

# Shakespeare Seminar

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Shakespeare's Odysseys

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# INTRODUCTION

LUKAS LAMMERS AND KIRSTEN SANDROCK

## Shakespeare's Odysseys

In Episode 9 of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, "Scylla and Charybdis," Stephen Dedalus develops a theory about the origins of Shakespeare's works that is both original and controversial. It is in the National Library of Ireland that Dedalus, in a wild and winding conversation, develops his 'Hamlet theory'. The episode stages the strong and sometimes comic appeal of a biographical approach to Shakespeare's works and, at the same time, casts Dedalus – Joyce's alter ego – variously as Hamlet, Hamlet's father, Shakespeare, and as a modern-day Ulysses. In contrast to Homer's Ulysses, Joyce's Dedalus is not faced with a choice between two fantastical dangers – the six-headed monster Scylla or the deadly whirlpool Charybdis – but with a battle between two artistic dogmas: Aristotelian rhetoric and Platonic dialectic. Navigating these waters, *Ulysses* not only firmly establishes a connection between Joyce and Shakespeare; it also raises questions regarding the relationship between artist and artwork, text and intertext(s), modernism and gender, narrative and drama and many more. In other words, it leads us directly into the world of Shakespeare's odysseys.

The papers selected for this issue explore some of these cross-temporal and cross-cultural connections between Shakespeare and the *Odyssey*, variously highlighting intertextual, intercultural, literal, and metaphorical aspects. While some focus on classical and early modern contexts, others bring into view modernist and postcolonial afterlives of Shakespeare and Homer. What is at stake is therefore not only Shakespeare's approach to antiquity but also how Shakespeare's works have travelled widely and not always unproblematically between cultures.

In the first essay, Philip Goldfarb Styrt draws our attention to the depiction of Ephesus in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* and *Pericles*. While much criticism has connected the plays to discourses about the Roman or Ottoman empires as it appeared in Biblical narratives or in contemporary early modern travelogues, Goldfarb Styrt invites us to consider the plays in the context of Shakespeare's plays about contemporary Italianate city-states. In drawing on early modern knowledge of classical Ephesus, the paper argues, Shakespeare found a powerful space to explore familiar Shakespearean themes – the importance of hospitality to strangers, the role of seclusion and death, and the peculiarities of ducal authority – within a different and yet still familiar world. Exploring the plays through this lens, Goldfarb Styrt suggests, thus lets us see how these Greek city-states connect to Shakespeare's more familiar Italian ones, and how reading them together can illuminate both sets of plays.

In the second contribution, Divya Nair examines connections in the reception and canonization of Homer and Shakespeare in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, using the example of Nicholas Rowe's drama *Ulysses* (1705). In particular, Nair reads Rowe's drama in the context of his work on the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare's works and Rowe's

great interest in classical philology. The paper shows how Rowe negotiates contemporary political and geopolitical conflicts in his drama by adapting both Homeric and Shakespearean elements, which also reflects on a growing interest and gradual canonization of Shakespeare's at the time.

In her comparative reading of Shakespeare's early comedy *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1590) and the Proteus episode in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), Kathrin Bethke manages to tease out and illustrate the relevance of the Proteus myth for, on the one hand, Shakespeare's comedy and early modern poetic and poetological texts, and, on the other, for an understanding of Joyce's modernist classic. Noting that the third chapter of *Ulysses* "features various scenes of reading and writing that echo the metapoetic scene of the torn letter from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*," Bethke presents this scene as "equally programmatic for the poetic form of the fifteen subsequent episodes" (27). By bringing these fascinating readings together, the article also shows how a comparative reading "ultimately points to a historical trajectory connecting early modern and modernist poetics" (27).

The final article by Rebeca Araya Acosta examines a particular case of Shakespeare reception in Latin America through an analysis of Douglas Dunn's poem "A Theory of Literary Criticism." Exploring the close connection between the Scottish poet and the Chilean Nobel Prize winner Pablo Neruda, Acosta argues that Dunn, "[g]oing beyond the elegiac gesture of remembrance, [...] seeks to rescue a lesson in literary criticism that Neruda imparted (albeit indirectly) to him" (45). This 'lesson,' the article suggests arrived – on long and winding ways – via Shakespeare. It is a copy of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* owned by Neruda that takes on a wider meaning in Dunn's work. The lyrical speaker transposes statements from Neruda's writings about Shakespeare, Latin America, and the role of the socialist poet in the form of a complex transmigration metaphor. Dunn, it is said, thus "preserves and recirculates Neruda's socialist defense of universalism" (45) and by updating Neruda's self-reflective reception of Shakespeare makes a crucial revisionist contribution to postcolonial theory. Dunn's poem is thus framed as a defence of the universalist thesis, which sees the importance of Shakespeare asserted across national and cultural differences.

## Works Cited

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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).<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Styrst). 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.



# THE INTERTWINED RECEPTION OF HOMER AND SHAKESPEARE IN NICHOLAS ROWE'S *ULYSSES* (1705)

by

DIVYA NAIR

Nicholas Rowe's 1705 tragedy, *Ulysses*, is an interesting case study in the intertwined reception of Shakespeare and Homer in the early eighteenth century. This paper suggests that the canonization of Homeric stories, particularly the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, in the eighteenth century went hand in hand with the canonization of Shakespeare. I suggest Nicholas Rowe's *Ulysses* is a particularly useful literary artifact that encodes and memorializes this process. But Rowe's play is not merely an imitation of Homer's and Shakespeare's works; rather, it is an adaptation inflected by the complexities of Greco-Roman reception in early modern England. I suggest that Rowe reinvents the events recounted in the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* for an eighteenth-century English audience, tailoring the plot to address geopolitical concerns specific to the period and rendering the plight of characters in affective and moral terms relevant to English playgoers. I'll begin with a brief synopsis of some of the theoretical questions surrounding the reception history of Shakespeare and Homer—whose names may be better understood as authorial tropes rather than singular geniuses—in early modern English literature. I'll then consider the significance of Rowe in the eighteenth-century reception of plots associated with both writers. The essay finishes with a reading of Shakespearean and Homeric elements in the play.

Of course, the reception of Homer and Shakespeare in western literature is a vast scholarly subject. Nevertheless, one cannot help but notice parallels in the questions surrounding authorship, originality, and reception in their reception history. The first Greek edition of the Homeric canon in the west was published in Florence in 1488.<sup>1</sup> Arthur Hall translated the first ten books of the *Iliad* in 1581 using Hugues Salel's 1555 French translation. George Chapman's translations of Homer (1598-1611) at the turn of the seventeenth century also likely created a robust demand for Homeric plots. However, it is worth noting that Shakespeare may or may not have read Chapman's Homer; scholars generally attribute the source of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* tale to Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1380) and other medieval versions of what Penelope Wilson calls the "Troy story," such as Caxton's *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* (1475) and many others (Davis-Brown 15-34). As Wilson observes, "Homer before the eighteenth-century colonization of the classics was a more composite and more uncertain entity" (P. Wilson 275). In this sense, it is worth reasserting that the authorial phenomenon dubbed as Shakespeare (more on this later) may not have consulted the *Odyssey* or *Iliad* directly in the Greek or even English translation of the original but perhaps some of these more accessible 'Troy stories.' However, in an earlier

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<sup>1</sup> I am using James Porter's chronology in Porter, James I. *Homer: The Very Idea*. University of Chicago Press, 2021.

study from the 1960s, Geoffrey Bullough had “no doubt” that Shakespeare had read Chapman’s *Seaven Bookes* and “suspect[ed] that his satiric treatment of the Greeks and his use of high-sounding language was partly to mock at the hero-worship shown by Chapman in the prefatory material to his versions” (87). Bullough speculated that Shakespeare may have read more of the *Iliad* than the *Odyssey*, which Chapman published in 1598, “perhaps in Salel’s version,” pointing to its impact on the plot of *Troilus and Cressida* (Bullough 87).

Noting the fluctuations in the reception history of Homer, James Porter has also emphasized, we may be better served in thinking of Homer as a series of malleable tropes, rather than a singular historical figure, re-interpreted century after century. As Porter puts it, “The real problem, then, is not just that Homer is an unknown object whose identity is clouded over with endless uncertainties, nor even that Homer may never have existed as an identifiable person, as is widely believed today. It is that Homer is an impossible object, an entity who only became tangibly real and actual in the very failed effort to grasp him” (2). Indeed, the source history of Shakespeare’s plays also suggests that we may think of Shakespeare in similar terms, not as singular figure but as an authorial trope. This perspective is particularly useful for reading a play like Rowe’s *Ulysses*, which is not only reinterpreting Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad* but also the Shakespearean tradition. As Porter puts it, Homer’s “reception – by which we should understand his repeated reimagining – was truly bipolar, from the first preserved mentions of his name to the end of antiquity and from there into modernity, once the manuscripts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* resurfaced in Renaissance Europe” (116). These re-imaginings, in turn, are guided by unique historical purposes, their form and substance shaped by the particularities of time and space. Though many thinkers have tried to imagine a historical Homer, very little is known about the author of two of the most cherished works of Greek antiquity in the western canon, the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. As Friedrich August Wolf put it in his 1795 *Prolegomena to Homer*:

In Homer, however, the oldest poet, doubts clearly exist as to whether so much weight should be given to the authority of such recent manuscripts. For none of them is even so old as the latest Latin writers. Those that date before the twelfth or eleventh century are few and far between. This doubt may carry the implication that these sources cannot enable us to restore Homer's work to the genuine, pure form which first poured from his divine lips. (45-46)

Returning to Wilson’s claim about the colonization of Homer in the eighteenth century, it seems that writers like Wolf were questioning the Homer-as-singular-poetic-genius narrative as early as the eighteenth century. Homer’s literary value in England and throughout much of Europe was canonized over time.

Similarly, the authorial identity of Shakespeare and the unity of the Shakespearean canon has also been a point of significant debate in literary studies. As Jeffrey Knapp puts it, “On the one side of the controversy are the Shakespeare lovers, the bardolatrists [...]. On the other side of the debate are the historicists who view Shakespeare’s greatness as a *post facto* construction with no substantial relevance to the historical person and his writings” (Knapp 1). Brian Cummings echoes James Porter’s argument about Homer: “Shakespeare’s life has always been a construction after the fact. The lack of substantial evidence has increased his usefulness to a mythology of Englishness. Each

new age has reinvented him according to its predilections, without any serious possibility of being contradicted by the facts” (Cummings, “Shakespeare” n.p.). Harold Bloom, a staunch “bardolatrist,” in Knapp’s terms, remarks that we tend to turn against Shakespeare much as Plato turned against Homer, remarking that “Plato’s war against Homer is weakly echoed by all our contemporary politicizings of aesthetic concerns. If there is to be an aesthetic counterattack, Shakespeare ought to be the field of battle, since Shakespeare is the largest aesthetic value that we will ever know” (Bloom 159). Moreover, for all we know, Shakespeare’s life may be a work of fiction itself. James Shapiro points out that “Shakespeare did not live, as we do, in an age of memoir [...]. Literary biography was still in its infancy; even the word ‘biography’ hadn’t yet entered the language and wouldn’t until the 1660s” (17-18). Consequently, “anyone curious about his life had to depend on unreliable and often contradictory anecdotes, most of them supplied by people who had never met him” (Shapiro 17).

One such biographical anecdote occurs in Nicholas Rowe’s 1709 edition of Shakespeare’s plays, a portable octavo edition with six volumes, complete with illustrations, modernizing the plays for an eighteenth-century readership, where Rowe includes what some scholars recognize as the first “biography” of Shakespeare. As Brian Cummings notes, Rowe’s biography may be a product of late-seventeenth century fascination with Shakespeare’s past: he argues that “Rowe’s Account” of Shakespeare’s life “is, in most essentials, the Shakespeare of Restoration criticism and especially of John Dryden and Thomas Rymer, minus the negatives” (Cummings, “Shakespeare” n.p.). Rowe’s illustrated edition of Shakespeare’s plays is relevant to our understanding of *Ulysses* (1705) because it is a good example of Homeric reception in the early eighteenth century by a writer well versed in the Greek and Latin tradition. It is also significant that Rowe later became the first Poet Laureate of Britain. Indeed, when we study Rowe’s critical biography of Shakespeare, we find that he is trying to fit Shakespeare into the Greco-Roman tradition despite his admission that the bard may have a scanty knowledge of Latin, Greek, or even other European languages.<sup>2</sup>

Rowe’s edition of Shakespeare is also interesting from a historiographic perspective because it is a British reception of the Greco-Roman past in the early eighteenth century, filtered through an early modern English text. Rowe observes in his biography of the bard that Shakespeare achieves the function of both poet and historian in his adaptation of the Greco-Roman past in plays such as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, remarking that “For those Plays which he has taken from the *English* or *Roman* History, let any Man compare ‘em, and he will find the Character as exact in the Poet as the Historian” (Rowe, *The Works of William Shakespear* xvii). Rowe’s own reception of the Greco-Roman past in *Ulysses* and his translation work can be understood more clearly if we examine his interpretation of Shakespeare’s reception of Greco-Roman antiquity.

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, Rowe notes that, “I believe we are better pleas’d with those Thoughts, altogether New and Uncommon, which his own Imagination supply’d him so abundantly with, than if he had given us the most beautiful Passages out of the *Greek* and *Latin* Poets, and that in the most agreeable manner that it was possible for a Master of the *English* Language to deliver ‘em. Some *Latin* without question he did know, and one may see up and down in his Plays how far his Reading that way went [...]” (Rowe, N, et al. *The Works of Mr. William Shakespear: In Six Volumes; Adorn’d With Cuts*. London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, within Grays-Inn Gate, next Grays-Inn Lane, 1709, p. a2).

In studying Rowe's intertwined reception of Homer and Shakespeare, then, we are better placed to understand the civilizational significance of Greco-Roman antiquity – a time and place rather remote from eighteenth-century Britain – to eighteenth-century Britons, who increasingly began to idealize the ancient Mediterranean. It is also worth remembering that the ancient Mediterranean was closer to Africa and Asia, by way of the Mediterranean, than Northern Europe. And yet, we also find that the British Empire engaged in commercial war, enslavement, and territorial conquest in these parts of the world during the eighteenth century. The historiographic dissonance created by these layered histories allows us to think comparatively about past and present in new and innovative ways.

*Ulysses* was performed four years prior to the printing of Rowe's illustrated edition of *The works of Mr. William Shakespear*. I have chosen to focus on it here because *Ulysses* is often overlooked in articles and books about Rowe's dramatic oeuvre.<sup>3</sup> It may be useful to study it in light of Rowe's 1709 edition because it reveals the ways in which Shakespearean and Homeric plots may have influenced Rowe's creative process. It is also a good example of Rowe's reception of Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* both independently and perhaps through Shakespeare. I want to suggest that Rowe is an especially important figure to consider in the reception of Shakespeare and what we might call Homeric stories in the eighteenth century. *Ulysses* is unique because Rowe, given his level of education, may have very likely encountered and consulted both direct translations of Homer as well as the receptions of Homeric stories in Shakespeare's plays. As a translator and poet, he may have seen himself in the shadow of the "idea of Homer," recalling Porter. In Rowe's translation of *Pharsalia*, Lucan notes that "while Homer's verses shall be thought worthy of Praise, they that shall live after us shall read his and mine together" (Rowe *Pharsalia* xix). At the same time, as a dramatist, Rowe may have seen himself in the shadow of Shakespeare. I draw attention to this "anxiety of influence" because redeeming the function of poetry and the arts, more generally, in the British interest was important to Rowe as well as many other Augustan writers. As he notes in his preface to *Ulysses*, "Poetry, which was so venerable to former Ages, as in many Places to make a Part of their Religious Worship, and every where to be had in the highest Honour and Esteem, has miserably languish'd and been despis'd, for want of that Favour and Protection which it found in the famous Augustan Age" (Rowe *Ulysses*). At the same time, *Ulysses* offers an excellent example of Rowe's efforts to innovate English drama to better situate its significance in relation to the Greco-Roman past inherited by Britons over the course of the first millennium.

