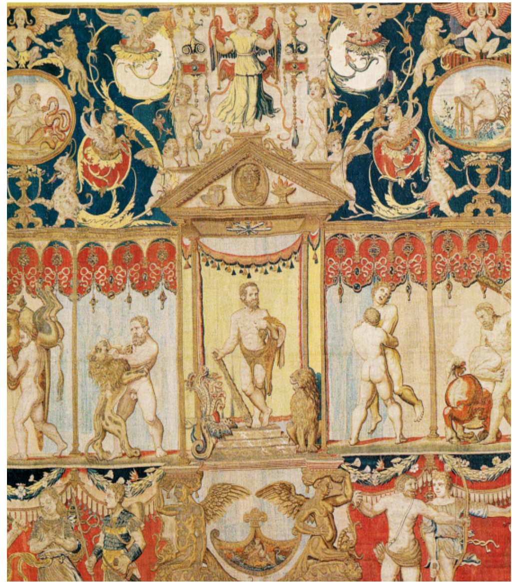
Skenè Texts DA • 4

What is a Greek Source on the Early English Stage? Fifteen New Essays

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi and Tania Demetriou



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Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama

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Contents

Contributors 9

Silvia Bigliazzi
Introduction 17

Part 1 – Authorities *vs* Sources

1. Colin Burrow
Invisible Books: Shakespeare and 'Narrative Sources' 47

2. Silvia Bigliazzi
The Strange Case of the Singing Chorus that Was Not There. On the Authority of Authorities 71

3. Jane Raisch
Classicism as Medievalism: Gower & Mediation in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* 109

4. Alessandro Grilli
An Idea of Old Comedy: Ben Jonson's Metatextual Appropriation of Aristophanes 129

5. Evgeniia Ganberg
'Of gentle and ignoble, base and kings': the Transformations of the Homeric Simile on the Early Modern English Stage 169

Part 2 – Receiving/Adapting/Resisting Models

6. Francesco Dall'Olio
'An Empire equall with thy mind': the 'Persian Plays' and the Reception of Herodotus in Renaissance England 197

7. Francesco Morosi
Aristophanes in *The Staple of News*: Ideology and Drama 223

8. Emanuel Stelzer
Questions of Mediation of the *Deus ex Machina* in Elizabethan Drama 263

Part 3 – Theatregrams

9. Tom Harrison
Hermaphroditical Authority: *Epicene* and The Aristophanic Chorus 295

10. Domenico Lovascio
Unveiling Wives: Euripides' *Alcestis* and Two Plays in the Fletcher Canon 335

Part 4 – Generic Inflections

11. Tom Bishop
Tragedy, Persuasion, and the Humanist daughter: Jane Lumley's *Iphigeneya* 361

12. Gherardo Ugolini
Unwritten Laws and Natural Law in Watson's *Antigone* 385

13. Tania Demetriou
Much Ado about Greek tragedy? Shakespeare, Euripides, and the *histoire tragique* 409

14. Janice Valls-Russell
Translating Greek History into Humanist Neo-Senecan Drama: William Alexander's *Croesus* (1604) 443

Part 5 – Pastiche

15. William N. West
"Is All Well Put Together In Every Part?": Assembling a Renaissance *Bacchae* 471

Index 493

Contributors

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Alessandro Grilli is Associate Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature at the University of Pisa. He has written extensively on ancient drama and the tradition of classical literatures. His research interests also encompass literary theory, applied rhetoric, film and genre studies. He has published monographs and essays on ancient and modern authors (from Aristophanes to Proust, from Catullus to Walter Siti), as well as on issues of argumentation theory and film analysis. His current projects include studies on the aesthetics of horror and a monograph on the pragmatics of literature. His latest monograph, co-authored with Francesco Morosi,

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Tom Harrison is an independent academic. He is the author of *Imitation and Contamination of the Classics in the Comedies of Ben Jonson: Guides Not Commanders* (Routledge 2023), a book that explores the links between Ben Jonson's dramaturgy and the works of ancient comedy. His research interests include early modern receptions of the classics and early modern performance practices, and he has been published in *Early Theatre*, *The Ben Jonson Journal*, and *Shakespeare*. His next project is a digital edition of Thomas Tomkis' 1614/15 university comedy *Albumazar*, co-edited with Dr Rachel White (Durham University), which will be published by Digital Renaissance Editions.

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Jane Raisch is Lecturer in Renaissance and Early Modern literature in the department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. She works on the reception of Greek antiquity in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England and Europe, and her current book project explores the influence of Hellenistic and Second Sophistic Greek literature on early modern practices of fiction and scholarship. Her work has been published in *ELH*, *LIAS*, and elsewhere and she has received fellowships from the New York Public Library; the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publication; the Huntington Library, and other institutions.

Emanuel Stelzer is Lecturer at the University of Verona. He is the author of *Portraits in Early Modern English Drama: Visual Culture, Play-Texts, and Performances* (Routledge 2019) and of *Shakespeare Among Italian Criminologists and Psychiatrists, 1870s-1920s* (Skenè – Texts and Studies 2021). His articles have appeared in journals including *Critical Survey*, *Early Theatre*, *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, *English Studies*, *Notes and Queries*, *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, and *Skenè. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies*. His main interests are early modern English literature and drama, textual studies, and theatre history, with a particular interest in source studies and early modern paradoxes. His work on William Sampson has earned him the Huntington Library Quarterly Centennial Essay Prize; he has also translated into Italian Philip Massinger's *The Picture* (Aracne 2017) and John Milton's *Comus* (ETS 2020). Emanuel Stelzer is managing editor of *Skenè. Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies* and contributes to *The Year's Work in English Studies*.

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Introduction

Silvia Bigliazzi

> Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it.
> Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch
> than most men could from the whole British Museum.
> (T.S. Eliot 1920, 47)

A Greek Spirit: Reading Readers

This is not a book on Shakespeare and Plutarch or the Greeks, although it will deal with all of them, but T.S. Eliot's famous lines on how Shakespeare engaged with the past through Plutarch introduces some key questions this book is interested in: what is meant by "absorbing" the Greek past and what is implied by metaphors suggesting taking in or soaking up, incorporating or assimilating what Eliot calls "essential"? Eliot's images, like all critical terminology attempting to convey ideas of sourcing,[1] are not devoid of implications about how we describe cultural phenomena of textual conversations across time. Talking about the dialogue between the Athenian stage of the fifth century BCE and the early London stage, Gordon Braden voiced something many people have grown up with as a given: "[o]n one level there has always been a sense that they ask to be thought of together" (2017, 103). Perhaps Ben Jonson was of the same opinion when he paired his famous criticism of Shakespeare's "small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*" with a

1 On the proliferation and connotations of different words defining a still debated notion of source, see Miola 2003 and, more recently, Maguire and Smith 2015.

calling forth of "thund'ring *Æschilus*, / *Euripides*, and *Sophocles*" alongside "*Paccuvius*, *Accius*, him of *Cordova* dead" as Shakespeare's apt companions. Although, as Charles Martindale has pinpointed, Shakespeare may be a bad place to start any discussions of the presence of Greek tragedy in early English drama, his "lesse Greeke", in fact, invites us to consider what it meant to know Greek at the time (Martindale 2017, 169), and possibly what Greek literature meant for an English audience when, as now, Greek texts could imply texts *not in* Greek.

