shakespeare's Greek world as similar to his Italianate one has significant potential for these plays, which likewise brought audiences out of their own world into an imaginatively distant one which operated under very different political rules. When Shakespeare's imagination journeyed around the eastern Mediterranean, it did so in the Hellenistic period, rather than the Roman or Ottoman Empires—and reading his Ephesian plays in this political context paradoxically connects them more closely to his contemporary Italianate plays than to, for instance, the Roman ones despite their common classicism. Both the ancient eastern Mediterranean and Renaissance Italy allowed Shakespeare and his audience to imagine relations between people—hospitality towards strangers, isolation and seclusion, and the exercise of political power—in ways that differed from either the imperial past or their own contemporary England. Most notably, the rulers of both ancient Greek and contemporary Italian city-states could act in ways that were dangerous for kings or emperors, but appropriate within their specific, limited settings. The Ephesian setting thus serves not as a topical substitute for early modern England, but as a distinct space in which specific issues could be explored: distinct not only from Shakespearean London but from Pauline Ephesus as well.

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Zusammenfassung

Dieser Aufsatz argumentiert, dass sich Shakespeares Darstellung von Ephesus in *Comedy of Errors* und *Pericles* auf frühneuzeitliche Darstellungen der antiken griechischen Stadtstaaten stützt und sich die Stücke so eher im Kontext von antiken griechischen Machtkämpfen verorten lassen, als im Kontext des Römischen oder Osmanischen Reichs, wie dies häufig in Interpretationen der Stücke geschieht. Der Artikel zeigt, dass Shakespeare sein Ephesus auf diese Weise eingebettet hat, um die Stücke enger mit wiederkehrenden Themen seiner Werke zu verbinden: die Bedeutung der Gastfreundschaft gegenüber Fremden, die Rolle von Abgeschiedenheit und Tod und die Besonderheiten herzoglicher Autorität. Indem er sich auf frühneuzeitliches Wissen über das klassische Ephesus stützte, fand Shakespeare eine effektive Möglichkeit, diese zentralen Themen in einer gleichzeitig anderen und doch vertrauten Welt zu beleuchten. Die Zusammenschau hebt Verbindungen zwischen den Darstellungen der griechischen Stadtstaaten und Shakespeares bekannteren italienischen Dramen hervor und erlaubt es so, unser Wissen über beide politischen und kulturellen Räume zu erweitern.