It is worth noting, however, that many critics were unfavorable to Rowe's adaptation of Homer. An anonymous reviewer trashed the play in his *Remarks on Mr. Rowe's last play, call'd Ulysses, a tragedy, etc* (1706).<sup>4</sup> The reviewer felt that Rowe had detracted from the heroism of Ulysses, as depicted in Homer: "I cannot believe he could have such a malicious Design in his Head, as to Burlesque Homer, who had a more sublime

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Caines draws attention to this critical lacuna in his "Introduction to *The Biter, Ulysses, and The Royal Convert*," noting that *Ulysses* has received "relatively little critical attention besides earlier and later counterparts in Rowe's oeuvre" (2).

<sup>4</sup> See Anonymous "Remarks on Mr. Rowe's last play, call'd Ulysses, a tragedy, etc." The British Library, 1706.

Opinion of his Grecian Heroes, and their Cause, than our Tragick Author, who thus ridicules it; I had almost said, prophanes it" (Anonymous 7). In his biography of Rowe in *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*, Samuel Johnson wrote of *Ulysses* that "We have been too early acquainted with the poetical heroes to expect any pleasure from their revival; to shew them as they already been shewn, is to disgust by repetition, to give them new qualities or new adventures, is to offend by violating received notions" (200).

The influence of the plays attributed to William Shakespeare on Rowe's oeuvre has a concrete link. In 1709, Rowe produced the first illustrated edition featuring images of characters garbed in eighteenth century apparel, act and scene divisions, as well as dramatis personae and stage directions (Rowe *The Works of William Shakespeare*). For this reason, many scholars look upon Rowe as the first "modern" editor of Shakespeare's works.<sup>5</sup> We may think of the First Folio editors, John Heminge and Henry Condell, as collators or compilers rather than editors, in the professional sense, dividing Shakespeare's plays into comedies, tragedies, and histories, and overseeing their printing.<sup>6</sup> Despite the persuasive claims of scholars who regard the

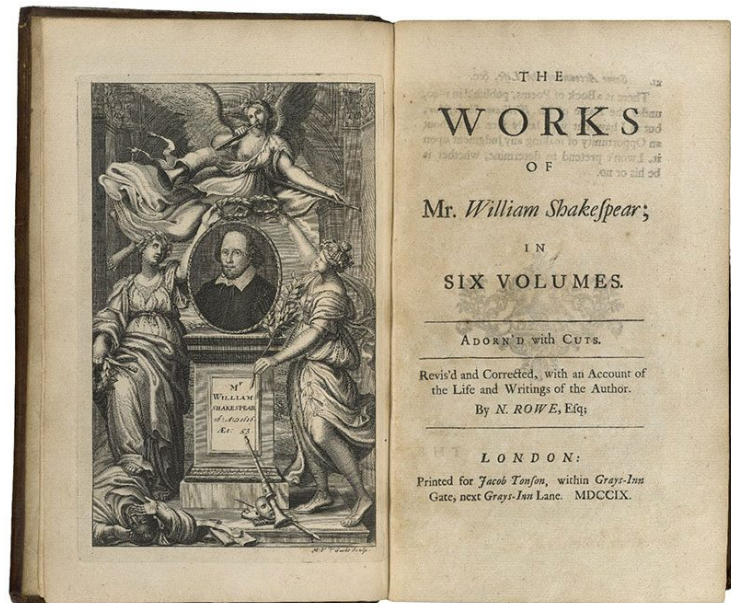


Figure 1. 1709 edition of Shakespeare's works, edited by Nicholas Rowe. Folger PR2752 1709a copy 2 v.1 Sh.Col., frontispiece and title page

text of the Second, Third, and Fourth Folios as "equivalent to the work of an editor" (Holland 25), Peter Holland observes that "it is Rowe whose work transforms the appearance of Shakespeare's printed language into a form we can comfortably recognize as modern" (25). Holland finds that "Rowe's habits are not radically dissimilar from those now practiced by editors" (25). Most significantly, Rowe's edition includes a set

<sup>5</sup> As Douglas Canfield has noted, "Nicholas Rowe is an important literary figure simply because he was the first biographer and editor of Shakespeare's works" (1).

<sup>6</sup> "Rowe makes many corrections and improvements to the text of his predecessors: he attempts to normalize spelling, punctuation, and grammar; he clarifies many of the plays' act and scene divisions; he adds robust stage directions, marking localities as well as characters' entrances and exits; he includes a list dramatis personae for each of the plays; and he translates the folio's Latin headings to English" (Hamm 179-180). Additionally, it "includes plates depicting scenes from the plays, making it the first illustrated Shakespeare edition" (Hamm 180), employing a new layout that "resets the folio's cramped, double-columned text" (Hamm, 180). Moreover, "it dispenses with the large folio volume, instead, portioning out the forty-three plays included in the 1685 edition over six octavo volumes or 3324 pages" (Hamm 180).

of plates illustrating key scenes from Shakespeare's plays, making it the first illustrated edition of Shakespeare.

Recalling the arguments of Knapp, Shapiro, and Cummings about the historical evolution of Shakespeare's canonical authority, it is worth noting that Jacob Tonson, who financed the edition, most likely did not consider Shakespeare a "major literary property." As Robert B. Hamm argues, while the compensation awarded to Rowe for his translation was substantial, it was a bargain when compared to the compensation offered by the Tonsons for other publications, suggesting that the Tonson publishing house did not consider Shakespeare to be "a major literary property" during Rowe's time (Hamm 191). Nicholas Rowe enjoyed a sustained business relationship with Tonson whose publishing house printed most of his plays, including *Ulysses* (Hamm 191). As Hamm points out, it is important to contextualize Rowe's reception of Shakespeare within Tonson's broader efforts to recover Greco-Roman classical tradition by reprinting a selection of key works, which Tonson began to complement with a recovery of canonical works in the English tradition.<sup>7</sup> While there is "nothing exceptional" about Rowe's edition of Shakespeare's works within Tonson's broader effort to reintroduce English authors from previous centuries, "perhaps there was something exceptional occurring to Shakespeare's reputation during this period" (Hamm 190); appropriations of Shakespeare, including Rowe's, "show a mounting interest in, and perhaps reverence for, his works," Hamm writes, understanding the appearance of Rowe's Shakespeare in 1709 as a "response to the increasing presence of Shakespeare's works, or plays inspired by them, on the public stage" (193).

*Ulysses* premiered on 23 November 1705 at the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket. Thomas Betterton played the leading role of Ulysses and Elizabeth Barry played Penelope, while Barton Booth emulated Telemachus with Anne Bracegirdle starring as Semanthe. It is worth remembering that *Ulysses*, which focused on Greco-Roman antiquity, was staged at the height of the so-called Battle of the Books between the Ancients and the Moderns, when the English intelligentsia was debating the supremacy of modern knowledge over and against that of ancient learning.<sup>8</sup> It may be worthwhile to read *Ulysses* as an effort to bridge the ancient and the modern. The coincidence of Homeric and Shakespearean reception in *Ulysses* reveals the ways in which the idea of Homer in the early eighteenth-century English imagination coincides with the emerging idea of Shakespeare as "vernacular classic" (Hamm 184). Moreover, when contextualized in terms of the political climate of the times, the theme of Ulysses' restoration to Ithaca may be read as a confirmation of the proposed Act of Union between England and Scotland, which became law in 1707, with the 'Pretenders' to the Queen's hand recalling the Stuart Pretenders to the British throne. The sexual threat posed by the suitors to Penelope echoes Whig fears about a Tory takeover: "The apparent precariousness of the Protestant succession pushed Whig writers to confront a crisis that would put the whole nation at risk; they frequently responded by depicting that risk as

<sup>7</sup> This legacy coincides with Rowe's extensive education in the classics. Likewise, his edition of Shakespeare falls in line with these twin editorial efforts undertaken by Tonson.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Swift hilariously reported this social phenomenon in *The Battle of the Books* (1704), appended to his satire, *Tale of the Tub* (1704). See Swift, Jonathan. *Battle of the Books*. Ed. Jack Lynch. *Eighteenth-Century Resources*. <https://jacklynch.net/Texts/battle.html>.

sexed or sexual,” writes Brett Wilson (823). A rape of a woman, particularly one of the higher class, signified an assault on the integrity and honour of the country. And yet, we may also read in the restoration of Ulysses and the hope of the hereditary transmission of power from father to son an inkling of the patriarchal ideology, founded on the divine right of kings.

Rowe reworks the Troilus and Cressida Homeric story for an early eighteenth-century English audience. Additionally, he adds a new plot to the Telemachy, adding fresh significance to the *nostos* of *Ulysses*. Telemachus in Rowe's *Ulysses* first disobeys his father in his pursuit of Semanthe, the rival king's daughter; in the end, Telemachus ends his affair with Semanthe. Semanthe is a new character created by Rowe, who is not identical to Cressida though it is possible to read her as Cressida-like. Moreover, like *Troilus and Cressida*, frequently labeled a “problem play” (Greenblatt 1835), *Ulysses* is not entirely a tragedy. Though it has tragic elements, *Ulysses* has a comic ending, culminating in the restoration of Ulysses to Ithaca, the rescue of Penelope from the clutches of Eurymachus, and the restoration of filial piety, with the return of Telemachus to his father, in spite of the tragic annulment of his clandestine union with Semanthe. Semanthe's father, Eurymachus, is a threat to the plot's comic resolution because he vies for Penelope's hand in Odysseus' absence. As such, though he draws on Shakespearean and Homeric frameworks, Rowe's reception is unique in that he works in original twists. Indeed, we find that the plots of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* acquire new interpretive dimensions.

*Ulysses* also keys into some of the national and global tensions of the day. For instance, the war between the Trojans and the Greeks in Homer's works can be compared to the struggle between the House of Hanover and the Stuart dynasty for political hegemony during the succession crisis.<sup>9</sup> It can also be interpreted as a veiled reference to the war of Spanish succession (1701-1715), which drew the French and the British into a struggle for control of Catholic Spain's assets, flanked by their respective alliances with various European powers. Indeed, this latter conflict infused domestic rivalries between the Catholic Stuarts, who sought refuge in France, and the rival Protestant Hanoverians, who followed on the heels of the Glorious Revolution.

And yet, though *Ulysses* appears to draw on Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, it also adapts the plot of the *Odyssey*. Ulysses returns from the Trojan War to Ithaca, only to find that his kingdom, his queen, Penelope, and son, Telemachus, are threatened by the whims of unscrupulous rivals. The play opens with a rumination by Telemachus about the state of Ithaca in the absence of his father. It has been ten years since the end of the Trojan War and Ulysses is still missing in action:

By turns have chang'd the Seasons since it fell,  
And yet we mourn my Godlike Father's Absence,  
As if the Graecian Arms had ne'er prevail'd,  
But Jove and Hector still maintain'd the War. (12)<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For an account of the upheavals of the Stuart dynasty in the seventeenth century, see Kishlansky.

<sup>10</sup> There is no modern edition of Rowe's *Ulysses* to my knowledge. I have used the 1733 edition printed by Jacob Tonson (Rowe, *Ulysses*, 1733).

Telemachus mourns his father's absence and wonders what Ulysses would think of the state of affairs if he were to return to find "his State o'er-run, Devour'd and parcell'd out by Slaves so vile" (12). Rowe heightens the dramatic irony of the opening scene by introducing Ulysses, who masquerades as the stranger, Aethon, moving through the island and interacting with his subjects, family members, and enemies in disguise, to recover his rightful seat, trusting the "Secret of [his] Soul" (13) to no one: his seventy years have taught him "Thus only, to be safe in such a World as this is" (13). This part of the play closely parallels the return of Ulysses to Ithaca in Homer's *Odyssey*, where Odysseus disguises himself in beggar's rags upon landing on the shores of Ithaca. Rowe's Ulysses wonders if Penelope would be able to recognize her husband: "Cou'd she forget / The Difference 'twixt Ulysses and his Slave?" (15) he asks Mentor, Telemachus' tutor and a family friend, foreshadowing his meeting with Penelope later on, who does not, in fact, recognize her missing husband. It is worth noting that in the *Odyssey*, Pallas or Athena appears in disguise as Mentor, a point that is significant. Athena is Ulysses' patron goddess, protecting him through his trials and tribulations. In Rowe's play, Pallas appears later, at a crucial juncture in the plot, reversing the misfortunes of Penelope and answering her prayers for Ulysses' restoration.

Ulysses faces two immediate external threats, "the silken Minions of the Samian court" and Antinous, who pretends to be a friend to Telemachus only to reveal his true colors in the end as a rival of Ulysses (27). However, Antinous also considers the King of Samos a rival. Ulysses' restoration is also threatened by Telemachus' affair with Semanthe, the daughter of Eurymachus, King of Samos. Both Antinous and Eurymachus are rival suitors to Penelope's hand. Remarking on Telemachus' dangerous attachment, Cleon, a friend of Antinous, quips that "the Love-sick Youth dotes ev'n to Death / Upon the Samian Princess" (29) Semanthe. Antinous commands that they "Let it go on": "'tis a convenient Dotage," he remarks, "And sutes my Purpose well" (29). With Telemachus distracted by Semanthe, Antinous stands to gain the hand of the defenseless queen. Antinous acknowledges Telemachus' noble character, noting that "The Youth by Nature / Is active, fiery, bold, and great of Soul" (29); however, he ascertains that Telemachus' liaison with Semanthe inspired in the impressionable youth "lazy Wishes, Sighs and Languishings, / Unactive dreaming Sloth, and womanish Softness" (29).

Both Antinous and Eurymachus appear as characters in Homer's *Odyssey*; however, Semanthe is Rowe's unique creation. Semanthe resembles Cressida in a number of ways. The character of Cressida is itself unique to the medieval period. A woman named Chryseis appears in the *Iliad*. She is taken as a prize to Agamemnon during the sack of Thebe and her father Chryses seeks her return (Rabel 473). Like Cressida and Chryseis, Semanthe belongs to the enemy camp; the other characters in the play view her as temptress, and yet, in Rowe's unique adaptation, she is a virgin sworn to Diana. There is a tragic element in her love for Telemachus, not unlike Cressida's love for Troilus; however, whereas Shakespeare depicts Cressida engaging in amorous activities with other men in *Troilus and Cressida*, Semanthe remains loyal to Telemachus throughout *Ulysses*.

In Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Troilus belongs to the Trojan camp and Cressida is a Trojan woman. The morning following Cressida and Troilus' union, Cressida is exchanged for a Trojan prisoner and taken to the camp of the Greek warrior,



Diomedes, where she becomes a plaything of the Greek soldiers, to Troilus' humiliation. Ulysses also appears as a character in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*; when Cressida arrives in the Greek camp, he kisses her in a show of conquest. In Shakespeare's adaptation, Ulysses describes Cressida as wanton, noting that "her wanton spirits look out / At every joint and motive of her body" (4.5.56-57). Similarly, in the second act of Rowe's *Ulysses*, Ulysses (Aethon) refers to Semanthe as a "wanton" (34), disapproving the evolving relationship between Telemachus and Semanthe. In a soliloquy, he remarks that "This Samian King is Happy in his Arts; / His Daughter, vow'd a Virgin to Diana, / Is brought to play the Wanton here at Ithaca" (34).

From a political standpoint, if we read the rival "Pretenders to the Queen's hand" as the Stuart Pretenders and Penelope as Queen Anne, who was rumoured to hold Tory sympathies, then Semanthe may be read as a spy or security threat, of sorts, distracting the rightful king's first heir-in-line from his duties. She may also be read as a pawn of war, like Cressida. If we read, Semanthe as Cressida, then we may also interpret Telemachus as a kind of Troilus figure. However, unlike in *Troilus and Cressida*, it is not Telemachus/Troilus, but Ulysses who is compelled to witness Penelope's humiliation in Rowe's adaptation. The returned king disguised as Aethon witnesses first-hand the threats of Eurymachus, Semanthe's father, to kill Telemachus, Semanthe's lover, unless she yield to the Samian king's nefarious advances. Such details shed light on Rowe's creative adaptation of both Homer and Shakespeare in *Ulysses*. Like the legends of Homer, we see how the plays historically attributed to Shakespeare are adapted to fit the priorities of eighteenth-century English theatre. Similar to the "Troy stories" of the medieval age, the reception of Shakespeare in the eighteenth century spawned a series of "Shakespeare stories," as it were. Rowe's *Ulysses* may be read as both a Homeric story as well as a Shakespeare story.