These questions fall within the remit of this book, which concerns how we can interpret a Greek source – and what a Greek source means – in the context of early English theatre. A recent scholarly reappraisal of the presence of Greek texts in England has revived a long-debated interest in the role of classical culture and humanism compared to what happened on the continent. This book takes up this topic by exploring the implications and interferences of our critical perspectives in studying the traffic between Greek literature and early English drama. Still talking about Shakespeare and the Greeks in the article mentioned above, Braden rightly observed that not only are "connections . . . difficult to search for, all but impossible to search for systematically", but they are also much dependent on "the stuff in [our] passive memory" that we wait "for something to activate" (106). Of course, this is a question that goes beyond Shakespeare's conversation with the Greeks, encompassing reception studies in general. No twentieth-century contribution on the subject, Braden argues, from comparative analysis of Greek and Shakespearean plays by H.D. Kitto (1956), Tom Driver (1960), and Adrian Poole (1987), to Michael Silk's perception of a "strange relationship" (2004) between them, and Emrys Jones' detective-driven analysis of parallels in the admitted absence of "conclusive evidence" (1977, 105), allows one to make final claims on actual conversations – in Braden's vivid filmic metaphor, we have "no smoking gun" (2017, 109). This is true for authors other than Shakespeare too, but Shakespeare's case is especially revealing precisely because it is at the same time very distant and very close to Greek theatre. The collection of studies on *Oedipus at Colonus* and *King Lear* I edited in 2019 questioned precisely mutual resonances as well as differences between Shakespeare and Sophocles. It situated

them within a space of intersections prompting readers to ask what it means and why it matters to look at them together beyond source hunting through verbal echoes. It interrogated how considering them on a par may illuminate their individual concerns reciprocally and how one may have spurred critical readings through the other (see e.g. Murnaghan 2019). This is an example of how the traffic between the Athenian and the London stage may be examined from different perspectives that remain conscious of concerns about the lack of positivistic evidence of tangible borrowings, but are also aware of the need to go beyond an interpretation of English drama as exclusively tied to its Medieval and popular roots (see e.g. Weimann 1978). Once ascertained that Greek texts were known and dealt with in sixteenth-century England in ways long underestimated, other issues have come to the fore: first and foremost *whether* they really mattered for early modern theatre and *how*.

Thus, a new interest in the Greek textual presences in England has sparked off a surge of studies that have fostered a convergence of historical approaches to the spread on these works in different quarters, from schools to universities and printing houses, as well as to how performance practices in academic circles influenced aristocratic and commercial drama (Norland 2009 and 2013; Demetriou and Pollard 2017, 3). Groundbreaking research has been carried out in this sense by Micha Lazarus, who has added important pieces to our knowledge of the teaching of Greek as well as to the role of the German influence on the English reception of Sophocles and the shaping of Christian drama from ancient roots (2015a, 2016, 2020). Tania Demetriou and Tanya Pollard have drawn attention to the receptions of Homer and Greek tragedy emphasising that "by the sixteenth century's final decades, the printing, adaptation, and performance of these texts had converged in England's learned theatrical circles as a vibrant and avant-garde site of engagement" (2017, 5). Pollard (2017) has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt the relevance of Greek tragedies featuring female protagonists with a particular focus on Euripides. Colin Burrow has engaged with memory and reading, furthering the argument that imitating authors "raises questions about how different readers analyse and remember the texts that they read, about how shared practices of writing and interpretation grow and mutate, and about how

different writers in different periods have had different concepts not just of what authorship is, but of what the central characteristics of individual authors might be" (2019, 3). Within the ongoing 2017 PRIN project on *Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama*, Alessandro Grilli and Francesco Morosi (2023) have offered a contrastive analysis of self-conscious uses and display of meta-performance in Aristophanes and Ben Jonson, paving the way for an interpretation of ancient satire percolating into early modern comedy through occulted forms of Latin mediation. In turn, Marco Duranti (2022) has grappled with the function of paratexts of Greek editions published in England, offering a new perspective on the comparative lack of editions of Greek drama texts compared to the continent (cf. Demetriou and Pollard 2017a and 2017b; Pollard 2017). If duly considered, Duranti's claim that the interest lay not so much in philological accuracy as in "the education of the ruling class" (2022, 55) may open new paths of inquiry into the learning of the language, the development of rhetorical skills, and absorption of the values useful to prospective statesmen, bureaucrats, clergymen as part of an "overall project of promotion of the Anglican faith and the monarchy, seen as two sides of the same coin" (ibid.).[2]

This particular case concerns the publication and performance of texts in Greek. But this is not the only way in which Greek literature came to be known in the Renaissance. Latin and vernacular translations were possibly the most common *loci* where Greek texts were encountered; other forms of mediation were also crucial, from rewritings to adaptations in different genres and in multiple languages. One question that needs to be kept in mind, therefore, is what we mean by a 'Greek source' in the Renaissance context where "sophisticated intertextuality uses" (Demetriou and Pollard

2 The following is only a selected list of relevant publications in alphabetical order, in addition to the ones quoted in these pages: Bate 2019; Burrow 2004 and 2018; Demetriou and Pollard 2017a contain the following about Homer and Greek tragedy, besides Braden and Martindale's articles just quoted: Coffin 2017, Kenward 2017, Miola 2017, Peyré 2017, Whittington 2017; Demetriou and Valls-Rassell 2021; Dewar-Watson 2004, 2008, 2010, 2018; Duranti 2021; Ewbank 2005; Hopkins 2020; Kerrigan 2018; Lazarus 2015b; Martindale and Taylor 2004; Martindale 1990; Miola 1992, 2004; Peyré 2020; Pollard 2012.

2017, 3) went beyond classical texts while including them in various mediated forms, and where polygenetic and elaborate dialogues provided a melting pot for the shaping of early English drama.

Discussing the peculiar case of George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmersh's presentation of their *Jocasta* as an Englished Euripides to the audience of Gray's Inn in 1566, possibly acquainted with the Greek tragedian, Emrys Jones intriguingly asked why the play should have been perceived as especially Greek. The answer was that the "qualities which were unfamiliar to them", that is, the non-Senecan ones, were what made for the play's sense of Greekness. The passage is worth quoting in full:

> One of H.B. Charlton's arguments [*The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy*, Manchester University Press 1946, or. ed. 1921] against Greek influence in Renaissance tragedy was that translators into Latin or the vernaculars invariably 'Senecanized' their Greek subjects . . . But it does not follow that if it [*Jocasta*] seems 'Senecan' to us, it also seemed 'Senecan' to its audiences and readers. They may have well taken for granted the qualities we call 'Senecan', but have been all the more alert to those other qualities which were unfamiliar to them – the 'Greek' ones . . . They would presumably have believed that they were seeing a Greek play, and – despite the many departures from the original text – they would have been right: they would have been seeing something essentially Euripidean; they may even have been closer to the spirit of the original play than we can. Charlton's argument falters perhaps through a failure to grant the sixteenth century the chance of making its own leaps into the past despite what a modern classical scholar might consider the crudity of its means. (1977, 105-6)

Jones was making a fine point here which has not been considered enough, and is exemplary of issues this book deals with. In light of the popularity of Lodovico Dolce at Gray's Inn as well as of the Italian debate on classical tragedy, it seems unlikely that anyone acquainted with Euripides should have perceived anything un-Senecan as Greek instead of as an Italian re-elaboration of classical drama, one which was already quite well-known since the early sixteenth century. After all, as Robert Miola rightly put it, this play was "three hands and three tongues removed from the original

Greek" (2002, 34). How far removed it was conceptually from the Euripidean ancestor it claimed derivation from is apparent in the play's overall Renaissance and Christian relocation in ways that go far beyond the kind of Christianised Greek tragedy that penetrated England from Wittenberg.[3] As Miola has also argued, "Dolce's titular substitution indicates a refocussing of the tragic interest" (2002, 35) that could have hardly been perceived as primarily Senecan. Dolce added to the Euripidean play a sacrificial scene on stage derived from Seneca's *Oedipus*, but he replaced the Senecan ox with a goat, an animal traditionally imbued with Greek connotations going back to the origins of Greek theatre itself. Could such a detail be possibly interpreted as genuinely Greek rather than as Dolce's own manipulation of the Senecan scene with a gesture to an abstract idea of Greek theatre? The substitution of the ox with a goat is a minor detail, but one that calls for attention when one is interested in the Greek/Roman alternative within the stratification of mediations and layers of receptions of the ancient past (Bigliazzi and Suthren forthcoming). The second point is whether there was a prioritising of Senecan over Italian filters and why, and, therefore, how the audience at Gray's Inn could have interpreted "the many departures" of this English Euripides from the Euripides they may have known (Collinus's 1541 Latin edition being one of the best candidates). Thirdly, what may be interpreted to be as "essentially Euripidean" and for whom: early modern spectators or contemporary critics? And in this case how can we fully recover their position without projecting ours onto theirs? Finally, can we pin down an authorial 'essence' and where can it be found?

Speaking about similarities between Shakespeare's style and Greek drama, Gordon Braden remarked that Antony's famous reflection on the changing shape of the clouds in *Antony and Cleopatra* is a close example of "what a reader of Plutarch's *Lives* might take in about Greek tragedy: this is how they talked on the Athenian stage" (2017, 118). Braden's reference is to a passage in the life of Demetrius taken from a lost play of Sophocles where Menelaus, like Antony, betrays a feeling of losing himself like "the

3 On the Christian reception of ancient drama with special reference to the Wittenberg tradition see Miola 2014 and 2019; Lazarus 2020.

moon that changes in shape from day to day" (North's translation, 1579, 980; Braden 2017, 17). This situation, for Braden, is in no way referable to how characters talk

> on the Senecan stage (if there was a Senecan stage). Senecan tragedy is too stringent for it, too tightly focused on its scenarios of dominance and suffering and the iron grip of fate. Greek tragedy has a looser weave, with a fuller sense of human life, especially communal life, and more variety and room for play in the way things fit together. (117-18)

Braden's comment implies a family resemblance of sorts, suggesting that Greekness, or what we can say is essentially Greek, resides in "the sense of human life" conveyed by Greek plays. All we hear at this point is a character speaking in a simile. Should we assume that this is what the Greekness of Greek tragedy boils down to, and does this cover how all characters talk on stage? Braden further ventures,

> without feeling that I am saying anything greatly controversial, that something like that characterizes classical Greek literature in comparison with Latin: there is just more to it. A dramatist of Shakespeare's instincts could have responded to it when it came into view. For the period we are considering here, Greek tragedy remained mostly on a distant horizon, but it was visible and it had inspiration to offer. (118)

Differently from Michael Silk's contention that direct sources matter the most, Braden argues here that there is possibly little sense in distinguishing them from texts "mediated through classical Latin sources and . . . through Renaissance culture in general" (Silk 2004, 241). A case like Plutarch's, for instance, which is replete with both references and quotations from Greek tragedy, would blur the difference between them, although Plutarch is clearly taken as a mediator selecting, alluding to, and presenting Greek tragedy in fragments.[4] After all, as Sasha Roberts (2003), and more recently

4 Besides North's Plutarch, Braden counts 405 citations from Greek tragedy in Erasmus' *Adagia* (1500-1536) and 6 quotations from five plays of Sophocles in Thomas Watson's *Ekathompathia* (1582), to mention but a few (2017, 112).

Robert Miola (2019) and Carla Suthren (2020, 64) have underlined, early modern readerly habits were different from our own, and commonplace reading through selected *sententiae*, marked-out passages, and marginalia made for a large portion of readerly interests. Those individual parts could often be, as in the case of Plutarch or Erasmus, what early moderns largely knew of Greek tragedy – a mediated source carrying "within them some of the DNA of the work and culture that produced them" (Braden 2017, 112). Along these lines, Suthren has recently offered a discussion of how an English reader would have gained a picture of Euripides specifically from reading Plutarch's works (2023 IPS Conference on *Translating Plutarch*). This leads us back to Braden's remark on the affinity between the Sophoclean passage and Antony's speech through Plutarch. It now appears clearer why the one could have been a 'tragic' source of inspiration for the other, and why it qualifies specifically as Greek – Plutarch mentions Sophocles. Whether this was *essentially* un-Roman, however, remains slippery.

What the language of "essences" and "spirits" evoked so far seems to entail is in fact something that may be rephrased with a clearer view of what we are looking for. For instance, we may talk about virtual meanings embedded in texts that are identifiable by ways of patterns of implied reading: structured constructs within the text that allow for subjective responses, while gearing them to the texts' own structures and reading instructions (Iser 1978). In Wolfgang Iser's words, by virtue of the observer's standpoint according to which authors organise their representation,

> the reader is situated in such a position that he can assemble the meaning toward which the perspectives of the text have guided him. But since this meaning is neither a given external reality nor a copy of an intended reader's own world, it is something that has to be ideated by the mind of the reader. A reality that has no existence of its own can only come into being by way of ideation, and so the structure of the text sets off a sequence of mental images which lead to the text translating itself into the reader's consciousness. (1978, 38)

The classical receptions we are dealing with in this book, of course, complicate the process, because we are not interpreting Greek

texts, but their early modern receptions. We are meta-readers, readers of readers (Bigliazzi 2023), and this adds to the difficulty of considering how different horizons of expectation located at different times in the processes of reception may interfere with each other (Martindale 2006).[5] This also adds to the fact that the contexts of reading are themselves traversed and shaped by reading policies and practices, structured values, as well as power discourses and discourses of resistance in Foucault's sense. Such a stratified network of forces and layered ways of seeing the world dependent on cultural contexts and discursive practices necessarily interfere with structured forms of textual readings as described by Iser. And this is something that complicates exponentially the question of how to talk about 'Greek sources' – something that still awaits to be articulated through a clear vocabulary and set of criteria.