Ulysses, still disguised as Aethon, is privy to the overtures made by Eurymachus on his wife. Penelope is yet to recognize Aethon as her long-lost husband, thinking him a loyal friend, but commends his loyalty to her husband. Eurymachus trusts Aethon enough to include him in the same room during his pursuit of the queen. Aethon then begins to test Penelope's loyalty, encouraging her to accept Eurymachus' proposal. Penelope is insulted. "Oh Aethon!" she cries, "art thou too—become my Enemy!" (24). She dubs him a traitor and accuses that "Gold has prevail'd upon thee to betray me, / And bargain for my Honour with this Prince" (24). Eurymachus threatens to kill Telemachus, responding to Penelope's repeated queries about her son's safety "That Royal Youth, that best lov'd Son is safe, / Nor dies, unless his Mother urge his Fate" (28). Eurymachus declares that "a Priest, by faithful Aethon's Care / in private shall attend" the queen's apartments in the evening, where "The Gods of Marriage and of Love invoking," he pledges to "renew [his] Vows, and at thy Feet / Devote ev'n all [his] Pow'rs to [her] Command" (28). The scene concludes with Eurymachus commanding Ulysses to fetch a "faithful" priest and Ulysses agrees to bring his "Friend of ancient Date [...] now in Ithaca," "try'd in these pious Secrets" (30).

Holding his tongue still, Ulysses says, "I ask no other Bliss nor fond Delight, / Nor envy Thee, O King, thy Bridal Night," and takes Eurymachus' leave (43). However, though seemingly unaffected, in the following act, Ulysses confides in his friends

Mentor and Eumaeus<sup>11</sup> that “These Eyes beheld her yielding—Cursed Object! Beheld her in the Samian King’s Embrace” (44). The tragic element in the play is compounded by Ulysses himself inquiring “what auspicious Hour, Your Royal Bridegroom and the Priest shou’d wait” (45). Penelope admits to him that she has her “Sex’s Weakness” (45): “I have a Mother’s Fondness in my Eyes / And all tender Passions in my Heart” (45). She nevertheless thinks of Aethon as traitor, magnifying the dramatic irony of the scene, and vows to curse him “Till Hell shall tremble at my Imprecations” (46). Embarrassed by his guile, Ulysses instructs his friends, Eumaeus and Mentor to “Guard her upon [their] Lives [...] from ev’ry Instrument of Death” till his return (46).

The central plot device of the play, on which the drama is catapulted, is the humiliation of Penelope, which signifies the degradation of Ulysses’ honor; her fidelity to Odysseus is constantly questioned by characters in the play, prompting the audience to also engage in this interrogation of her chastity. Not unlike the *Odyssey*, Penelope’s conjugal cross-examination is fraught with anxieties about preserving the honor of the Ithacan kingdom, and in the case of Rowe’s *Ulysses*, the integrity of the English throne, over which Queen Anne presided. As the daughter of James II, Anne was the last reigning monarch of the Stuart dynasty. Scholars have speculated at length about her potential Jacobite leanings. *Ulysses* was staged under her reign. Anne was very much a transitional figure in the shift from seventeenth-century mercantilism to eighteenth-century global capitalism. In her mannerism, she was rather Catholic, upholding a observance of ritual.<sup>12</sup> Bucholz understands Queen Anne to be “charting a middle course between the opposing shoals of the Whig and Tory parties, in an attempt to preserve freedom of maneuver for the postrevolutionary monarchy” (288). Thus, in Ulysses’ skepticism about Penelope’s fealty, we see elements of suspicions about Anne’s loyalties. Hanoverians questioned her fidelity to the Protestant succession. Paulina Kewes writes that

there is no evidence that the queen [...] harbored pro-Jacobite feelings. On the contrary, she strove assiduously to dispel any doubts about her commitment to the Hanoverian succession. Yet her refusal to allow any member of the Hanoverian family to reside in Britain during her lifetime fueled suspicions that she might countenance the pretensions of her half-brother James Francis Edward Stuart. (286)

Likewise, the vilification of Semanthe by characters’ in the play continues on this suspicion of women’s intentions. At the same time, the focus on these two female characters in the play also sheds light on their power as decisive actors in the broader social play of political succession. It would be easy enough to read Penelope as a victim and Semanthe as a pawn, and equally easy to read Penelope as a calculating politician and Semanthe as a wily seductress. However, the answer may be somewhere in the middle, anchored in contemporary perceptions and ideals of womanhood, mixed with

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<sup>11</sup> In the *Odyssey*, Eumaeus is Odysseus’ faithful servant and Ulysses recognizes him for fulfilling the Greek tradition of providing shelter and sustenance to strangers, the custom of honoring strangers as guests.

<sup>12</sup> R.O. Bucholz writes that “[i]t is well known that Anne was, like her father and grandfather before her, a stickler for ceremony. Her nearly obsessive interest in, and extensive knowledge of, courtly ritual and custom were much commented on by observers” (292).

the lived experiences of women. As such, these Shakespearean and Homeric female characters are adapted to eighteenth-century English contexts.

Similarly, while it is possible to read *Ulysses* as a Whig merchant-hero, it is also possible to read him as a Stuart “native son.” Perhaps Rowe was constructing a character capable of appealing to both Whig and Tory factions in Queen Anne’s court, aiming to mend a divided country. Similarly, though critics have tended to align Rowe with Whig tendencies, such a cut-and-dry political alignment misses the complexities of political alignments and disavowals of the time. In her biography of Rowe, Annibel Jenkins observes that “Rowe knew all the major writers of the age of Queen Anne [...] dining with them, writing to them, and discussing, no doubt, the chief interests they all shared in politics and letters” (26), including Jonathan Swift and Richard Steele. Jenkins describes Rowe as “an ardent Whig” (26). She reads *Ulysses* as a “play of patriotism” (73), though specifically, as a Whig allegory. And yet, while this has remained the traditional viewpoint, given that *Ulysses* is a *returning* king – not a foreign dynasty like the Hanoverians – I’d like to suggest that Rowe could also be likening him to Charles II, a Stuart monarch restored after being exiled. In this way, the conflicts of ancient Greece and Elizabethan England are reenergized to interpret the conflicts plaguing Augustan Britain in the early eighteenth century.

Nicholas Rowe’s *Ulysses* is a complex blend of Homeric and Shakespearean plots finished with Rowe’s unique touches. In framing the Trojan War in terms of contemporary domestic and geopolitical concerns, Rowe makes Greek antiquity relevant to a divided Britain in the early eighteenth century in a new way. In sustaining a parallel between Penelope and Queen Anne and Ithaca and Britain, Rowe refashions the Greek ideal of virtue for eighteenth-century Britons. The plight of Penelope, harassed by various political rivals while awaiting her husband’s return, resembles the plight of Queen Anne’s court, divided between two warring political factions. Much as Shakespeare uses the Troilus and Cressida story to underscore the political perils posed by “wanton” women in wars, and their enervating effects on manhood, Rowe uses the Telemachus-Semanthe storyline to underscore the folly of youthful dalliances in the fulfillment of royal duty. Semanthe is Cressida-like, though only nominally; Rowe also emphasizes her fallen virtue, subtly indicating, in the end, her capacity for redemption, much as Telemachus is redeemed by returning to his father, Ulysses. We may observe that the classical outlook of the play here merges with an eighteenth-century British Christian eschatology.<sup>13</sup>

Poised on the verge of modernity, *Ulysses* foreshadows the 1707 Act of Union, which created modern Britain. The ‘restoration’ of Ulysses, a ‘true-born’ Ithacan reinforces contemporary desires for a ‘true-born’ patriarch, on the one hand; however, the rivals to his throne are also referred to as ‘Pretenders,’ a term reserved for Jacobite usurpers; as such, Rowe may have refashioned Ulysses to satisfy both Whig and Tory appetites. Thus, recalling James Porter, in Nicholas Rowe’s *Ulysses*, we see the rebirth of the idea of Homer in a distinctively eighteenth-century British way, though its ancient Greek sources are nevertheless undeniable. At the same time, by embedding the Telemachus-Semanthe plot within the story of the *Odyssey*, he may be reiving the literary reputation

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<sup>13</sup> For more on Rowe’s Christianity, see Canfield’s *Nicholas Rowe and Christian Tragedy*.

of Shakespeare in the early eighteenth century and authenticating the Shakespearean canon as a ‘vernacular classic.’

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## Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel untersucht Verbindungen in der Rezeption und Kanonisierung von Homer und Shakespeare im 18. Jahrhundert am Beispiel von Nicholas Rowes Drama *Ulysses* (1705). Rowes Drama wird insbesondere im Kontext seiner Arbeit an der ersten illustrierten Ausgabe von Shakespeares Werken und seinem großen altphilologischen Interesse gelesen. Im weiteren Verlauf zeigt der Artikel, wie Rowe in seinem Drama durch die Bearbeitung homerischer wie auch shakespeare'scher Elemente zeitgenössische politische und geopolitische Konflikte verhandelt, die nicht zuletzt Rückschlüsse auf Shakespeares Rezeption als kanonischer Autor ziehen lassen.

# PROTEAN POETICS IN SHAKESPEARE AND JOYCE

by

KATHRIN BETHKE

Proteus, the protagonist of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, is the only character in William Shakespeare's *oeuvre* based directly on an episode from Homer's *Odyssey*. Shakespeare scholars usually emphasize the mutability and inconstancy of the character, thus explaining why he was given the name of the ancient shape shifter. However, in Shakespeare's time, Proteus is also eponymous with a particular element of Renaissance poetics, namely the Proteus verse introduced by Iulius Caesar Scaliger in his *Poetices Libri Septem* of 1561 (588). The elements of a Proteus verse can be deliberately permuted without compromising the line's semantic or metrical integrity. It thus represents the nucleus of a combinatorial poetics that Shakespeare's comedy alludes to directly in its opening scene: after the character of Julia tears into pieces a love letter from her lover Proteus, she instantly starts to permute and recombine its elements, thus creating a linguistic space for the couple to be 're-combined' and thus reunited (1.2.100–30). In a reading focused on the poetological implications of the scene of the torn letter this study aims to demonstrate that the protean poetics of permutation and recombination govern the development of plot and characters as well as the language and semiotics of love in Shakespeare's early play. A similar argument can be made for the Proteus episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The third chapter of Joyce's novel features various scenes of reading and writing that echo the metapoetic scene of the torn letter from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and can be read as equally programmatic for the poetic form of the fifteen subsequent episodes. The myth of Proteus as well as the poetic paradigm embodied by Scaliger's Proteus line can thus be employed as poetological heuristics in a comparative reading of Shakespeare's early comedy and Joyce's *Proteus* episode that ultimately points to a historical trajectory connecting early modern and modernist poetics.

## The Myth of Proteus and Combinatorial Poetics

In book four of Homer's *Odyssey*, at the end of what is usually called the 'Telemachiad', Odysseus' son Telemachus joins Helen and Menelaus for a banquet to inquire after his missing father. Menelaus reports that he has already made inquiries of his own: stranded on the isle of Pharos, hidden in the foul-smelling skin of a seal, he has been able to tackle the ancient sea-god Proteus and asked him about the way home. Proteus is known for resisting such interrogations by transforming himself into all kinds of shapes and elements, which is why Menelaus and his friends must hold him down until he changes back into his original form:

And then the old forger all his forms began  
 First was a lion with a mighty mane,  
 The next a dragon, a pied panther then,  
 A vast boar next, and suddenly did strain  
 All into water. Last he was a tree,  
 Curl'd all at top, and shot up to the sky. (4.609–14)<sup>1</sup>

Renaissance texts frequently invoke the obstinate sea god as an advocate of mystic knowledge and scientific inquiry (Giamatti 437–42), as an allegory of the “primal matter” (443), or as a prototype of the actor or the poet himself, either with its positive connotation of the *poeta vates* who has insight into various creatures and elements, or the shadow side of that role as the great seducer and manipulator (445–72). Bartlett Giamatti has consequently argued that “there is no more inclusive vision of the versions of Proteus in the Renaissance” than Shakespeare’s Proteus (475). His character, however, has an additional connotation hitherto unexplored by the existing research on the play. It unfolds in the second scene of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* when a young woman named Julia receives a letter from her suitor Proteus, delivered by her maid Lucetta. In a fit of girlish coyness and feigned indifference, Julia refuses to accept the letter and – as a proof of her resolution – tears it into pieces. A minute later she regrets her rashness and kneels down to reassemble the countless little love letters in front of her. When she finds the characters of her own name and those of Proteus among the scraps she happily “fold[s]” the scraps “upon another” (1.2.129) in such a way that she and her lover can be – quite literally – reunited:

Lo', here in one line is his name twice writ:  
 'Poor forlorn Proteus', 'passionate Proteus',  
 'To the sweet Julia'—that I'll tear away.  
 And yet I will not, 'sith so prettily  
 He couples it to his complaining names,  
 Thus will I fold them, one upon another.  
 Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will. (1.2.125–30)

Julia’s coy refusal of a love letter is a novella convention that Shakespeare adapts from a mid-sixteenth century Spanish prose romance by Jorge de Montemayor entitled *Diana Enamorado* (cf. Bullough 231). What makes the passage original and exciting in this context is the newly added element of the tearing of the letter and the fact that it was written by a man named Proteus. The scene thus becomes legible as a metapoetic allegory of the so-called Proteus line as Iulius Caesar Scaliger describes it in his *Seven Books of Poetry* in a chapter devoted to verse variations defined by word order (585–91). Following a section on palindromic verses that can be read backwards, Scaliger mentions a line whose words can change places so many times that the verse will assume “innumeras paene facies”, or ‘countless new faces’ (588). It thus achieves on the level

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<sup>1</sup> George Chapman’s partial translation of the *Odyssey* was first printed in 1615, so it must be assumed that in the early 1590s, when Shakespeare presumably started writing *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, no English translation of the epic was available to him. Scholars such as Bartlett Giamatti (1968), Brenda Thaon (1985), and William E. Burns (2001), however, have documented the pervasive presence of the Proteus myth in Renaissance philosophy and literature.

of verse what anagrams do on the level of the single word. Scaliger's sample line reads: "Perfide sperasti divos te fallere Proteu" – 'Wickedly you hoped to deceive the Gods, Proteus' (588). It offers not only a description, but a performance of protean shape shifting. Mathematically, the six elements of Scaliger's Proteus line can be permuted in  $6! = 720$  different ways. If metre and semantics are taken into consideration, the possibilities are significantly reduced, but still copious: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who drew inspiration from Scaliger in his *Dissertation on Combinatorial Art*, identifies 64 metrically correct permutations of the line (245).

The Proteus line constitutes the nucleus of a combinatorial poetics that became quite fashionable in German baroque poetry and philosophy alike. Poets such as Georg Philipp Harsdörffer or Quirinius Kuhlman have composed entire Proteus poems consisting mainly of monosyllabic words that can be rearranged freely.<sup>2</sup> But Harsdörffer has also invented various ways of automating the combinatorial principle of the anagram and the Proteus line. Some of these devices are as simple as letter dices ("Delitiae" 513) or cylindrical combination locks, so-called "Mahl-Schlösser", that are inscribed with letters and numbers (cf. Zeller 169–73). Others are as elaborate as his "Fünffacher Denckring der Teutschen Sprache" (1636), or 'fivefold thinking of the German language', which consists of five movable concentric circles that are inscribed with suffixes, prefixes and other morphemes and letters ("Delitiae" 517). The rotation of one or more of these circles allows for the creation of new words and expressions. Harsdörffer's 'thinking' thus mechanizes the combinatorial nature of language as such. It combines *ars combinatoria* and *ars inveniendi* in an effort to fully exhaust the possibilities of the German language.

However, the integration of the mathematical art of combination into philosophical and literary discourses goes back much further. Both Leibniz and Harsdörffer base their work on the kabbalist idea of divine creation by way of words and letters, as well as on the reception of the Kabbalah by medieval and early modern Christian philosophers such as the Majorcan convert Ramón Llull (1231–1315) and, most importantly, the Italian polymath Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494). In his *Ars Magna*, Ramón Llull assigned nine letters from B to K to five sets of theological principles, including virtues and vices as well as the primary principles of *bonitas*, *magnitudo*, *aeternitas*, *potestas*, *sapientia*, *voluntas*, *virtus*, *veritas*, and *gloria*. Nine relational principles, e.g., *differentia*, *concordantia*, *contrarietas*, were established to regulate the way in which concepts and letters could be combined.<sup>3</sup> Llull then set out to use the theological arguments created by this early version of a computational algorithm (cf. Cramer "Statements" 53) in the conversion of nonbelievers to the Christian faith. Ramón Llull's

<sup>2</sup> In a treatise on poetry and poetics, his *Poetischer Trichter* of 1648/53, Harsdörffer notes a Proteus poem composed entirely of monosyllabic nouns called "Wechselsatz", which means as much as 'interchangeable set' (51). While Harsdörffer's "Wechselsatz" consists of only 22 words, Quirinus Kuhlman's monstrous "Libes-Kuß 41" would generate over six billion permutations. The poem is reprinted in Rosemarie Zeller's book on the poetics of play in German baroque literature (175–76), whose chapter on "Ars combinatoria" gives an overview of the role of combinatorics in early modern poetry and poetics (157–87, see also Neubauer 11–39).

<sup>3</sup> An overview and analysis of Llull's *Ars brevis* can be found in (Yates 11–18, Neubauer 19–40, Eco 53–62, and Cramer 49–55).



*Ars* is an early example of a shift from a *combinatoria verborum* to a *combinatoria rerum* that not only permutes words and letters in an effort to create novel poetic expressions, but that applies combinatorics to the organization of concepts and ideas in a way that anticipates Leibniz's project of a *lingua characteristica* as part of a *mathesis universalis*.<sup>4</sup>

While Llull and Leibniz use combinatorics in an epistemological function as a generator of philosophical truths, authors of Proteus poetry utilise it as a means of poetic invention and creation. At the same time, they add an element of automation and mechanization to the process of writing and thus invoke the phantasm of poetic composition without a subject, an idea that has also been employed by avantgarde writers such as Tristan Tzara, who created poetry from random newspaper cutups (cf. Cramer 173–75), or writers of the *ouliipo*-group, most famously perhaps Raymond Queneau, who created a combinatorial sonnet sequence. The pages of that sequence are cut up between the lines of each sonnet, thus allowing for the permutation of lines and ultimately for the creation of *Cent mille milliard de poèmes* (Queneau). The innocent scene of the torn letter in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* thus anticipates the combinatorial poetics of Baroque and modernist literature and must be considered part of a historical trajectory that culminates quite famously in a novel composed entirely of anagrams, palindromes, and portmanteaus, namely James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. As a case in point: the novel contains nearly ten anagrammatic variations of Shakespeare's name, which are created either by the exchange of singular letters or by switching out entire lexemes. He is called "Shikespower" (47), "Chickspeer" (145), "shaggspick" (177), "Shakehisbeard" (177), "Sheekspair" (191), "Shakefork" (274), the "Great Shapesphere" (295), or "Shopkeeper" (539). Joyce's portmanteaus are a hybrid of anagrams, which rely on the permutation and recombination of letters, and homophonic puns, which are based on phonological similarities. As will be shown below, these anagrammatic structures are introduced and reflected in a number of metapoetic scenes in the *Proteus* episode of *Ulysses*, which thus constitutes a key text in the development of Joyce's late protean style.

Shakespeare's anagrammatism has been investigated by scholars such as Christopher Ricks, R.H. Winnick, and Helen Vendler, especially with regard to the *Sonnets*. While Ricks and Winnick concentrate first and foremost on anagrammatic variations of proper names distributed across the text, Vendler recognises the combinatorial texture of the *Sonnets* (217) and thus confirms for Shakespeare what Erika Greber has claimed in a systematic and foundational argument for the entire sonnet tradition (60–70).<sup>5</sup> But even though the scene of the Protean letter has received some critical attention, its reference to the Proteus line or the metapoetic dimension of Julia's permutation of names and

<sup>4</sup> Jan C. Westerhoff has traced the connections between Harsdörffer's combinatorial poetics and Leibniz's philosophical project to create a linguistic code that "was supposed to act as a system of notation for 'the alphabet of human thought'" (450).

<sup>5</sup> Erika Greber has shown that the sonnet, thanks to its numerological structure, anagrammatic word play, and permutation of rhymes, is an inherently combinatorial form (63). Helen Vendler has argued that the repetition and variation of themes, motifs, and even phrases in Shakespeare's sonnet sequence may inspire readers to create "false combinatory octaves or sestets", suggesting that the combinatory structure of the sonnet form may well be projected onto the sequence (217).

letters has never been investigated. Alan Stewart, for instance, simply dismisses the tearing of the letter as a “cute conceit” (64), while Frederick Kiefer focuses solely on the dramaturgical function of the scene as an “engaging” and “comically surprising” incident (68). In the following I want to show that the scene of the torn letter can be read at once as the poetological matrix of the play and as a metapoetic incident that submits to critical scrutiny the specific codes and conventions of love as it would become typical of Shakespearean comedy in the 1590s.

### **Combinatorial Languages of Love in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona***

Combinatorial poetry relies on a set of medial, performative, semiotic, and poetic rules and conditions. Combinatorial forms such as the anagram, the proteus line, and other examples discussed above, depend, just like calculus, on the notational iconicity of writing.<sup>6</sup> The materiality of the written (or printed) signifier is the medial condition for their permutation, which is usually achieved by some sort of manual intervention, adding a performative element to combinatorial practices like rearranging a Proteus line or creating one variation of Raymond Queneau’s *Cent mille milliards de poemes*. The variations of an anagram or a Proteus poem need to be written down in order to be actualised, and Harsdörffer’s ‘think-ring’ and Queneau’s sonnet sequence are meant to be touched and manipulated in order to produce a new combination.<sup>7</sup> The permutation of signifiers coincides with an element of mechanisation and automation, which, in turn facilitates rhetorical invention and finally results in an instance of autopoetic creation that scandalously dispenses of a unifying subject. The act of permutation temporarily disrupts the sequential order of a set of signifiers, which is then reassembled in a new fashion.

All of these aspects are present in the scene of the torn letter that initiates a multimodal combinatorics of love in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. When the character of Julia kneels down to rearrange the words and letters of her lover, the movement of her hands introduces a ludic element of play and contingency that is traditionally associated with combinatorial practices of writing and text making.<sup>8</sup> The tearing and

<sup>6</sup> In her research on the notational iconicity (“Schriftbildlichkeit”) of writing, Sybille Krämer has argued against the concept of writing as a mere phonographic representation of language that writing must be understood as a medium, a system of iconic symbols, and above all as a “cultural technology” (523) whose performative aspect is realized most poignantly in calculus, which depends on the operational use of written symbols: “Calculus is the incarnation of operative writing” (522).

<sup>7</sup> Examples like Harsdörffer’s various letter machines and Queneau’s cut up book suggest an analogue moment of haptic intervention or even manual labor in the actualisation of combinatorial variation: Harsdörffer reports that the 22 words of his “Wechselsatz” – poem might be permuted in so many ways that a scribe would have to write 1200 lines every day for 91 years to put them all on paper (“Trichter” 51–52). However, Florian Cramer has explored the connection of combinatory poetry to the algorithmic language of computers (“Statements”) and has created a website that permits the digital permutation of Queneau’s sonnet sequence and other texts mentioned above (cf. “permutations”).

<sup>8</sup> Susanne Strätling has pointed out the role of the hand in practices of writing and practices of play as both overlap in the various technologies used in the combinatorial arts: “The manipulating hand plays a prominent role not only in writing but also in playing, especially if the ludic activity arises from or

rearranging of the letter subvert the syntagmatic order of the original text in an instance of spatialisation that allows for the emergence of new meanings from a set of given signifiers. Her permutation and recombination of Proteus' words thus challenges the idea of authorial intention and generates new semantic possibilities from the pure language material her suitor has offered her. These semantic possibilities, as we recall, include a happy (re-) union accomplished by proxy through the confederation of two scraps of paper: "Now kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will" (1.2.130). Without even reading her admirer's protestations of love, she appropriates his words to textually realise her own vision of their story. As Julia combines her and Proteus' written characters, her actions assume the form of a magical ritual in which she whimsically animates her own and Proteus' name in such a way that the written signifiers can engage in sexual activity in lieu of the lovers themselves.<sup>9</sup> The animation of the text is achieved not only through the permutation of words but by addressing the letters as though they were living things, or words "made flesh" (1 John 1:14). The scene thus invokes both biblical and cabbalist ideas of divine creation via words and letters (cf. Cramer "Statements" 23, 43–49; Westerhoff 454).<sup>10</sup>

The Protean scraps of papers tumbling to the floor of Shakespeare's comedy also recall a passage from Virgil's *Aeneid*, namely the myth of the Cumaen Sibyl, whose prophesies are written on oak leaves and plastered against the "honeycombed" (6.66) mouths of the oracle's cave until the wind scatters them about, thus permuting and recombining a myriad of human fates and future life stories (6.105–19). Just as Aeneas warns the Apollonian oracle to "commit no verses to the leaves" lest they "be confused, shuffled and whirled" by "playing winds" (6.117–19), Julia implores the powers of nature: "Be calm, good wind, blow not a word away/ Till I have found each letter in the letter" (1.1.119–20). The reference draws attention to the element of hazard and contingency in combinatorial operations: whatever text Julia's permutation of the letter may generate, she is merely its 'arranger', not its author. In the following I would like to explore further how the paradigm of combinatorics is realised throughout Shakespeare's early text.

First of all, the mechanism of permutation and recombination governs the realm of amorous attachments in the play. Shortly after Proteus has proclaimed to be "metamorphosed" (1.1.66) by his love for Julia, his love undergoes a metamorphosis of its own. He follows his good friend Valentine to Milan where he immediately falls in love with Valentine's valentine Silvia:

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leads into writing. [...] Harking back to mystical letter combinatorics, it experiences a heyday in the baroque *ars combinatoria* and does not end with the invention of Scrabble" (63).

<sup>9</sup> Julia's animation of written letters draws attention to the double meaning of the word "character", which denotes both dramatic figures in a play and letters on a page. The connection has been emphasized by Stephen Orgel, who claims that: "Characters [...] are not people, they are elements of a linguistic structure, lines in a drama, and more basically, words on a page" (102).

<sup>10</sup> Julia also apologizes to Proteus' "poor wounded name" (1.2.115) as she announces that she will "kiss each several paper for amends" (1.1.110) while "trampling contemptuously" (1.1.113) on her own name. Proper names thus exceed their function as arbitrary signifiers or synecdochic representations of persons in this context and assume an embodied presence reminiscent of the eucharist as it is prefigured in the gospel of John.

She is fair, and so is Julia that I love –  
 That I did love, for now my love is thawed.  
 Which like a waxen image 'gainst a fire  
 Bears no impression of the thing it was. (2.4.185–95)

Throughout the play, the feeling of love is described as a mutable form that constantly changes its shape and state of matter. Proteus describes it as a mouldable piece of wax that adjusts itself to the object of the amorous attachment but melts away just as quickly. Proteus's change of heart is accompanied by a significant change of character that allows him to abandon Julia and to betray his friend:

Julia I lose, and Valentine I lose.  
 If I keep them I needs must lose myself.  
 If I lose them, thus find I by their loss  
 For Valentine myself, for Julia, Sylvia. (2.6.19–22)

In these tautological ruminations, in which Proteus recklessly replaces every person dear to him with himself, people become mere place holders in a reckoning game of having and not having. While Julia's demiurgic language play turns letters into living characters, Proteus reduces human beings to interchangeable elements in a game of love in which amorous attachments can be permuted and re-combined just as swiftly as his love letters. The passage has an echo in Shakespeare's sonnet sequence, which also features a polyamorous constellation of lovers, namely the speaker, the beautiful youth and the so-called dark lady. Sonnet 42 highlights the combinatorics of love by playing through the possible permutations of this triad:

If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,  
 And losing her, my friend hath found that loss;  
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,  
 And both for my sake lay on me this cross:  
 But here's the joy, my friend and I are one;  
 Sweet flattery! Then she loves but me alone. (42.9–14)

As the speaker faces the possibility of losing both objects of his affection to a couple formed amongst the two of them, he imagines an ideal unity between himself and the beautiful youth which can then be loved by the third party, thus creating a harmonious triad of love. Both these passages seem extremely similar in the way they play on the different flexions of love and loss, but their grammar and rhetoric are in fact quite different. Where Proteus constructs a convenient and simplistic syllogism out of parallelisms and antitheses that allow him to take the place of his best friend while abandoning his beloved, the sonnet employs the syntactical figures of chiasmus and antimetabole to perform the permutation of lovers and to play through the advantages of each constellation. Chiasmus and antimetabole, a figure that George Puttenham calls "the counterchange" in his *Arte of English Poesy* (217), are grammatical equivalents of the proteus line as they describe the distribution and syntactical position of a word across a verse or sentence.

To Julia, it is completely incomprehensible what might have affected the painful change of heart in her beloved. She follows Proteus to Milan in the disguise of a page and gets hold of a picture of her rival Sylvia. She quickly perceives that the only thing

distinguishing Proteus' new love from herself is the colour of her hair. The anagrammatics of love are thus complemented by an anagrammatics of beauty features:

Here is her picture. Let me see, [...]  
 Her hair is auburn, mine is perfect yellow.  
 If that be all the difference in his love,  
 I'll get me such a coloured periwig. (4.4.176–83)

This passage has a famous relative in John Donne's poem *The Anagram*, which was written about the same time as the play. The poem satirises the Petrarchan tradition of the blazon by creating a protean remix of body parts and facial features:

Marry, and love thy Flavia, for she  
 Hath all things whereby others beautiful be.  
 For, though her eyes be small, her mouth is great,  
 Though they be ivory, yet her teeth be jet:  
 Though they be dim, yet she is light enough,  
 And though her harsh hair fall, her skin is rough;  
 What though her cheeks be yellow, her hair's red;  
 Give her thine, and she hath a maidenhead. [...]  
 Though all her parts be not in th' usual place,  
 She hath yet an anagram of a good face. (10.1–16)

What these passages show is that the protean poetics of the torn letter are present in various elements of the play: aside from a fickle and inherently protean protagonist, the play is organised by a permutation of lovers, a permutation of beauty features, and a permutation of signifiers when it comes to the language of love. The scene also has theoretical implications regarding the language and semiotics of love, specifically in the comedies. It suggests that amorous passion can reside exclusively in the realm of language and letters. But it also implies that the signs and tokens of passion can be deliberately rearranged and redistributed, thus rendering the code of love as arbitrary, mutable, and conventional as language itself. The scene thus anticipates Niklas Luhmann's claim that love "as a medium is not in itself a feeling, but rather a code of communication" (20), a set of rules and communication standards that organises and generates emotions rather than originating in them. "In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, desire is textual", Jonathan Goldberg has argued accordingly (19).

When it comes to the relationship between language and affect, Shakespeare's comedies are very different from the tragedies, where emotions are often represented as something that is inaccessible to language and signification: Lear's daughter Cordelia famously refuses her father's request for verbal proof of her filial affection: "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth" (1.1.89–90), she says, and adds: "My love's more ponderous than my tongue" (1.1.75). Hamlet similarly claims that he has "that within that passeth show" (1.2.85). In contrast, love in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and subsequent Shakespearean comedies is defined by combinatorial language play whose mechanism also organises the play's character constellation and, ultimately, the dramaturgical resolution of the romantic plot. Only at the very end of the comedy, after the play has moved through all possible permutations, the original order of lovers is restored and Proteus finds forgiveness for his transgressions. He realises that,

whatever he might see in “Silvia’s face”, he “may spy, / more fresh in Julia’s with a constant eye” (5.4.112–13), thus attributing his unfaithfulness to the protean nature of visual perception.