Iser is interested in meaning-making, and this is connected with schemata, styles, patterns, points of view, language uses. In this sense, Jones' reference to the "spirit" of the Euripidean play conveyed by the English *Jocasta* through Dolce's Italian *Giocasta* – which also implies different dramaturgical and conceptual conventions – invites reflection on whether we can transcend the differences it makes if a play derives from a non-Euripidean Greek text in a non-Greek language. Does it affect in any way the sense of its 'Greekness', whatever this may mean? Is the impact the same as Thomas North's fourteener translation of Sophocles' passage included by Plutarch in the Life of Demetrius, adding to it an irrefutable English veneer?[6] Martindale has pointed out that, in large part, early modern responses to Greek literature were mediated by Latin or vernacular languages, and that Latin syntax affected the sense of the original as well as the writing in English of those who studied Latin closely, as in Christopher Marlowe's case (2017, 171, 173). This kind of remark shifts the question from whether Greek texts (meaning texts either in Greek or circulating in different languages) were present in early modern England, to

5 On the notion of horizons of expectation see Jauss 1982; for a recent reappraisal of reception studies in relation to Shakespeare see Wood 2020.

6 For a discussion of the reception and reinvention of classical metres in early English drama, see Bigliazzi 2021, and references therein.

whether they *did have* an impact on the literary uses of English and, in turn, whether these afforded *new visions* of Greek works (172).

Such a perspectival change is tell-tale of a resurgence of interest in classical receptions in early modern English culture in ways that mark a step beyond the basic question of whether Greek texts circulated in England, how they did, and whether their knowledge of the original language had any cultural currency. The new question is whether either really *mattered*. This is another way to say that perhaps now we may be less interested in whether ideas of "classical" literature – meaning specifically Greek – circulated at all in early modern England, than in what "classical" meant and how it sounded like. Stephen Orgel has answered these questions by pinpointing the cultural value of the historical construction of both, referable to how the early moderns located themselves in history and constructed the other as a way of affirming themselves: "The meaningful re-creation of the past requires the semiotics of the present. Anachronism is essential to the very notion of historical relevance itself, which assumes that the past speaks to, and is in some way a version of, the present" (2018, 58). Orgel's claim entails the larger question about what it would "mean for the principles of humanism to inform literature in the vernacular – how could English literature become 'classical', not only classical in imitating the ancients, but classical in the sense subsequently applied to music, classical as opposed to popular, classical as formal, serious, and therefore good" (2021a, 2).

The present book belongs to this stage in the study of classical receptions in early English theatre. It is concerned not so much with whether we can speak of Greek texts in England, as with what a Greek text and a Greek source meant and which vocabulary may be used to describe them; how ideas of Greekness came about, and how they may now be pinned down textually and culturally; finally, how these affected the construction of early modern drama by openly comparing and contrasting Greek with Roman models, or silently subsuming refined intertextual dialogues across different genres, languages, and cultural milieux. The chapters into which the book is divided display an array of perspectives. They begin with the observation that scholars often limit their source study to lexical echoes and tend to reject anything that does not prove to be

irrefutable evidence. All essays go beyond this assumption through individual empirical studies as well as the use of a more technical language attempting to codify the numerous ways in which texts can interact with one another with a view to overcoming the lexical bias of traditional source studies. All of them cut across forms of mediation discussed in the whole book. The way they have been grouped into sections highlights dominant concerns without dismissing the essays' sharing one and the same interest in the same ideational and polygenetic engagement with what a Greek source is on the early English stage.

Authorities *vs* Sources

The second volume of William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* prefaces the narratives with a list of "Authorities from whence these novelles be collected and in the same avouched" (1575, Avi*r*). The word "authorities" stands for what sources mean for us, and the list includes Greek and Roman, as well as French, Italian and Spanish narratives – it begins with Strabo and ends with Antonio de Guevara. Starting from a discussion of what an "authority" was in the Renaissance, and how Painter used this word without hierarchical implications, in "Invisible Books: Shakespeare and 'Narrative Sources'" Colin Burrow revises the notion of "fact" traditionally interpreted as irrefutable evidence in a forensic demonstration, to ask "what an early modern 'fact' or thing done look like, if it were stripped bare of 'circumstantial' detail, or if the time when or the persons who acted were all changed, while the nature of the action remained the same" (x). In *Imitating Authors* (2019) Burrow argued that formal imitation encompasses structures and rhythms as well as words; in this chapter, he contends that de-circumstantialised narrations provide narrative facts hardly identifiable as traditional sources behind ornamented and elaborately refashioned stories, in ways that allow us to say that George Petty's tale of Alcestis provides "suggestive connections with *The Winter's Tale*" (61). Narrative sources, differently from Bullough's traditional approach, may be viewed as summaries or digests, *fabulae* stripped of ornaments, derived from cumulative, rather than alternative, cultural

influences. In this sense, the novella culture, to which Shakespeare deeply belongs, invited the fusion of contemporary European as well as ancient Greek and Roman stories asking for circumstantial ornamentation to the extent of occulting the books behind them, making them "invisible".

What oriented the creation of circumstances as well as their ideational and ideological import, though, remains open to debate and this needs individual scrutiny of choices. Summaries and digests are never neutral, but the product of selection and, in turn, ideational and ideological assumptions. In discussing *Titus Andronicus*' debt to Euripides' *Hecuba*, Emrys Jones underlined the affinity of the dramatic structures of both, each consisting of "two movements of feeling, the first dominated by passionate suffering, the second by purposeful revenge" (1977, 97). This is the kind of imitational attitude referable to the imitation of style Burrow talks about (2019). But it can also be argued that the Greek Hecuba not only suggests dramatic solutions,[7] but also emphasises questions of justice at the core of the play in ways that bring centre-stage issues of wild justice and the collapse of Roman *pietas* relevant to contemporary political and legal concerns. This issue is embedded in the play's own texture in ways that signal affinity with one particular version of that story: Euripides'. Elsewhere I argued that the either/or alternative does not replace concurrence and polygenesis, but this does not exclude preferences for circumstantial choices (Bigliazzi 2018).

Thus when we hear an anonymous prologue, displaced from the liminal space of prologues to the middle of act 2 of *The Warres of Cyrus* (1594), claim the performative prestige of a singing Greek chorus compared to the lamenting, hybrid, neo-Senecan one, we are called on to distinguish circumstantially between ancient models bearing competing ideological values: the values of acknowledged antiquity they were circumstantially invested with. This is part of my discussion of a strange passage in this play as a unique document about how to perform the classical chorus in an ancient manner

7 In this respect Jones has pointed out that differently from Ovid, Euripides could provide a "structure . . . that could be imitated and adapted to a modern theatre. The structure of Ovid's episode, on the other hand, is one proper to narrative poetry, not drama" (1977, 103).

within a text that, as it stands, has no chorus. In "The Strange Case of the Singing Chorus that Was Not There. On the Authority of Authorities", I question the notion of authority by looking at how the reception of a key portion of ancient drama stood for what was received as being "classical", suggesting different degrees of ancient authority and layers of antiquity related to performance practices with very peculiar contemporary implications. In the particular circumstance of Blackfriars performances, a singing chorus was not devoid of political and cultural connotations. Its value appears against the backdrop of what we may deduce the early moderns understood of the ancient chorus from the encoding of choruses in contemporary Greek and Roman editions, as well as what we now may understand about the performance of early modern neo-Senecan dramas. This is a typical example of the meta-readership mentioned above, modern scholars being not only the readers of those early modern plays but also of how early modern readers read editions of Greek and Roman tragedy. In turn, this obscure document shows concerns about a performing style that acquires the status of the kind of meta-performance Grilli and Morosi talk about in their 2023 book on Ben Jonson and Aristophanes, as opposed to metatheatrical stances.[8] The strange prologic speech we find astray in the *Warres of Cyrus* claims this kind of articulation for a singing chorus "that is not there", whose meta-performative characteristics we can only glimpse through its intertextual allusion to a Greek chorus.

The authority of mediation with a hierarchical sense close to the one of the claimed precedence of this singing chorus (less so to the unprioritised meaning of Painter's "authorities" from which Burrow takes his starting point), is also the topic of Jane Raisch's

8 ". . . meta-performance (such as, for instance, any form of celebration within the play) is not the same thing as metatheatre (that is, any explicit self-conscious reference to the play as a play and to the playwright's, or the actors', work). While metatheatre and the breaking of the fourth-wall stress the difference between first-level diction and reality, meta-performative segments stress the difference between first-level diction and second-level diction. In other words, meta-performance does not impinge at all on dramatic 'illusion', but provides a further articulation thereof." (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 44-5).

"Classicism as Medievalism: Gower & Mediation in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*" and Alessandro Grilli's "An Idea of Old Comedy: Ben Jonson's Metatextual Appropriation of Aristophanes". Raisch engages with "a display of cultural mediation" exploring the exhibited stratification of layers of receptions starting from the choric figure of John Gower and his show of medieval knowledge of an ancient story. Instead of reading the play as genuinely engaging with the invention of medievalism or instead with a Hellenistic representation of the Mediterranean world, as critics have often done, this chapter takes a middle stand suggesting the centrality of the act of mediation itself as a thematisation of reception tout court. In this sense, Shakespeare's *Pericles* becomes an epitome of indirect forms of cultural reception beginning with the narrative function of Gower as its dramatic chorus "situated in a kind of representational limbo" (114), himself consulting authors and books and, thus, displaying how the Greek world was accessed by Medieval culture.

With Alessandro Grilli's chapter we approach intertextual dialogues through meta-textuality as a peculiar form of imitation in the guise of comment or, better say, the kind of relation that a text entertains with the *idea* "of the text to be taken as a model" (133). Grilli's purpose is to demonstrate that Ben Jonson's early production was possibly more familiar with critical texts relating to Aristophanes – Horace, in particular – than with Aristophanes' own plays, suggesting that what he had in mind was an abstract idea of his comedies as forerunners of Roman satire in the way Horace presented Old Attic Comedy in his *Satires* and *Ars Poetica*. Thus, while in the previous chapter Raisch shows how Shakespeare exhibits reception in *Pericles* as a mediated, indirect practice, in this chapter Grilli discusses how the Horatian mediation is assumed, yet not showcased, by Ben Jonson as a strategy to situate his early plays under the aegis of Aristophanes' authority. Grilli demonstrates that the imitation at work here entails structural and, above all, ideological transformations. In other words, the ideological updating resides in deviations and corrections that not only prove that Aristophanes had been read, but *how* it had been read and transformed, and for what purpose. In brief, "Jonson's Aristophanism at this stage is not so much dependent on Aristophanes as on an *image of* Aristophanes that Jonson derives from other authors, primarily Horace" (148).

This first section closes on Evgeniia Ganberg's study of examples of the early modern staging of the Trojan War, from George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584) to William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), Thomas Heywood's *The Iron Age* (1632), James Shirley's *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* (1659), and Elkanah Settle's *The Siege of Troy* (1707). The attention now shifts from the imitation of narratives, performing styles, mediated notions of the Greek world and Greek authors, as in the previous chapters, to a specific stylistic figure standing for the typically Homeric epic. In "'Of gentle and ignoble, base and kings': the Transformations of the Homeric Simile on the Early Modern English Stage", Ganberg discusses the reprises of the formal epic trope of juxtaposing the noble and the lofty with the low and the common as a typically Homeric trademark of a comparative logic challenging ideas of heroic distinction.

Receiving, Adapting, Resisting Models

Moving beyond issues of authority, the book's second focus is on selected examples of uses of Greek material – how it was received, adapted, but also resisted. Francesco Dall'Olio's chapter on the reception of Herodotus on stage ("'An Empire equall with thy mind': the 'Persian Plays' and the Reception of Herodotus in Renaissance England") explores how mediated forms of Herodotus' *Histories* were appropriated by Thomas Preston's *Cambises* (1569), Richard Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus* (1594) and William Alexander's *Croesus* (1604). Dall'Olio explores how this material was used to address political questions relevant at the time, with particular attention to good and bad kingship as well as imperial politics. The chapter touches on the question of how to represent tyranny on stage and how received historiographic narratives, such as Xenophon's and Herodotus', could intersect contemporary political concerns.

The Persian plays Dall'Olio deals with also entail generic adaptation, from history to drama. Francesco Morosi takes up this question in his discussion of a different type of adaptation where Aristophanes no longer surfaces as a metatextually mediated authoritative idea in Ben Jonson's comedy (as shown by Grilli), but

as a component of the two plotlines in his *Staple of News* – the other one being typically Menandrean. Neither Dall'Olio nor Morosi engage with verbal echoes, but with stories. In Ben Jonson's case, his intertextual strategies appear to pivot around an Aristophanic mental model which was brought to interact with other ancient Roman models, as well as with early modern comedic techniques. In this sense, Morosi argues that Jonson derives from individual Aristophanic plays a general idea of how Aristophanic drama works, and it is "that model, and not specific *loci*, that Jonson remembers and reframes" as both "a playwright and an interpreter" (256).

These two essays tackle the reception of Greek authors through the adaptation of Herodotus' *Histories* and Greek and Roman comedic models for the contemporary stage. No resistance emerges in these cases, but what we find are strategies of appropriation concerning plots, ideologemes, and dramatic patterns and formats.

In the following chapter on "Questions of Mediation of the *Deus ex Machina* in Elizabethan Drama", Emanuel Stelzer poses a related and at the same time different issue: the scarce use of a theatrical device such as the *deus ex machina* which was key to Greek and Roman drama. The stagecraft and technology available at the time do not account for the paucity of examples and Stelzer raises intriguing questions of cultural resistance in the way the representation of pagan gods on stage could prompt reflection on the Catholicism with which that device was connected by the contemporary Reformed culture through memories of Medieval miracle plays. The Reformed context privileged a notion of divinity prefigured and concealed in the mysterious notion of the *deus absconditus*, which is the opposite of the *deus ex machina*. Stelzer's discussion prompts questions on the extent to which a Protestant bias might have affected a specific dramaturgical choice that could have had a clearly metatheatrical implication. While Puritan biases concern theatre as a whole going far beyond the representation of the pagan god, the *deus ex machina* possibly remained a very hot issue within a context where resistance to theatrical culture was voiced from different quarters. Representing the pagan god could reinforce the fictitious dimension of the play but it could also imply an ideological risk that called for resistance.