By exploring the poetics of love from the perspective of the Proteus myth and the paradigm of the Proteus line, this early comedy establishes a variety of poetic principles that re-occur in Shakespeare’s later comedies and the sonnets. Julia reflects on the arbitrariness of amorous attachments, which constantly change position throughout the play. The motif of the permutation of lovers and the comical dramatizations of the de- and reattachment of affection reappear in plays like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (1595) or *As You Like It* (1599). The permutation of beauty features is connected to Shakespeare’s satirical reception of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition in *Sonnet 130* (1609) and in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1595), a play about several hobby sonneteers who attempt to woo their paramours by writing conventional love poems but are mercilessly rejected as the female characters call out the conventionality and insincerity of the code of love represented by Petrarchism and the poetics of the blazon

PRINCES OF FRANCE: We have received your letters full of love,  
Your favours the ambassadors of love,  
And in our maiden council rated them  
At courtship, pleasant jest, and courtesy,  
As bombast and as lining to the time. [...]  
Dumaine: Our letters, madam, showed much more than jest. [...]  
Rosaline: We did not quote them so. (5.2.759–68)

*Love’s Labour’s Lost* remains Shakespeare’s only comedy without a happy end; the fourfold wedding that the audience would structurally expect from a comedy, is postponed for a year’s time.

The rejection of Petrarchan love letters in the later comedy echoes another scene featuring a torn letter in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. After Julia has joined Proteus’ service in the disguise of a page, she delivers a note from him to her unwitting competitor Sylvia, who instantly tears the letter into pieces because she distrusts the literary conventions of love. While Proteus advocates for the deceitful and seductive use of “wailful sonnets” (3.2.69) in the game of love, Sylvia is certain that his letter will be “full of new-found oaths, which he will break/ As easily as I do tear this paper” (4.4.122–24). Both the mythical figure of Proteus and the eponymous Shakespearean character stand for a semiotic insecurity in which the outside never matches the inside: just like the ancient sea god, Proteus assumes a myriad of different shapes as he disguises and disassembles his intentions (Giamatti 473). That semiotic unreliability is projected onto the realm of language. The Protean letters and their repeated dis-assembly by the female characters of the play paradigmatically establish the combinatorial mode as a poetic principle for the language of love in the comedies. But each time they also initiate a critical reflection of the particular code of love dramatized in the genre.

### **Protean Shapeshifting and Anagrammatism in *Ulysses***

In the *Proteus* episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, references to the myth of Proteus are much less direct than in Shakespeare’s comedy. Instead, the changeable features of the

ancient sea god are realised on the level of narrative perspective and poetic style.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, the episode is an inherently poetological one. The thoughts and memories of its protagonist, an aspiring writer in his own right, are preoccupied by the themes of sense perception and poetic creation. Eventually, they culminate in a subversive scene of writing in which Stephen Dedalus tears apart a letter he was given by old Mr. Deasy in the *Nestor* episode and uses it as writing material for his own epiphanies (3.401–7). It is one of several metapoetic passages echoing Shakespeare’s scene of the torn letter which can be interpreted, once again, as allegorical representation of an anagrammatic poetics that, from the *Proteus* episode onwards, governs the rules of text production in *Ulysses*.

The *Proteus* episode is the first text in Joyce’s *oeuvre* that experiments with a stream of consciousness narrative as Stephen Dedalus takes a late morning stroll on Sandymount Strand. The first two paragraphs of the chapter alone feature several elements of what might be called Joyce’s protean poetics:

Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read, seaspawn and seawreck, the nearing tide, that rusty boot. Snotgreen, bluesilver, rust: coloured signs. Limits of the diaphane. [...] Diaphane, adiaphane. If you can put your five fingers through it it is a gate, if not a door. Shut your eyes and see.

Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time. A very short space of time through very short times of space. Five, six, the *Nacheinander*. Exactly: and that is the ineluctable modality of the audible. Open your eyes! No. Jesus! [...] My two feet in his boots are at the end of his legs, *nebeneinander*. Sounds solid: made by the mallet of Los *demiurgos*. (*Ulysses* 3.1–20)

The chapter is multilingual as it uses bits and pieces of various languages. The multiperspectivity and multivocality of the narrative are further protean features: the chapter sets in with a subjectless sentence that reveals only at the end a possessive pronoun (“my”) to which voice and perspective can be assigned. After this, the chapter moves on in a seemingly reliable “basic opposition pattern” as it alternates between an extradiegetic narrative voice that traces and describes “the linear onward movement of Stephen’s walk” alongside the beach and an autodiegetic voice that relates “the circularly arabesque movements of his reflections” (Gabler 59) in internal monologues and dialogues. As “obvious” (Gabler 59) as this pattern may seem, the changing voices and perspectives are not easily told apart because Stephen’s voice occasionally takes over the description of what is happening on the beach and the extradiegetic narrative voice becomes playful and arabesque-like in turn. The narrative structure thus remains inherently protean. Andreas Mahler has argued that the *Proteus* episode marks a point in Joyce’s works where his narrative style shifts programmatically from a mimetic to a performative mode of writing in which “dysphoric world-making” ultimately turns into “euphoric text-making” (291), a process in which “the illusion of a plausible and

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<sup>11</sup> The chapters of the novel were originally only numbered with no direct indications of their hypertextual correspondence with passages from Homer’s *Odyssey*. However, in 1930 Stuart Gilbert included a schema that outlines the Homeric character, time, place, art, a bodily organ, as well as a narrative mode dominant in each chapter (30). As the Gilbert schema’s publication was sanctioned by Joyce, it has become customary to refer to the chapters by their mythical reference points.

consistent mimetic realization of a (seemingly pre-existent) world” is replaced by a playful poetics that eventually opens into a “liberated endless syntagmatic progression of (writable and written) ‘text’” (291). Mahler mentions onomatopoeic and anaphoric passages in *Proteus* as examples of Joyce’s “textual machinery” (294). I want to take this argument a little further as I demonstrate below that text production in *Ulysses* consists to a large extent of anagrammatic variations and combinatorial patterns, which, in turn, are introduced and prefigured in Stephen Dedalus’ own literary practice.

Invoking Aristotelian faculty psychology, Stephen ponders the difference between the “ineluctable modality of the visible” and the “audible”, thus illustrating the protean nature of sense perception, connecting it then to Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s aesthetic categories of “nebeneinander” and “nacheinander” and thus to the *paragone* between ‘temporal arts’ (“Zeitkünste”), which rely on sequentiality, on one hand and ‘spatial arts’ (“Raumkünste”) like painting and sculpture on the other (cf. Gifford 45). The aesthetic principles that occupy Stephen’s mind are reflected in his movements and perceptions: “Stephen closed his eyes to hear his boots crush crackling wrack and shells. You are walking through it howsomever. I am, a stride at a time” (3.10–11). While Stephen engages in a linear movement that follows the sequential pattern of “nacheinander”, the narrative description of his movements obeys increasingly a spatialised pattern of “nebeneinander” that projects onto the “syntagmatic axis of combination” (Jakobson 358) a paradigm of velar plosives (“cr”) and internal rhymes (“ack”) that imitate the sound of his steps (cf. Mahler 292–94). In the syntagmatic sequencing of phonetically similar elements Joyce’s prose becomes not only increasingly poetic, it also becomes increasingly anagrammatic. As Stephen ‘crushes’ and ‘cracks’ the ‘wrack’ and the shells of Sandymount under his feet, his thought process brings about the first portmanteau of the book – “howsomever” – which lifts into syntagmatic presence an entire paradigm of words and compresses it into one: ‘however’, ‘somehow’, and ‘whatsoever’.<sup>12</sup>

Like the anagram and the proteus verse, portmanteaus disrupt the “Nacheinander” of words and letters and introduce an element of spatiality to poetic language. The poetological ruminations of *Proteus* thus introduce one of the most persistent stylistic features of the novel, whose protagonists are later revealed to be ardent anagrammatists themselves.<sup>13</sup> In *Scylla and Charybdis*, Stephen Dedalus bemoans in a range of anagrams Shakespeare’s poor treatment of Anne Hathaway, whom he left only his second-best bed:

Leftherhis  
Secondbest  
Leftherhis

<sup>12</sup> The linguistic characteristics, historical development, and semantic possibilities of Joyce’s portmanteau words have been investigated by scholars such as Derek Attridge (“Portmanteau”), Jordan Brower, and Antonia Zimmerlich (45–47). Brower observes a gradual increase of anagrammatic forms in Joyce’s writing, starting with simple neologisms and composites in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, which then graduates to the repeated anagrammatic play and use of complex portmanteaus in *Ulysses*, culminating finally in *Finnegan’s Wake* (442).

<sup>13</sup> Anselm Haverkamp considers ‘paragrams’, ‘hypograms’, ‘cryptonyms’, ‘cryptograms’, and ‘achrostics’ as variations of the anagram and expands that list by ‘anagrammatic phenomena’ such as ‘alliteration’, ‘paronomasia’, ‘antonomasia’, ‘syllepsis’, ‘palindrome’, ‘echo’, and ‘pun’ (133).



Bestabed  
 Secabest  
 Leftabed. (9.701–6)

The *Ithaka* episode reveals young Leopold Bloom as a “kinetic poet” (17.19) and master of combinatorics who presents his beloved with an acrostic of his nickname “Poldy” on Valentine’s day (17.10–16), and who can jumble the components of his own name into a bunch of hilarious anagrams:

Leopold Bloom  
 Ellpodbomool  
 Molldopeloob  
 Bollopedoom  
 Old Ollebo, M.P. (17.404–9)

Occasionally, Joyce’s text is structured and perpetuated by homonyms, which constitute an extreme form of the anagram: in homonyms, a sequence of letters is not varied or permuted at all and yet may refer to completely different signifieds. The following passage is constructed around the homonyms of “Citron” and “Pleasant”:

Oranges and tissue paper packed in crates. Citrons too. Wonder is poor Citron still in Saint Kevin’s parade. [...] Pleasant evenings we had then. Molly in Citron’s basketchair. Nice to hold, cool waxen fruit, hold in the hand, lift it to the nostrils and smell the perfume. Like that, heavy, sweet, wild perfume. Always the same, year after year. They fetched high prices too, Moisel told me. Arbutus place: Pleasants street: pleasant old times. Must be without a flaw, he said. (4.204–210).

In this passage from the *Calypso* episode, Leopold Bloom spies a pile of Mediterranean citrus fruit on the market and instantly associates them with their verbal signifier “Citron”, which then reminds him of the name of an old neighbour, Mr. Citron, and thus stimulates a cascade of “pleasant” memories, which lead him to further recollections of “Pleasants Street”. The passage does not relate a coherent story or incident but is generated entirely by its anagrammatic language material and its associative potential.

Anagrammatic forms are occasionally expanded onto the level of syntax: the second section of the *Aeolus* chapter, for instance, features a syntactic palindrome that reverts the grammatical units of a sentence and thus recalls the mechanism of the Proteus verse:

Grossbooted draymen rolled barrels dullthudding out of Prince’s stores and bumped them up on the brewery float. On the brewery float bumped dullthudding barrels rolled by grossbooted draymen out of Prince’s stores. (7.21–24)

Anagrammatic forms in Joyce’s novel occur not only on the level of singular words and sentences but extend to the anagrammatic combination of phrases and texts in an extreme form of intertextual connectivity. This aspect of Joyce’s combinatorial poetics, too, is prefigured in the reading and writing practices described in *Proteus*. Stephen, who spent his youth at a catholic boarding school, recalls that he used to read “two pages apiece of seven books every night” (3.136), thus overthrowing linearity of plot and argument in his reading practice and replacing it with a combinatorial pattern instead. He then reminds himself of “Books” he was “going to write with letters for titles” (3.139), and imagines the critical dialogue they might have inspired:

Have you read his F? O yes, but I prefer Q. Yes, but W is wonderful. O yes, W. Remember your epiphanies written on green oval leaves, deeply deep copies to be sent if you died to all the great libraries of the world, including Alexandria? Someone was to read them there after a few thousand years, a mahamanvantara. Pico della Mirandola like. Ay, very like a whale. (3.139–45)

Obviously, young Stephen had Shakespeare's Folio and Quarto editions in mind when he imagined writing books with letters for titles, and he expands that sequence by a third volume entitled "W", thus inscribing himself ambitiously into the Shakespearean tradition. In both his reading and his writing practice, Stephen expands the anagrammatic scope from the permutation of words and letters to the permutation of larger chunks of text: by selecting several pages from a set of several books and recombining them in a new sequential order, he creates a new text from existing ones. Stephen's habit of writing his ideas on "green oval leaves" (3.141), which are then to be collected in the libraries of the world, continues his practice of permuting and combining entire texts and stories. It echoes Virgil's myth of the Sibyl of Cumae even more directly than Shakespeare and must be read equally as a metapoetic invocation of protean anagrammatism, especially since Stephen compares his writing practice to that of Pico della Mirandola, who was himself a Christian kabbalist and practitioner of the combinatorial art.<sup>14</sup>

Stephen's practices of reading and writing illustrate Julia Kristeva's anagrammatic concept of intertextuality according to which each word in a literary text demarcates a "croisement des surfaces textuelles" ("Mot" 144), an "intersection of textual surfaces" ("Word" 35). Kristeva's radical model suggests that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations" ("Word" 37), thus installing a combinatorial model as the basis of all literary communication. Joyce's *Ulysses* is not just a hypertext of a clearly defined pretext, it programmatically integrates myriads of intertextual references, which constitute another aspect of the novel's combinatorial poetics. The hypogrammatic reference to the "green oval leaves" (3.141) of the Cumaean Sibyl is particularly interesting as it has poetological implications of its own. Aeneas' consultation of the Sybil constitutes the Roman equivalent of the consultation of Proteus in the *Odyssey*. The temple of the Sibyl was founded by Stephen's mythical namesake, Daedalus, as he "fled the realm of Minos" (6.22). Like Joyce's "Old Father Ocean" (3.483), the Sybil is portrayed as an unpredictable shape changer.<sup>15</sup> Her habitat is described as a gigantic "cavern perforated a hundred times" (6.67) with prophesy spouting mouths, which are, in turn, plastered with inscribed leaves. Aeneas asks the Sybil to deliver her revelations

<sup>14</sup> Pico della Mirandola, whose writings were an important influence for both Shakespeare and Joyce, is usually seen as the founder of the Christian Kabbalah. He was familiar with kabbalist writings such as the *Zohar* and the *Sefer Yezira*, as well as with the works of the medieval Spanish kabbalist Abraham Abulafia and used their combinatorial techniques as well as the letters of the Hebrew alphabet to generate the name of Jesus and to thus affirm the catholic faith (cf. Reichert 198, see also: Yates 19–27, Eco 120–126).

<sup>15</sup> The Sibyl's reaction to Aeneas' inquiry reads very similar to the transformations of Proteus:

And as she spoke neither her face  
nor hue went untransformed, nor did her  
hair stay neatly bound: her breast heaved, her wild heart  
Grew large with passion (VI.76–80)



Stephen has apparently continued by collecting paper slips from the library as his writing material of choice. Like Julia's tearing and recombining of Proteus's letter in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Stephen's writing practice invokes a combinatorial poetics that continues to unfold throughout *Ulysses*.

Combinatorial texts, as shown above, are characterized by an aspect of automation. Narrative coherence as well as authorial autonomy are surrendered to an algorithmic permutation and syntagmatic generation of signifiers that obfuscates traditional modes of mimetic representation and plot construction. In Joyce's case, that aspect of combinatorial automation is realised on various levels. Firstly, Joyce's *Proteus* episode dispenses with a unifying narrative perspective and offers it up to fragmentation and multiplication instead. Secondly, the novel constantly generates and perpetuates its verbal material according to the Jakobsonian principle of similarity. It thus relies on the autopoetic potential of its language material. And finally, each subsequent chapter is subject to an externally established formal principle that determines its narrative and poetic form. The *Aeolus* episode follows the typographic and narrative conventions of the newspaper, the *Sirens* episode is composed according to the formal patterns of the *fuga al canonem* (which is a combinatorial pattern in its own right), *Ithaca* follows the form of a scholastic treatise, etc. (cf. Gilbert 30, Iser 324–26). The rules and conventions assigned to each chapter assume the function of an algorithmic combination pattern. They resemble Julia's agitated hands or the wind that shuffles the leaves of the Sibyl and add an element of contingency in which the categories of author and narrator are replaced by what Hugh Kenner poignantly termed "The Arranger" (22–25).

### Conclusion

Both Shakespeare's Julia and Joyce's Stephen Dedalus disassemble a letter and then proceed to use it productively in an act of poetic creation and animation. In each case, the scene of the torn letter turns into a metapoetic scene of writing that forecasts a combinatorial poetics about to unfold in each text and subsequently in each author's *oeuvre*. The metapoetic implications of the scene are, in both cases, deepened and amplified by the additional intertextual layer of Virgil's description of the Cumean Sybil and the combinatorial media practices used in her prophesies. Julia's tearing and reassembling of Proteus' love letter programmatically establishes a pattern of permutation and transformation as the prevailing poetic principle of Shakespeare's romantic comedies and casts, at the same time, a critical spotlight on a code of love that is based on the arbitrary permutation and recombination of signifiers, couples, and body parts. Similarly, Stephen's practice of writing his poetic revelations on random "leaves" (3.141) and paper scraps can be read as illustrative of the anagrammatic poetics about to unravel in the remaining chapters of *Ulysses* and Joyce's work in general. In each case, it is not merely the myth of Proteus, but specifically the reference to the combinatorial paradigm introduced by Scaliger's Proteus line that provides a productive perspective for the analysis of the poetic principles governing each text.

The motif of the torn letter is also the element that establishes an intertextual relationship between Shakespeare's earliest comedy and Joyce's *Ulysses* and thus allows for a comparative reading of the two texts in the first place. Because of each

scene's poetological ramifications, the discovery of this additional intertextual connection is not just a philological miscellany to be added to the many investigations of Joycean Shakespeare references. The motif of the torn letter constitutes, in the terminology of Julia Kristeva, an "intersection of textual surfaces" ("Word" 35) in which the word 'letter' regulates and controls what Kristeva describes as the mutation "from diachrony to synchrony" ("Word" 37). The diachronous structure of literary history is thus transformed into a momentary instance of synchronicity in which Joyce's text becomes early modern as much as Shakespeare's turns into a modernist text experiment.

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## Zusammenfassung

In einer vergleichenden Lektüre metapoetischer Passagen in William Shakespeares früher Komödie *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1590) und der *Proteus*-Episode aus dem *Ulysses* (1922) von James Joyce arbeitet dieser Beitrag die poetologischen Implikationen der *Proteus*-Mythe und ihrer Rezeption in poetischen und poetologischen Texten der Renaissance heraus. Seit Iulius Caesar Scaligers Einführung des sogenannten Proteus-Verses in den *Sieben Büchern der Dichtkunst* (1561) ist diese mit einer kombinatorischen Poetik assoziiert, die bei Shakespeare in der Anfangsszene, in welcher ein Liebesbrief zerrissen, permutiert, und kombiniert wird, allegorisch aufgerufen und fortan als poetologische Matrix der Liebeskomödie lesbar ist. Im *Ulysses* wird in diversen Szenen des Lesens und Schreibens ebenfalls eine kombinatorische Poetik aufgerufen, welche die narratologischen und poetischen Verfahrensweisen des *Proteus*-Kapitels beschreibbar macht und anagrammatische Formen im *Ulysses* sowie in Joyces Spätwerk antizipiert.

**SHAKESPEARE IN CHILE – PABLO NERUDA THROUGH THE EYES OF  
DOUGLAS DUNN. A CONTRIBUTION TO THE POSTCOLONIAL  
DEBATE AROUND UNIVERSALISM**

by

REBECA ARAYA ACOSTA

**Introduction**

In Scottish poet Douglas Dunn's autobiographical poetry collection *The Year's Afternoon* (Dunn) one poem stands out. Titled "A Theory of Literary Criticism", Dunn's lyrical homage to his Chilean counterpart, Pablo Neruda, has a simplicity that deceives. Strictly speaking, it is an elegy on the socialist Neruda who died of cancer on 23 September 1973, twelve days after the coup against the government of Salvador Allende, Latin America's first democratically elected communist president and a friend of Neruda's. The violent overthrow of Allende under the head of Chile's military forces, Augusto Pinochet, quickly triggered international displays of solidarity with the ousted government and its persecuted adherents. Working as a professor and poet in residence at the University of Hull at the time, Dunn must have been aware of the local solidarity campaign which included cultural events to raise awareness of the Chilean conflict. It is even likely that some of Dunn's poetry students (if not Dunn himself) participated in them. In this respect, Dunn's remembrance of Neruda in *The Year's Afternoon* can indeed be said to have an autobiographical component, as it works like a reference to the political mood of his time in Hull. However, closer examination betrays a more intimate connection joining Dunn and Neruda. Dunn's collection of poems is transparent about the role models who inspired him, not least Neruda himself. This is where the title "A Theory of Literary Criticism", which subsumes his homage to the Chilean, gains importance.

Going beyond the elegiac gesture of remembrance, Dunn seeks to rescue a lesson in literary criticism that Neruda imparted (albeit indirectly) to him. In Dunn's poetic homage it is not Neruda himself who stands at the centre, but his copy of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Exploring the implications of this oblique celebration of Neruda, this article advances the claim that, through his focus on Neruda's use of Shakespeare, Dunn preserves and recirculates Neruda's socialist defense of universalism. In light of recent developments in the postcolonial debate over appropriation, Dunn's re-cycling of Neruda's argument about the universal reach of art – indeed, even that of the controversial Bard – achieves two things. On the first plane and through Dunn's updating frame, Neruda rehabilitates Shakespeare's works within the postcolonial setting. Secondly, this rehabilitation is tied together in Neruda with the displacement of the intellectual in favour of Everyman as a consumer, disseminator, and even potential producer of literature. Both the question of cultural appropriation and the solving of the class-determined tension between the art critic as intellectual and the people as both



object and potential consumers of that art are germane to Dunn's own poetics. It is the resolution of these two sites of tension – tensions which unavoidably determine the Scottish poet writing in the wake of Hugh MacDiarmid's "Renaissance" and under the sign of Scottish "New Writing" – that the speaker of Dunn's "A Theory of Literary Criticism" chooses to honour in this elegy on Neruda.

The works of William Shakespeare have borne the weight of postcolonial theory in its claims and contestations like no other. Formerly considered by some intellectuals such as Brazilian Oswald de Andrade as a two-edged sword that could revert the damage of empire through bellicose appropriation – de Andrade frames it in terms of cultural "anthropophagy"<sup>1</sup> – in the twenty-first century the option of appropriating the Bard is increasingly met with scepticism. Indeed, as Andrew Dickson concludes on his global tour of Shakespearean adaptations and after looking into the ambiguous history of the "Robben Island Shakespeare", "the relationship between the British empire's anointed playwright and the peoples on whom his work was imposed remains fraught" (Dickson 2015). Ultimately a form of resistance to and through Shakespeare, this type of resistance has been exposed as a narrative that is unavoidably liable to co-option as an Orientalising script. Matthew Hahn's play *The Robben Island Shakespeare* (2017) is prefaced by an apt testimony from black actor and playwright John Kani. After agreeing to play Othello in a historically unprecedented production of the play in 1987 South Africa, Kani was subjected to intense interrogation by an anxious state police. It suspected a "communist plot" under way due to the play's overt undermining of apartheid rules through its casting choice of a black Othello (Hahn 2017, ix).

The narrative of resistance can also fail irrespective of the good intentions of the narrator. Thus, in his *Hamlet's Dreams. The Robben Island Shakespeare* (2012) David Schalkwyk problematises the role ascribed to the appropriation of Shakespeare in the fight against apartheid. As such, he questions the celebration of the *Complete Works* copy signed by Nelson Mandela and fellow prisoners on Robben Island as a symbol of black empowerment. Schalkwyk's scepticism concerning the political reach of the narrative of appropriation corresponds with recent critiques from the fields of sociology and literary studies concerned with what is believed to be postcolonial theory's much-too-narrow emphasis on difference. The work of sociologist Vivek Chibber and literary scholar Nivedita Majumdar expose with varying foci the fault lines in what Majumdar has termed the postcolonial "master narrative of agency and resistance" (29). The sense that a political automatism of attending to difference has turned the Orientalising violence on the postcolonial project itself pervades Chibber's sociological critique of Subaltern Studies and Majumdar's reassessment of the postcolonial approach to literary analysis respectively. Both Chibber and Majumdar argue that the category of universalism is a much-needed critical tool to better address the postcolonial experience. Moreover, by carefully rehabilitating historical and material continuities with the West, both positions argue, there is better chance of identifying the real issues at stake in a Third World that is just as threatened by the increasingly academicist tendencies of postcolonial theory as it is under the weight of its colonial past.

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<sup>1</sup> See de Andrade's "The Cannibalist Manifesto" (1928).

In this sense Pablo Neruda becomes an interesting case study, not only for Dunn. Neruda had acted as government consul in the interwar period and was a militant member of the Chilean communist party from 1945 until his death. Informed by this personal and political trajectory, he sought to advance a global vision of the literary craft to further a notion of transnational affinities and historical-materialist continuities. It is this understanding of the creative art, especially as it relates to poetry, that Dunn's speaker celebrates in "A Theory". In Schalkwyk's sense, I read Dunn's commemoration of him, and by extension of his Shakespeare reception, in terms of a more adequate contextualisation of the Shakespearean material in light of Chile's colonial history and the concomitant social issues that in turn permeated Neruda's writing and political activism. A clear reconfiguration of agency separates Dunn's Neruda from de Andrade and his bellicose take on Shakespeare, insofar as Dunn attends to Neruda's celebration of a universalism that became discredited in the wake of the postcolonial charting of Third-World literature.

### Rehabilitating Universalism

Rick J. Santos opens his introduction to *Latin American Shakespeares* (2005) with a claim that has become iconic for Postcolonial Studies: "Shakespeare in Latin America is as mixed as the people themselves" (11). Though restricted to the Shakespeare reception, what is at the core of this assertion is nothing other than the postcolonial culturalist reflex. The assumption is that a product of the Western literary canon will elicit different responses outside of the Western cultural sphere. More to the point, it will be aligned with the shifting background of its recipients. This results in a form of cultural 'mestizaje' which Santos is quick to associate with de Andrade's image of cannibalism:

It is worthwhile to highlight that Latin America [sic] philosophical tradition is based on 'cultural cannibalism', a concept introduced by Oswald de Andrade in the 'Manifesto antropófago' ["Cannibalist Manifesto"] (1928), which describes a resistant method to absorb information from First World countries without losing cultural autonomy. (Santos 11)

While the ideal of cultural cannibalism did have its proponents in Latin America, it would be misleading to suggest that it is the basis of something like a Latin American philosophical tradition. This is especially the case since he does not elaborate on his later claim that cultural cannibalism allows the recovery of agency for "those traditionally excluded and marginalized" (Santos 12). It is not clear whom Santos means by the excluded and marginalised. If what he has in mind is Latin American writers, then the question that crops up is whether the cannibalistic imperative ever meant anything beyond the domain of the Latin American intellectual, or even whether said agency could not have been regained on the basis of relatability rather than radical cultural alienation.

These are questions inspired by one branch of critical engagement with postcolonial theory that seeks to rehabilitate a "modest" form of universalism for analysis (Vanaik 2017, 2). The general assumption is that, as Achin Vanaik puts it, "our human similarities of *minimal common* rationality/needs/instincts/capacities/emotions provide enough resources for cross-cultural learning and behavior" (2017, 12, emphasis in the original).

As such, these approaches depart from the conventional postcolonial narrative à la Santos in that they favour similarity over difference to account for questions of postcolonial state formation and development. By so doing, these theorists also understand themselves as subjecting the role of the postcolonial academic to revision. Coming from the sociological perspective, Vivek Chibber draws our attention to the historical inconsistencies generated by the postcolonial differential style of argumentation (3-4). Concerned with the concrete case of postcolonial India, Chibber expands on his criticism by directing it at the increasingly textualistic tendencies of the field, a property which, under the aegis of poststructuralist and cultural theorists such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Edward Said, helped increase its academic popularity at the cost of sociological inquiry. Chibber posits that arguing from difference and through the evocation of a master narrative is in and of itself not wrong given the postcolonial agenda. It only becomes objectionable once this logic is used and later invariably applied to other contexts without being backed each time by historical evidence. Thus, Chibber reads key figures of the Subaltern Studies collective as guided by the differential logic and thus overlooking important commonalities that can better account for the current political condition of former colonies.

Continuing the discussion of the differential logic, Nivedita Majumdar puts the problem down to the unresolvable tension between localism and universalism which drives the postcolonial critical method (5). Revisiting the literary sources celebrated as paradigmatic for postcolonial literature, Majumdar finds examples that work in analogy to Chibber's interrogation of Subaltern Studies. Just as Ranajit Guha had idealised the European bourgeoisie in his eagerness to highlight the extent of alterity in regard to its Indian 'deficient' counterpart (Chibber 2013, 90–91) – a construction created to fit the postcolonial differential paradigm – Majumdar outlines how Spivak herself can be faulted for her preference for alterity at the cost of engaging the actual issues complicating postcolonial development. In both cases achieving the latter would have meant attending to those similarities subaltern subjects bear even with their Western counterparts, namely the material pressures all individuals are subject to under a capitalist system (Vanaik 2017, 14).

However, such a move to economic relatability does not sit well with a postcolonial theory that is increasingly hostile to the socialist project, as Chibber and Majumdar have diagnosed the current trends in the field to be. Too deeply ingrained is the association of universalising claims with the tools of empire to allow for the postulation of wider-encompassing issues and crises. A similar issue in the postcolonial argumentative logic can be observed with the Shakespeare reception. In fact, it is precisely this concern over the cultural vestiges of empire that drove de Andrade's call to "cannibalize" Shakespeare. Nevertheless, and after having considered Chibber and Majumdar's objections to this logic of cultural alienation, the question remains whether such a type of appropriation can keep faith with the postcolonial promise of representing a certainly non-academic section of Latin Americans and their socioeconomic predicaments. In the case of the Robben Island Shakespeare and South Africans, Schalkwyk finds that the question must be answered in the negative. This failed appropriation will be discussed as a contrastive example to Dunn's Chilean Shakespeare.

With the Robben Island Shakespeare, the scenario of appropriation outlined by Santos in the past section is continued. Shortly before his release as a political prisoner on Robben Island, Sonny Venkatrathnam circulated his copy of Shakespeare's *Complete Works* among his fellow inmates and asked them to sign a passage of their choice. Among them was Nelson Mandela, whose signing of Caesar's reply to Calpurnia's foreboding, "Cowards die many times before their deaths; / The valiant never taste of death but once", fired up the Robben Island narrative of appropriation. In *Hamlet's Dreams* Schalkwyk traces how this act of signing quickly became a red herring for postcolonial scholars who were eager to see a full-bodied act of anti-apartheid appropriation of the Bard in Venkatrathnam's initiative. As he quotes from later interviews with some of the signers, Schalkwyk reveals how shaky the foundations of such an understanding of the Robben Island Shakespeare are. With some of the interviewees not recalling why they chose a particular passage or even openly expressing incomprehension at the importance attributed to their signings, Schalkwyk arrives at a similar conclusion to Majumdar's. In assessing the value of this particular copy of the *Works* there is disproportionate attention paid to an idea of resistance as connected to the act of selecting and signing the passages that seems to be completely disconnected from the reality of the event.

Countering Tom Lodge's claim in his Mandela biography about the great number of prisoners who 'universalised' their experience through the reading of the Robben Island copy, Schalkwyk reminds us of the fact that Venkatrathnam's Shakespeare only made its rounds in section B of the prison, where only thirty-four inmates were kept. The remaining prisoners, thousands of whom were illiterate, would have been in a separate section and certainly not uniformly thinking of Shakespeare as their first recourse to describe their condition of captivity. Their knowledge of the playwright, if at all existent, would have been restricted to whatever small contact English school curricula had afforded them (Schalkwyk 13). Moreover, delving into the act of signing itself, Schalkwyk exposes the several layers of signification involved in the process:

[T]here the signatory is signing himself against another name – 'Shakespeare' – and that name is multiplied in the names of the multiple characters who speak, both on their own behalf and in his name. Shakespeare is held hostage by the characters who appear in his name, and who therefore divide him from himself. Anyone who pledges himself against Shakespeare's characters thus gives himself up to being hostage both to the characters and to Shakespeare – and to the accumulated other signatures that 'Shakespeare' had acquired over almost half a millennium. The depths of complexity here are almost dizzying – but they may be encompassed or, perhaps better, signaled by the notion of the unconscious, which suggests a difficult relation of simultaneous singularity and generality, agency and passivity, individuality and institutionality. (Schalkwyk 22)

Needless to say, such an entangled understanding of the signature complicates the seemingly straightforward story of resistance that had been weaved around the Robben Island Shakespeare. Such a story presupposes the primacy of subjective identity over and beyond any other consideration. Which is why, when considered on these grounds alone, it is not as long lasting as postcolonial scholars would have hoped. "What is this 'Robben Island Bible'? What is it that people want to do? The quotation mentioned there was not chosen by me" (Mlangeni qtd. in Hahn), a confused Andrew Mlangeni states when interviewed by Hahn when gathering material for his play about the Robben Island

Shakespeare in 2010. Former fellow inmate Kwede Mkalipi echoes Mlangeni's statement by admitting that he would even choose a different passage if given a second chance (Mkalipi qtd. in Hahn). And some of those who stand by their choice do so despite knowingly undermining expectations about the political meaning of such a selection. Here Schalkwyk draws attention to Eddie Daniels 'internalisation' of Macbeth's speech about the futility of the future: "Striking, though, is the fact that the exemplary life [Daniels] sketches is not the self-sacrificing prisoner on Robben Island, but rather the comfortable bourgeois ideals of South Africans in the twenty-first century" (Schalkwyk 35).