Theatregrams

As Tom Harrison reminds us, a famous saying by Ben Jonson was that the ancients should act as "guides, not commanders" (*Discoveries*, 1.98). This claim beautifully encapsulates the dialectic between the power of authorities and their epigones' dependence on as well as freedom from them – in brief, an early modern version of Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence (1973). Ben Jonson handled it as a combination of *imitatio* and *contaminatio* creatively reshuffling different 'guides'. The phrase "family resemblance" that Harrison uses to interpret this kind of practice identifies, in Wittgenstein's terms, "simultaneously rigid and malleable" properties that Harrison finds in the category of theatregrams as models featuring similarities at different levels, overall or of detail. Jonson's "contaminative dramaturgy" (296), in Harrison's words (2023), is here explored through his articulation of choral groupings bearing a family resemblance to the use of the chorus in Aristophanes' Old Comedy. The Collegiate ladies of *Epicene* (1609-1610) are set against the choruses of Jonson's tragedies in a more Senecan vein and presented as an informal collective retaining the "hurting" and parabatic function of the Aristophanic chorus within a dramatic context appropriate to early modern comedy. As Harrison rightly points out, Jonson wrote for an audience which did not fully understand the ancient chorus and read it through the dramatic tradition of Seneca and Horace; and yet they could sense the performative potential of their collective licentious, aggressive, and comic incarnation. The identification of discrete theatregrams provides the grammar of what is sometimes called an Aristophanic essence or spirit, allowing for a clearer perception of its dramatic articulation and possibilities for cultural contamination.

Domenico Lovascio also uses the language of theatregrams but to identify conversations between Fletcher and Shakespeare's affordances to access reservoirs of Greek stories or clusters of dramatic patterns. In "Unveiling Wives: Euripides' *Alcestis* and Two Plays in the Fletcher Canon", Lovascio concentrates on the defamiliarising effect of the trope of the veiled woman in John Fletcher's *The Tragedy of Thierry and Theodoret* (1613-1621, probably 1617), composed in collaboration with Philip Massinger and Nathan

Field. Anyone acquainted with *The Winter's Tale* finale and its indebtedness to Euripides' *Alcestis* – or possibly George Pettie's novella version of that story in his *Petite Palace* of 1576 – would have expected a tragicomic ending, also ambiguously enhanced by Shakespeare. Lovascio brings Fletcher and Shakespeare into conversation across *King Lear* and *The Winter's Tale*, invoking memories of ancient brotherly enmity, from Lucan to Statius (but also as filtrated through the contemporary English *Jocasta*), demonstrating the likewise contaminative dramaturgy of Fletcher in "a conscious effort systematically to defy the expectations of the audience in terms of genre and theatrical conventions" (351). If Harrison refers the theatregram device to its commedia dell'arte origin, where he unroots an articulated grammar of family resemblances, Lovascio treats the same concept more loosely, alternatively as a trope, a pattern, a theme, a motif, more strongly conversant with the contemporaries than with the ancients, resisting their guidance and inhibiting "the transition of tragedy into tragicomedy" (354).

Generic Inflections

Lovascio's discussion brings us smoothly into the realm of generic construction. The following two chapters by Tom Bishop ("Tragedy, Persuasion, and the Humanist Daughter: Jane Lumley's *Iphigeneya*") and Gherardo Ugolini ("Unwritten Laws and Natural Law in Watson's *Antigone*") deal, respectively, with the first and only English and Latin translations of a Greek tragedy in the sixteenth century. Tania Demetriou and Tanya Pollard suggested that translations of Greek tragedies contributed to giving a sense of "English writers' increasing interest in translating Greek tragedy" and that this "developed hand-in-hand with attention to these plays' theatrical possibilities" (2017, 3). Tom Bishop looks at Lumley's translation from an opposite angle: instead of defending her dramaturgy – often charged with inaccuracy and lack of sophistication – he argues that "dramaturgy is precisely *not* what she is interested in" (373). In Bishop's reading, Lumley's prose translation, clean of metres and choruses, is placed squarely within

the legacy of rhetorical dialogue, rather than tragedy. It is close to Erasmus' colloquies and Isocrates' orations, Bishop contends, and, therefore, is concerned more with *peithō* or persuasion, than with pathos. Thus, if sixteenth-century uses of the word "tragedy" covered different genres such as narratives, plays, and a variety of Christian writings, Bishop demonstrates that this Euripidean tragedy could well be shaped by Lumley as a series of conversations focused on the topic of counsel. If Euripides' *Iphigenia* thus becomes a testing ground for dialogue and argumentation, in Watson's 1581 Latin version of Sophocles' *Antigone* is turned into a Christian tragedy in the Wittenberg tradition of readings of Sophocles. Interestingly, it presents even more strange contaminations also at the level of dramatic choices recalling parabatic devices entirely absent from the ancient tragic tradition. Gherardo Ugolini shows how the superimposition of an interpretation of the notion of unwritten laws as natural laws, absent from the original onto the play's conceptual frame, drastically changes its genre to embrace Christian theology in a similar vein to Robert Garnier's contemporary French reinvention of *Antigone ou la Pieté* (1580).

Interestingly, while Lumley dealt with dialogue and argument and Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh contaminated their version of Euripides' *Phoenissae* with dumb shows, Watson modified the genre in an early modern spirit by adding paratexts (the so-called *Pomps* and the *themes*, or short choral odes) and an *Argument* that has "the flavour of a *parabasis* (unthinkable in an ancient Greek tragedy), a text with a programmatic message offering the reader/viewer, even before the drama begins, not only an essential presentation and/or recapitulation of the events, but also, and especially, a key for their interpretation in the light of the role of nature and the violation of her rules" (396). It is precisely a message on the role of Nature and natural laws that is contained in this liminal text providing the right instructions to read Sophocles' Greek tragedy through a Christian filter.

How a rediscovery of Attic tragedy in France mediated by François de Belleforest's narrative rewriting of Matteo Bandello's "Timbreo e Fenicia" possibly oriented Shakespeare's reflection on how a tragic story could become tragicomic is the subject of Tania Demetriou's following chapter ("Much Ado about Greek

Tragedy? Shakespeare, Euripides, and the *histoire tragique*"). In accord with Colin Burrow's contention that Shakespeare's drama is embedded in the narrative culture of contemporary European novellas, Demetriou demonstrates that the tragic genre in the novella tradition interacted with the reception of Greek tragedy in ways that suggest an interplay with the Euripidean device of the veiled bride in *Alcestis*. Shakespeare's encounter with Belleforest's version of the Bandello tale also implied a closer encounter with the Stobaean Euripides contained in that French novella, suggesting to him generic possibilities for *Much Ado about Nothing* that he would later further develop in *The Winter's Tale*. In this sense, Demetriou unveils complex layers of generic interplay, from Attic tragedy to contemporary reflections on what tragic meant in the context of French narratives and how they could swerve towards comic endings. This journey through different traditions reveals the complex mediations of a concurrent cultural blend of factors that went beyond the either/or alternative in the identification of sources, with regard not only to a text, but also to the articulation of a genre.