Examples like these unsettle the notion that the individuals in question were approaching Shakespeare with a political agenda in mind. Rather, they were individually reacting to what could have been questions of aesthetics, as possibly conveyed through the vestiges of British colonial schooling, questions of personal sympathy or even attending to spontaneous impulses which made them prefer one passage over others.

On these grounds expecting the signers to become Robben Island 'eaters' of Shakespeare is unrealistic given the either filtered or limited access to the playwright most of the signatories had, let alone the non-signatories. The expectation is also out of place. Rather than attending to the particular postcolonial experience of these prisoners, such a logic generalises their plight into a culturalist formula. Schalkwyk's examples serve to expose the limits of the universalist argument when applied to a narrative of resistance. Rather than applying this wider lens to highlight actual problems affecting global communities alike, it is used to construct a homogeneous story of contention that can only speak to academics and hence represent little more than a discourse. What Schalkwyk's findings show is that as fighters against racial and the concomitant economic oppression, these prisoners struggled to see resistance within what was ultimately a different power paradigm.

Addressing this divergence between the notion of power in traditional power relations and the new understanding of power as introduced by cultural politics, Majumdar draws from Sri Lankan British writer and former director of the London Institute of Race Relations, Ambalavaner Sivanandan (Majumdar 211). In his insightful analysis of the emergence of the British New Left, Sivanandan outlines just how much a departure from the socialist project of the British Left was owing to Labour's electoral pressures. In the face of the Thatcherite reconfiguration of the working 'social bloc' as aided by the quick development of information technologies and accompanying service industry, Labour's options for its constituencies also underwent a transformation and with them the notion of a vertical power struggle determining class relations was also changed:

There is, that is, not just one power game any more but several, and not just one political line but a whole lot of political positions – and hence 'a politics which is always positional'. And personal. Because the personal is the political. And personal politics is also about the politics of consumption, desire, pleasure – because we have got choice now. (Sivanandan 13)

Even though Sivanandan's analysis of this shift in the British Left is restricted to the particular political dynamics Britain was undergoing at the time, it is useful to think of this divergence between the Old and the New Left as equally shaping postcolonial rhetoric and the expectations regarding the forms of expression of the formerly

colonised. Both Chibber's and Majumdar's issues with postcolonial theory rest precisely on such a turn to a politics of identity that disavows the importance of the economic question. Thus, returning to Schalkwyk's argument and when considering the act of signing, much is made of these prisoners' choices in terms of their minoritarian identities. But this is while bypassing the common cause they espoused, namely, resistance to apartheid as a multi-layered system of oppression where race was only one of the components. Accordingly, the fetishisation of the Robben Island Shakespeare is grounded on the assumption that choice would have been recognised by Venkatrathnam's inmates as a political opportunity. That this was not so has been proven by the various gaps in this story of resistance.

### Signing for all. Neruda and Shakespeare

With Dunn's "A Theory" readers find the opposite of fetishisation as the poem both exalts and relativizes in their importance the names of both feted artists, Shakespeare *and* Neruda, in favour of the transcendental act of creating poetry. On the surface the poem has the air of commemoration. The lyrical speaker introduces Neruda as the owner of a copy of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* which is then – upon his death and the subsequent raid on his property – sent into circulation as what seems like a metaphor for Neruda's oeuvre. Persecuted for his political views and affiliations, Neruda became a special target decades before the coup. The poem translates this biographical trajectory through images of recurring tension between the physical realm of censure where books are stolen and destroyed and an ideal world that negates even the possibility of annihilation. One interpretation would position the memory of Neruda and his literary influence in this ideal world, and thus regard the poem as a mere act of homage giving. However, upon closer inspection, and bearing in mind the programmatic title, the poem reveals greater depth. Thus, the speaker opens the poem with a seemingly simple act of signing that, as Schalkwyk would argue, is anything but simple:

In 1930, on the island of Java,  
Pablo Neruda purchased Shakespeare's *Sonnets*  
Into which he wrote his name and the date. (Dunn, 11, l. 1–3)

Although the informed reader knows about the biographical foundations of these lines – Neruda himself mentioned this transaction<sup>2</sup> –, this is more than just a reference to that event. As will become clear, Dunn uses the Shakespearean *Sonnets* owned by Neruda as a pretext to introduce Neruda's poetics of the socialist artist:

After he died, his houses were plundered.  
What became of his book, his treasure of four decades?  
Whether stolen, or cast aside, it circulates

From Batavia to Chile by the long way round  
Across the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic,

<sup>2</sup> See Neruda's speech "Shakespeare, Prince of Light": "My name is written in my copy of the *Sonnets*, along with the day and the month in 1930 when I bought the book on the island of Java" (1983, 163).

From Chile to Batavia across the Pacific.

It goes like an albatross and they cannot kill it.  
 Out of the fires of burning books rises the perfect replica.  
 From hand to phantasmagorical hand (l. 4–12)

In lines 5–6 the equivocal nature of Neruda's *Sonnets* book is established. The answer to the whereabouts of his "treasure of four decades" (l. 5) (i.e., the book) is as indeterminate as it is nonsensical: "whether stolen, or cast aside, it circulates" (l. 6). Here the reader witnesses a transformation of the historical object – Neruda's *Sonnets* by Shakespeare – into a metaphor based on an abstract "it". An "it" that circulates across the globe following Neruda's consular travels ("From Batavia to Chile [...] / Across the Indian Ocean" l. 7–8) before being likened to what sounds like Samuel Taylor Coleridge's albatross from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: "It goes like an albatross and they cannot kill it" (l. 10). It is tempting to suspect that the "it" stands for Neruda's Shakespeare-inspired literary legacy. After all, the travels described do match his, even if the chronological order of the trips "From Batavia to Chile" (l. 7) and "From Chile to Batavia" (l. 8) should be inverted. Moreover, the paradox of circulation despite impairment in line 6 ("whether stolen, or cast aside, it circulates") conveys a sense of resistance worthy of de Andrade's "Manifesto". After having internalised Shakespeare, Neruda's oeuvre can defy and withstand violence.

However, how does the speaker's association of the "it" to an albatross (which, unlike the mariner's, "cannot [be] kill[ed]", l. 10) fit in? In Coleridge's ballad it is the death of the albatross that generates the mariner's need to atone through compulsive retelling: Since then, at an uncertain hour,

That agony returns:  
 And till my ghastly tale is told,  
 This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;  
 That moment that his face I see,  
 I know the man that must hear me:  
 To him my tale I teach. (Coleridge l. 582–590)

But in Dunn's poem there seems to be a conflation of albatross and "tale" as the next two lines show: "Out of the fires of burning books rises the perfect replica. / From hand to phantasmagorical hand" (l. 11–12). The seamless transition of the "it" from being an albatross to a "perfect replica" (l. 11.) sustains this interpretation. And this is not the only alteration of Coleridge's ballad. The identity of the mariner has also changed. In Dunn's rendition there is no sin calling for atonement and as such, the "phantasmagorical hand[s]" (l. 12) are free of guilt. And yet, their "phantasmagorical" quality seems to insist on the connection to the haunted mariner. If these hands are indeed to be understood in terms of the protectors and disseminators of Neruda's legacy, why should they be ghostly? The answer lies in Neruda's own collective understanding of the arts, where the act of artistic creation requires the involvement of many actors through time and where the Romantic genius or vatic artist is superseded by a creative

community. It is this understanding of poetry which Dunn's speaker offers in adaptation as "A Theory of Literary Criticism."

A highly metareferential poem, "A Theory" mimics the poetic process as Neruda saw it. In a speech delivered at the Faculty of Arts and Letters upon his appointment as Academic Fellow, Neruda reminisces on his poetic becoming, citing the names who influenced him, but more than anything establishing an entangled notion of the writing of poetry:

The world of the arts is one great workshop in which we all work and in which everyone helps his fellow, though he may not know or believe it. And, most important, we are aided by the work of those who came before us: we know there can be no Rubén Darío without a Góngora, no Apollinaire without a Rimbaud, no Baudelaire without a Lamartine, no Pablo Neruda without them all. And it is out of pride, not modesty, that I proclaim all poets my masters, for what would I be without the years I spent reading everything that had been written in my country and in every universe of poetry? (Neruda 1983, 362-363)

These clear statements of interdependence alert the reader to an alternative way of understanding literary influence that does not necessarily correspond with de Andrade's digestive metaphor. Earlier in the speech Neruda even distances himself from the iconoclastic type of writers who "wanted to be the lone respected survivor[s] in the midst of the assembly of the goddess Kali and her murderous cult" (Neruda 1983, 353). Instead, Neruda resorts to the image of flowing water to illustrate the idea of being "aided by the work of those who came before us" (1983, 363). Referring to the influence of Daniel de la Vega on him, he claims "that some drop of those verses still flows in my own stream" (1983, 363).

At this point the elusive nature of the pronoun "it" in Dunn's poem can be understood as paraphrasing Neruda's openly declared interdependencies. The copy of Shakespearean Sonnets owned by Neruda is gradually transformed into a label-less entity, "it", that defies material accidents as it records both the political and creative aspects of Neruda's life, before becoming even more opaque as it is being passed around by "phantasmagorical hand[s]" (Dunn, l. 12). This last transformation could in turn be read as Dunn's own adaptation of Neruda's phrase "aided by the work of those who came before us" (1983, 363; emphasis added).

The fifth stanza of Dunn's "A Theory" features a more explicit quotation of Neruda that helps consolidate his understanding of artistic interdependence:

It visits the 'perfume of pomegranates in Verona',  
 'The vulgar voices of parasites and buffoons',  
 And touches men and women to the quicks of their lives (Dunn, l. 13-15)

Here the speaker playfully has the "it" "visit" two quotes that are marked as such. They stem from Neruda's speech given in 1964 at the Theatre Institute of the University of Chile on occasion of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday. Verona is made prominent by Neruda on account of his Spanish translation of *Romeo and Juliet* which was commissioned to him and the results of which he was meant to present to the public at the Institute. As such, his task entailed giving a statement of relevance, a kind of stock-taking of Shakespeare's importance for the Spanish-speaking parts of Latin America that



would benefit from his translation. The result is diametrically opposed to that of de Andrade:

In every epoch, one bard assumes responsibility for the dreams and the wisdom of the age: he expresses the growth, the expansion of that world. One time he is called Alighieri, or Victor Hugo, Lope de Vega, or Walt Whitman. Above all he is called Shakespeare. (Neruda 1983, 162)<sup>3</sup>

Neruda evokes in his list of bards the notion of the wandering soul periodically inhabiting individual bodies. The fortuitousness suggested by the temporal adverb “one time” and the disjunctives shifting between names imply that it is the soul holding universal experience rather than its varying encasements that really matters. Even as Shakespeare is given some predominance in relation to the other names, he remains ultimately one among them.

Arguing from a postcolonial perspective it cannot be overlooked that none of Neruda’s bards are Latin American. Neither is there an attempt at selectively processing their contents to suit local demand, as de Andrade suggests should be the case. Rather, in his further consideration of Shakespeare Neruda appeals for the universal reverence to the poet who gave “new universes” to mankind. What is more, he makes the conditions of violence from *Romeo and Juliet* as much a Chilean as a global concern. To this effect he mentions the persecution of his poetic mentor, the Nobel laureate Gabriela Mistral, on account of her outspoken pacifism. Denouncing her persecutors, Neruda transposes the violent tendencies of a Tybalt onto his political reality: “One sees that the world and the press continued to be governed by the Tybalts, by swordsmen” (Neruda 1983, 165). The fact that Neruda elsewhere refers to Shakespeare as the “vastest of human beings”<sup>4</sup> makes it quite clear that he attributed universal validity to his works. However, this enthusiastic literary decoration should not distract from the fact that the Chilean poet still placed him within creative reach. Thus, Neruda closes his speech by directly thanking his “companion”.

It is in this image of companionship with Shakespeare that Neruda’s reception of the Bard, as going against the grain of the culturalist logic, stands out. Apart from seeking to preserve his legacy for Latin Americans by translating his works, the Nobel laureate is doing something else. He is exemplifying how the ‘workshop’ of the arts works by not only establishing his dependence on someone who came before, namely the English playwright, but also by passing on his works and universal importance through translation and corresponding praise. The action of passing on entails a third party in the

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<sup>3</sup> The first sentence corresponds with the translation by Margaret Sayers Peden in the referenced collection. The second is my own direct translation from the Spanish. Peden has taken out the temporal adverb “one time” as well as the recurring disjunctive “or” from the original, both of which are central to my interpretation of the passage.

<sup>4</sup> Once again, I diverge from the translation by Sayers Peden whose choice of “greatest” (“the greatest of human beings,” Neruda 1983, 165) changes the sense of the Spanish “vasto”, which means, as in English, extensive or far-stretching. Throughout the speech Neruda is making a case for the universality of Shakespeare’s works, hence his “vastness”. The qualifier “great” in association with a figure like Shakespeare takes away this semantic nuance in favour of the sense of exaltation of the artist. See original “Inaugurando el Año de Shakespeare” in Pablo Neruda, *Antología General* (2018), 414–418.

workshop, namely Everyman. And it is this last participant – a collective standing for “the most ignorant and exploited of his contemporaries” (Neruda 1983, 386) – that Neruda particularly has in mind. It is for them he wants to enable the smell of Verona’s “perfume of pomegranates” and it is them that should be “moved to the quick of their lives”.

While the culturalist postcolonial critic might accuse Neruda of condescendence, his eagerness to make Shakespeare accessible to the illiterate worker must be seen in the larger framework of his levelling poetics. Appealing for poets to be humble – as they are not “little gods” (Neruda 1983, 386) – he considers the dedication and sense of communal responsibility of someone like the local baker as the truly poetic craft. “And if a poet could be moved in the same way by such a simple conscience”, he concludes, “that simple conscience would allow him to become part of an enormous work of art – the simple, or complicated, construction that is the building of a society, the transformation of a man’s condition, the simple delivery of his wares: bread, truth, wine, dreams” (Neruda 1983, 386). For Neruda the Latin American poet cannot be an intellectualist in the sense of belonging to an exclusive group of individuals with their own communication channels and agendas. In thinking this he was not alone, but while the postcolonial narrative of resistance does target intellectual exclusion, it can be argued (with Chibber and Majumdar) that it restricts its censure to the colonisers without attending to homegrown intellectuals that might be vicariously deciding on the virtues of Shakespeare on behalf (and to the detriment) of entire communities. Venkatrathnam’s failed signing initiative to mobilise Shakespeare against apartheid would be a case in point.

Dunn’s speaker draws attention to this risk in one of the last stations of circulation of the “it” after it has averted the rigours of fire and censure: “They discuss it in lecture theatres but cannot kill it” (Dunn, l.18). Where the other hindrances to circulation – the raid on Neruda’s houses and the burning of books – are allusions to the reality of persecution under fascist regimes, the next to last thing Dunn’s reader would expect to find here is academic discussion suggested as a potential tool of destruction. And yet, this line is very much on point concerning Neruda’s reservations about intellectualism, or as he called it, “sectarianism” (Neruda 1983, 385). In his acceptance speech for the Nobel prize in Stockholm he frames these reservations in terms of a learned lesson:

[I]t is we ourselves who create the phantoms of our own mythification. From the very mortar with which we create, or hope to create, are formed the obstacles to our own evolution. We may find ourselves irrevocably drawn toward reality and realism – that is, toward an unselective acceptance of reality and the roads to change – and then realize, when it seems too late, that we have raised such severe limitations that we have killed life instead of guiding it to growth and fruition. We have imposed on ourselves a realism heavier than our building bricks, without ever having constructed the building we thought was our first responsibility. And at the opposite extreme, if we succeed in making a fetish of the incomprehensible (or comprehensible to only a few), a fetish of the exceptional and recondite, if we suppress reality and its inevitable deterioration, we will suddenly find ourselves in an untenable position, sinking in a quicksand of leaves, clay, and clouds, drowning in an oppressive inability to communicate. (Neruda 1983, 386–387)

Once more Neruda’s analysis of the role of the Latin American poet marks a departure from the conventional culturalist rhetoric. A warning against self-mythification along

with the possibility of becoming unintelligible to the majority suggests that Neruda is talking from experience.

After having moved in exclusive Modernist circles of artists during his early years as a diplomat, Neruda's refined aesthetic attitudes received a considerable nudge with the outbreak of the Spanish civil war. Resisting the regime that had deprived him of his friend, the poet Federico García Lorca, exacted of Neruda his consular duties in the shape of a special humanitarian mission: the evacuation of two thousand Spaniards on board the ship *Winnipeg* heading for Chile. Reminiscing on this operation years later, he challenged critics to erase all his poetry "but this poem I am recalling today" – referring to said operation – "will never be erased" (Neruda 1983, 254). More humanitarian missions would follow when, back in Chile in the 1940s, Neruda gives up his consulship and joins the communist party. By 1945, a senator representing the socialist cause, he seeks out the working classes and the poor across the country. And once again, his poetry is defined by him in terms of political activism. What he calls his "ars poetica" (Neruda 1983, 365) is comprised of his wandering among remote communities and slums holding poetry readings organised by unions and where his listeners, some of whom wore sacks around their waists for clothing, listened intently.

From these new uses of his poetry, Neruda's insistence on a clear and anti-academicist artistic expression can be discerned. At the start of this section, I established how Dunn's poem frustrates the conventional postcolonial interpretation of a Neruda "talking back" to Shakespeare. Indeed, the chance of appropriating Shakespeare via signature and ownership of the copy of *Sonnets* seems as irrecoverable as the historical object itself. Having worked as a librarian before fully turning to poetry, Dunn might have had a professional interest in tracing a book's historical trajectory. But the fact that in the present case tracking is disabled by the object's very elusiveness is not meant as a failure for the librarian but as a failure for the culturalist postcolonial scholar insisting on seeing Neruda's appropriation of Shakespeare behind the copy.

Indeed, the act of inscription spells out a complex personal involvement with Shakespeare, rather than a political statement. Referring to the actual event in his speech, Neruda qualifies Shakespearean poetry as having "kept open a line of communication with Western culture" (1983, 163) during his consular travels through the Indian ocean. Surrounded by a "fabulous multitude of hitherto unknown myths" on Java it was Shakespeare's poetry which provided him with a "crystalline law" to navigate the unknown island (Neruda 1983, 163). Without a doubt Neruda's assessment of Shakespeare is subjective. He was responding to his works as a reader who identified fully with the situations they presented. As such, it was not necessary for him to bring up boundaries of positionality that were simply not perceived and neither was his contribution to the dissemination of Shakespeare's works by translation hindered by this culturalist logic. Through translation Neruda saw himself as another line of communication enabling access to other lines through Shakespeare. He would not have shared this autobiographical reminiscence of signing his copy of Shakespeare had he not thought it pertinent to his translation work and had he not considered the signing a communal rather than a subjective act. Accordingly in Dunn's poetic adaptation, the copy progresses through shifting labels, not being Shakespeare's nor Neruda's for long and surviving the fire of political and not least academic faction.

### Neruda's 'keepers of verse'. Poetry as community

"I am a poet patriot, a nationalist of Chile's clay" (Neruda 1983, 364), Neruda declares in a biographical essay. While such declaration may seem to evoke martial tones, also as in the sense of de Andrade's rhetoric, this would be another interpretative misfire. Neruda was wary of such rhetoric. Criticising the colonial epic celebrating the military prowess of the pre-Columbian Mapuches, *La Araucana* (1569-89), the poet exposes the dangers behind such narratives: "[W]e forgot, in spite of *La Araucana* and its mournful pride, that our Indians are to this day illiterate and without land or shoes" (Neruda 1983, 365). In light of such circumstances Neruda's poetics is wider encompassing than the one grounded in the Aristotelian tradition. His is an uncomplicated fusion of the historical material conditions and the social reformist preoccupation with the question of how things could be. In Neruda's view it is not only a question of poetry being more philosophical than history, but also about poetry showing society the way forward.

Resonating with Chibber's and Majumdar's concerns over a postcolonial attitude that is out of touch with a nation's economic reality, Neruda redefined in his autobiography the poetic business of a socialist:

Each and every one of my verses has chosen to take its place as a tangible object, each and every one of my poems has claimed to be a useful working instrument, each and every one of my songs has endeavoured to serve as a sign in space for a meeting between paths which cross one another, or as a piece of stone or wood on which someone, some others, those who follow after, will be able to carve the new signs. (Neruda 1983, 387)

Neruda was not interested in charting the course of his poetry as returning to him in the shape of well-memorised lines. He was interested in its prompting the poetry of others, regardless their background or occupation. Underlying this expectation is once again his understanding of poetry as a common denominator of humanity from which acts are derived.

As though picking up on this nuance, the speaker in Dunn's poem redirects the conventional sense of memory suggested in the penultimate tercet where "keepers of verse" are said to convey the "it" "with memory's astounding patience" (l. 20–21) to fit Neruda's notion of literary reception:

They would write it down for them, in every language.  
Anything made can be unmade, but with this exception –  
If it exists, it exists, and there is the chance of eternity. (Dunn, l. 22–24)

Without having let the "it" out of sight throughout the poem, the reader knows better by now than to simply assume Neruda's oeuvre behind it. Rather, "it" has stood for the condition of his poetry considering his biography *and* in light of his universal socialist poetics. In this sense writing it in "every language" amounts to the carving of the "new signs" his work was supposed to trigger.

As such, and as has been seen with the negation of the copy's physicality, Neruda did not regard his poetry as self-contained and autonomous. He saw it as just another link in the poetic chain to be succeeded by others, in the same way his poetry had followed Shakespeare's. His theory of criticism presupposed an organic notion of art insofar as the object of art was an open-ended one, constantly susceptible to the interventions of

artists succeeding each other in a kind of assemblage line of personal work and circumstance. The poem closes with a contrast between production and existence that reinforces his notion of organic poetry:

Anything made can be unmade, but with this exception –  
If it exists, it exists, and there is the chance of eternity. (Dunn, l. 23–24)

This contrast between being “made” and “exist[ing]” in terms of potential destruction reflects the two different notions of art posited by de Andrade and Neruda respectively. The idea that the West can be ‘eaten’ to give rise to the literature of the formerly colonised, Neruda would say, is an illusion of creation that recalls the jarring juxtaposition of the mythicized Mapuches with the actual reality of Chile’s autochthonous population. Being artificial in that sense, such art can be “unmade”. It is only by bringing the poetic assembly line to the dispossessed Mapuches through an accessible poetry – hand in hand with social reform – that the literary cause of the Americas can be aided.

Finally, it would be missing Neruda’s point about universalism to restrict this analysis to the poetry of the Americas. As suggested in the introduction, the context of publication of Dunn’s “A Theory” widens the range of application. Not only was this poem published within an autobiographical frame reflecting Neruda’s influence on Dunn, but it also appeared as part of Harry Ritchie’s collection of New Scottish Writing *Acid Plaid* (1996). An anthology seeking to celebrate the Scottish “boom” of contemporary writing, Ritchie is anxious to dispense with the “cliches” that have determined international perception of contemporary Scottish writing as being a reaction to the 1979 failure of devolution (3), or broadly speaking, as fitting a particular political narrative:

To avoid any waffle, I am tempted to ascribe Scotland’s literary boom to the forces of pure, blind coincidence, but perhaps a more persuasive explanation is that one literary achievement encourages another (Ritchie 3).

Taking the controversial Hugh MacDiarmid and his nationalist movement of the Scottish Renaissance as the starting point of artistic flourishing, Ritchie proceeds to draw a line of authors exemplifying literary achievement. At the end of this line is Douglas Dunn himself.

Nevertheless, as ensues from the previous analysis, more than a confirmation of Ritchie’s claims, Dunn’s contribution to the collection, “A Theory of Literary Criticism”, is a corrective. Precisely the national self-mythification Neruda was warning against had been recognized by Dunn in the work of countryman Hugh MacDiarmid whom he disqualified in an interview on account of his fascist affiliations and alienating poetry: “MacDiarmid was writing for some notional, hyper-civilized technocratic being of the future. His audience didn’t exist in his lifetime and perhaps will never exist” (qtd. in Crawford 19). A highly polarizing figure, MacDiarmid saw no contradiction in espousing both Scottish nationalism and the communist cause – even after acknowledging indifference toward the self-same people he claimed to represent in his verse. Speaking in the same interview about MacDiarmid’s legacy, David Daiches refers to a letter MacDiarmid sent him expressing his aversion to being considered a popular

poet: “I don’t have your gift for empathizing with other people. I don’t like people. I think people are one of God’s mistakes” (qtd. in Crawford 19).<sup>5</sup> In this sense and given his aesthetic “unqualified opposition to the English ethos” (MacDiarmid xii), MacDiarmid’s poetry, which the Modernist Neruda had admired at an early stage of his career (Hubbard 39), can have no place in Neruda’s “workshop” of the arts. Indeed, in its first context of publication in Ritchie’s anthology Dunn’s poem acquires an additional function. Through its consistent blurring of authorial and readerly labels relating to Shakespeare, Neruda, and the “keepers of verse”, it updates Neruda’s warning against a mythic form of nationalism that overlooks the real social issues for the sake of the postcolonial narrative of “talking back”. Rather than belonging to the circulating “it”, MacDiarmid’s work would play the role of detractor. Aligning his philosophy with fascism (Crawford 17), Dunn would sooner identify MacDiarmid’s oeuvre with the burning fires of censure than with the eternal phoenix with which his speaker represents Neruda’s universalist art. Thus, as a component of Ritchie’s anthology, “A Theory” should be read as prompting a necessary re-evaluation of MacDiarmid’s role in Scottish literature.

### Conclusion

Through Dunn’s lyricized poetics of Neruda, the poet’s legacy gains concrete theoretical weight. The condensation of his scattered claims about poetry, Chile, and his socialist cause into the image of the circulating “it” helps to position Neruda in the camp of lesser-known postcolonial voices such as that of the Guyanese writer Wilson Harris. These are voices keen on finding resemblances and continuities across cultural and political boundaries who are not afraid of celebrating the universalism of human experience when they see it conveyed through figures like Shakespeare and to a socially enhancing effect. Initially drawn to the intellectualism informing de Andrade’s “Manifesto” during his early years, Neruda was nudged out of it by a Third World confronted with real social challenges. Through his socialist activism and the concomitant redistribution of aesthetic values in favour of the community of readers of Latin America, Neruda’s poetics can be argued to have a more productive postcolonial reach than the more conventional antagonizing approaches. Thus, and extending the application of Dunn’s contrast to postcolonial theory, it could be claimed that, while postcolonial rhetoric can be made, only true postcolonial activism has the chance of eternity.

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5 For MacDiarmid’s contradictions as a socialist see also the RTÉ documentary on One “Poetry and Politics – Hugh MacDiarmid”.

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## Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Artikel untersucht einen besonderen Fall der Shakespeare-Rezeption in Lateinamerika anhand einer Analyse des Gedichts von Douglas Dunn „A Theory of Literary Criticism“. Das Gedicht ist eine Hommage an den chilenischen Dichter und Nobelpreisträger Pablo Neruda, stellt aber zugleich eine Verteidigung der universalistischen These dar, die die Bedeutung Shakespeares über Länder- und Kulturunterschiede hinweg bestätigt sieht. Dabei transponiert der lyrische Sprecher Aussagen aus Nerudas Schriften über Shakespeare, Lateinamerika und die Rolle des sozialistischen Dichters in der Form einer langen Transmigrationsmetapher. Sie beschreibt die posthume Reise von Nerudas Ausgabe der Shakespeare Sonnette, welche der Zerstörung durch die Pinochetistas anheimgefallen sein soll. Durch diese Aktualisierung von Nerudas selbstreflektierter Shakespeare-Rezeption, so legt der Artikel nahe, leistet „A Theory of Literary Criticism“ einen entscheidenden revisionistischen Beitrag zu einer postkolonialen Theorie, die akademistisch zu werden droht.



## ***CALL FOR STATEMENTS – SHAKESPEARE SEMINAR 2023***

### **Shakespeare's Libraries**

2023 marks the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, known as the First Folio, published in 1623. It included 36 plays, some of which had not been published before. On the website of The Folger Shakespeare Library readers are invited to “learn more about Shakespeare’s language, life, and the world he knew,” suggesting that we might be able to unlock, or at least better understand, Shakespeare’s works by studying what he and his contemporaries not only read but also saw or heard. In the preface to his edition of Shakespeare’s works, Samuel Johnson ventured, “There are a few passages which may pass for imitations, but so few that the exception only confirms the rule; he obtained them from accidental quotations, or by oral communication” (Preface). Johnson’s comment arguably makes a claim for Shakespeare’s ‘originality’, but it also draws attention to the importance of hearsay and oral transmission for the production and reception of Shakespeare’s works – ‘libraries’ that we can access only indirectly at best. Geoffrey Bullough’s multivolume *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* remains the most comprehensive attempt to document similarities between Shakespeare’s works and texts that may or may not have been available to the author, albeit one that focuses on written works. Much has been written about ‘Shakespeare’s books’, and the notes in critical editions attest to the enormous spectrum and continued interest in possible sources. But what counts as a source? Digitalisation has opened a new chapter in this debate and discussions about authorship in early modern England continue to change the way we think about Shakespeare’s libraries. The Shakespeare Seminar 2023 invites participants to revisit this historic moment in Shakespeare studies and consider the legacy of the First Folio under the title ‘Shakespeare's libraries.’ We invite papers that deal with the idea of the library both in a narrow and in a wider sense of the word. That is, we invite participants to consider critical debates about Shakespeare and source studies but also about libraries and archives today, including digital libraries and archives, and how they provide access to Shakespeare. Topics may include, but are not restricted to

- First Folio(s), quartos, editions, collections, printers, editors, bookmakers
- reading in early modern England and Shakespeare’s first readers
- from page to stage and from stage to page
- orality and book culture
- book history and book studies
- Shakespeare's books/libraries/sources
- Shakespeare as library – quoting Shakespeare now and then
- contemporary Shakespeare libraries, digital archives, and approaches to Shakespeare
- visual and performance libraries as ways of accessing repertoires not based on script

Our seminar plans to address these issues with a panel of six papers during the annual conference of the German Shakespeare Association, *Shakespeare-Tage*, which is scheduled to take place from 21–23 April 2023 in Weimar, Germany. As critical input for the discussion, we invite papers of no more than 15 minutes that present concrete case studies, concise examples and strong views on the topic. Please send your proposals (abstracts of 300 words) by **31 December 2022** to the seminar convenors

Dr. Lukas Lammers, Free University Berlin: [l.lammers@fu-berlin.de](mailto:l.lammers@fu-berlin.de)

Dr. Kirsten Sandrock, University of Göttingen: [ksandrock@phil.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:ksandrock@phil.uni-goettingen.de)

The Seminar provides a forum for established as well as young scholars to discuss texts and contexts. Participants of the seminar will subsequently be invited to submit (extended versions of) their papers for publication in *Shakespeare Seminar Online* (SSO). For more information, please contact Kirsten Sandrock and Lukas Lammers. For more information about the events and publications also see: <https://shakespeare-gesellschaft.de/?lang=en>.