While Demetriou approaches the format of tragicomedy reaching back to Greek tragedy through the Italian and French novellas, Janice Valls-Russell starts from Greek historiography – Herodotus, Xenophon and Plutarch – to approach English tragedy *à la française*, mediated by the Senecan model. In "Translating Greek History into Humanist Neo-Senecan Drama: William Alexander's *Croesus* (1604)", Valls-Russell takes up the example of Alexander's Persian play also discussed by Dall'Olio for its political adjustments to contemporary concerns to examine the polygenetic weave of a historical drama in a "classical" fashion. Long narratives can hardly be contained within the space of a regular tragedy in Senecan style. But from those ancient historians Alexander learned how to embed individual stories within larger histories as "inset narratives which mirror features of the main dramatic action" (453). This chapter explores the hybridisation of Greek narrative with a Senecan format, the use of native verse and separate choruses for commentary, individual models derived from ancient Greek and Roman drama and epic, rounded off with heightened pathos in the French style. Such a medley of styles and registers raises questions on the idea

itself of tragedy as a genre which at this stage in the cultural context of English drama could encompass "austere tragicomedy" (461) as well. It also testifies to the "resilience with which narratives from a distant elsewhere reinvent and actualise themselves" (465).

Pastiche

Fragments are inherent in the reception and perception of Greek and Roman texts. They were read as series of parts, they were scattered as quotations and *sententiae* in other texts, they bore portions of a distant culture that was being received as refracted through sparse testimonies, commentaries, editions, translations, elaborate mediations as well as performances of excerpts.[9] But there is one case that is especially representative of how fragmentation and recomposition concurred to constructing the assumedly whole picture of a play epitomatic of the Christianisation of ancient tragedy: *Christus Patiens*. In his seminal study of 1988, Bruce Smith aptly replaced the notion of influence with that of confluence, suggesting that the intersection between Greek and Roman culture with the early moderns could profitably be seen from the perspective of the latter. His premise is worth recollecting at length:

> Since the Renaissance itself, critics have been pointing out the marks that ancient drama has left on modern; this book looks at the matter from the opposite direction as well and considers the marks that modern drama has left on ancient, particularly on the first stage productions of Greek and Latin scripts in modern times. In these physical confrontations between classical heroes and modern Englishmen, we can observe how each party had to accommodate itself to the other, how the protagonists of Greek and Roman drama were compelled to fit in with the staging traditions and moral assumptions of the Middle Ages, and how, at the same time, modern audiences were challenged to revise their customary ways of looking at plays and to explore two new structures of thought and feeling – "comic" and "tragic" – until those two categories

9 See e.g. Burrow 2013, 164ff. for comments on the same practice about Senecan tragedy.

> reestablished their dominion over the entire dramatic universe in Restoration neoclassicism. (6-7)

Building on this premise, in "'Is All Well Put Together In Every Part?': Assembling a Renaissance *Bacchae*", William N. West examines the famous Byzantine cento of lines from Greek tragedies on Christ's Passion, a text that eventually supplemented a few missing passages from Euripides' *Bacchae* to fill the famous gap where Agave realises the horror of Pentheus' dismemberment. Although *Bacchae* was "practically unknown" to the Elizabethans (Orgel 2021b, 64), *Christus Patiens* was not, and it incorporated in its final part what were later recognised to be two lacunae in the final scene of Euripides' play as transmitted by the Byzantine manuscript and the Renaissance editions. *Christus Patiens*, a tragedy on the suffering of Christ, is a patchwork of co-texts making for a whole, in fact assembling bits and pieces from different originally non-conversant Greek texts. Once those lines taken from a version of *Bacchae* we do not have are restored into modern editions of that play, they occlude their absence in the editions the early moderns could access. William West brings the example of this Renaissance pastiche as a literal, material instance of the confluence Smith talks about, and finally as a supreme example of the kind of problems this book engages with: a "conflation and flowing together", the "emblematic Greek tragedy for the Renaissance reception of antiquity, repeatedly appropriating and recontextualising favoured elements so that they acquire new resonances and new relations, and then carrying these with them as shadowy connotations as they are set into yet other contexts" (474).

Such a piecemeal way of composing a whole tells us something about the reception and appropriation of Greek antiquity for Christian purposes. It also tells us how from readings that atomised ancient texts new Renaissance visions accommodating contemporary stances could take shape. Whether these co-texts within one and the same play, as in this case, or layers of inter-texts co-present in the memory and ideational space of early modern readers as well as of readers of readers over time could be called sources in a traditional sense, is what this book challenges. Its attempt is to make sense of the haunting presence of an invisible antiquity.

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Part 1
Authorities *vs* Sources

1

Invisible Books: Shakespeare and 'Narrative Sources'

Colin Burrow

Abstract

Books onstage in Shakespeare tend to be provocatively unidentifiable, or serve as props for dialogue between characters. The naming of sources onstage in early modern drama tends to happen when someone who is either a pedant or a plagiarist is either boasting about their rudimentary learning or having it exposed. Plays with clear classical 'sources' typically do not explicitly identify them, and rely instead on readers and audiences to recognise parallels and divergences. What does this tell us about early modern reading and writing practices, and how should it inform critical practice? Recent work on relationships between early modern drama and the classics typically explores how Greek and Latin writing provides intellectual frameworks as well as invisible structures and forms that may underlie early modern drama. This invisibility is in keeping with early modern reticence about 'sources', but (as this paper will argue) work still needs to be done to develop a vocabulary and a set of criteria for persuasively making such identifications.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Ben Jonson; John Marston; Classical Antiquity; Authority; Imitation; Source

This paper is in a mixed genre, being in part palinode and in part gentle pushback. To take the palinode aspect first, in the ten years since *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* appeared there has been a lot of highly convincing work about Shakespeare's relationship to Greek tragedy. John Kerrigan and others have explored echoes of *Oedipus Colonus* in *King Lear*, while Tania Demetriou, Tanya Pollard, and many others too, including in volumes published by *Skenè*, have shown various ways in which Shakespeare's engagement with Greek was far greater than has hitherto been thought.[1] The

1 Kerrigan 2018; Pollard 2017; Pollard and Demetriou 2017; Bigliazzi 2019; Demetriou and Valls-Russell 2021. Work on Greek learning in the period generally has also enjoyed a recent renaissance: see Rhodes 2019.

result of all this work is that it no longer sounds risqué to find the *Trojan Women* influencing Shakespearean tragic heroines or to hear echoes of *Alcestis* in *A Winter's Tale.* Indeed not to hear the footsteps of Orestes echoing through the graveyard scene in *Hamlet* is today tantamount to confessing if not to deafness then at least to tone-deafness. My palinode is simple: I wish that there had been more room for Greek material in Shakespeare in *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*, beyond the inevitable chapter on Plutarch. My excuse is weak but common: the book was already overdue and overlong when I finished it, and because each chapter was about Shakespeare's response to a single author it would have been messy to include another chapter on all of Greek tragedy.

The pushback element in this paper is nothing that resembles a rebuttal or resistance to the recent Greeking of Shakespeare. It is indeed more of a sidestep or a dodge than a pushback. I will propose adopting a very broad view of what might be thought of as a 'source' in early modern England, and will use that broad view of the topic to suggest that, although the many verbal echoes of and allusions to Greek tragedy which have been recorded cumulatively establish the case for Shakespeare's knowledge of a reasonably wide range of Greek plays, verbal echoes are only one means among many of arguing convincingly for a strong relationship between Greek and early modern drama. The echo or verbal resemblance has become established as the principal foundation for identifying a 'source' for a number of reasons. One is that there is, as we say, 'a case to be made' that Shakespeare's small Latin and less Greek was actually capacious, and the way to prove that case is by what we call 'facts', and 'facts' in this context has a forensic sense, meaning in effect 'evidence that X did Y', or in this case that 'William Shakespeare read Euripides'. Another reason lies in the much longer history of annotations in scholarly editions of classical texts, from which the practices for annotating and interpreting the vernacular texts which have become canonical chiefly derive. Classical editors have always been keen to annotate close verbal resemblances between a Latin and a Greek text, and for good reason: one of the ways in which Latin authors simultaneously established their own authority and that of their language was by creating verbal parallels in Latin to Greek texts, and hence noting such parallels in commentaries on Latin texts

has both a hermeneutic purpose (it could show what the author was trying to do) and a wider cultural point (it could indicate the close and conflicted relation between Rome and captive Greece). 'Source criticism' as practised in the twentieth century was profoundly indebted to the methodology of the classical commentary, in much the same way that study of Shakespeare's texts and their transmission was dominated, at least for the central third of the twentieth century, by practices calqued off classical textual scholarship. By the early 1980s critics began to realise that the techniques of classicists (in particular recension in an effort to reconstruct a single lost archetype) were not appropriate for dealing with the texts of Shakespeare's plays, in which lateral influence between discreet versions coexisted with strong evidence of authorial revision, as well as strong evidence of collaboration and theatrical adaptation.[2] By the early 1980s too 'source study' was stigmatised as an 'elephant's graveyard', and fell, nay, positively crashed, from favour (Greenblatt 1985, 163). Much has been done to refine, complicate, and deconstruct the concept of a 'source' since then.[3] But despite these theoretical developments, in practice, and in particular when arguing for the influence of Greek texts on Shakespeare, the 'verbal allusion as evidence of influence' model still remains if not unquestioned then nonetheless dominant – and perhaps at times the desire for 'proof' can be stronger than the evidence available.

In *Imitating Authors: Plato to Futurity* (2019) I argued that in what I termed 'formal imitation' there often is no verbal connection between an imitand and its imitation. The relationship between the two texts may be more akin to a learned practice or a family resemblance than a shared phrase (Burrow 2019). It is probably self-evident to any practitioner of the creative arts that imitators imitate structures and rhythms as well as words, and the anxieties about verbal appropriation of prior texts, which are deeply intertwined with the history of *imitatio*, can be at least partially laid to rest by seeking to resemble the practice of an earlier text, its shape or habitual syntax, rather than its exact phrasing. The concept of 'formal

2 Notably Taylor and Warren 1983.

3 See e.g. Maguire and Smith 2015; Belsey 2015; Drakakis 2021, and on the metaphor of the 'source' Quint 1983.

imitation' had its roots in the work of my D.Phil. supervisor, Emrys Jones, who argued powerfully both for the transmissibility of what he termed 'scenic form' from one play to another, and for Shakespeare's awareness of Greek tragedy (Jones 1971; Jones 1977). It also rested on heroic work by Kathy Eden and Peter Mack in particular which showed the influence of Johannes Sturm and Philipp Melanchthon on rhetorical culture in the sixteenth century (e.g. Eden 1997; Mack 2002). One working assumption behind *Imitating Authors*, though, carried with it a large implicit debt to classical scholarship: in that book I tended to assume that theoretical discussions of imitation in the sixteenth century were necessarily, though in complex and refracted ways, reflected in practice. To put it crudely, *Imitating Authors* tends to assume that Shakespeare and his contemporaries put into practice what Melanchthon and Sturm and (though to a lesser extent) Erasmus theorised. There are good grounds for believing that 'theory' from the period can provide some kind of guide to practice, since rhetorical training was as much a way of life as a set of precepts, but there are also hazards in using the language of 'imitation' to describe textual relationships. The word 'imitation' has strong associations with the kinds of close textual relationship which we now usually call 'allusions', and is deeply embedded in the wider history and assumptions of classical scholarship. A key moment in this history is found in the textual apparatus to Alexander Pope's *Dunciad*, the notes to which always describe clear allusions to classical texts as 'imitations'. The Advertisement to the 1729 edition says that these "imitations", or what would now usually be termed "allusions", are noted "to gratify those who either never read, or may have forgotten" the texts to which they allude (Pope 1729, 4). This is a joke, like most of Pope, but also like most of Pope it is a joke with explosive force. It comically exposes the attitudes of the reading public in the 1730s: the assumption is that the learned reader of an annotated text already knows the texts to which "allusions" are made, and that assumption, Pope teasingly implies, is probably false. It also indicates that the word "imitation" by the first third of the seventeenth century was associated with close verbal resemblances. That association has not gone away, particularly among classical scholars, and it makes "imitation" a potentially risky word to use when describing interrelationships between texts.

Despite this problem, the theoretical writings of Johannes Sturm or Roger Ascham or Quintilian can indeed give insights into how early modern readers and authors thought about the interrelationship between texts. But other kinds of evidence about attitudes to what we call 'sources' in the period are available which are in their way just as revealing. There are several occasions in early modern writing in which fictional characters are represented talking about books and the relationships between texts – who are, as it were, themselves early-modern source-hunters – and these can give a slightly different angle on the ways that early modern writers thought about what we call 'source hunting'. Most of these representations occur in satirical contexts. This is not surprising, since satire was the genre in which the first English usages of the word 'plagiary' are to be found, and was a genre in which both the origins of and responsibility for authorship were subjected to particular scrutiny.[4] The source-hunter is of course distinct from "the plagiarie sonnet-wright" imagined by the satirist Joseph Hall, or from "plagiary" who steals poems from Horace in Jonson's *Poetaster*, or from the person who "(beggarly) doth chaw" Donne's words at the start of his second satire, but is usually also an object of ridicule, as though both plagiarists and those who police plagiarism are equally absurd. Lady Politic Would-Be in Jonson's *Volpone* is perhaps the most extreme instance of a source-hungry early-modern reader. Her frenzied name-dropping – she drops them so heavily that Montaigne's name is broken into three, rather than two, syllables – is not simply a cheap misogynistic satire on learned ladies. It is also an index of a wider aspect of early modern literary culture:

> LADY WOULD-BE Here's *Pastor Fido* –
> VOLPONE [*Aside*] Profess obstinate silence,
> That's now my safest.
> LADY WOULD-BE All our English writers,
> I mean such as are happy in th' Italian,
> Will deign to steal out of this author, mainly;
> Almost as much as from Montagnié:

4 See *Virgidemiarum*, 4.2.83 in Hall 1969; Jonson, *Poetaster*, 4.3.83 in Jonson 2012 (all quotations from this edition); Donne Satire 2.25-30 in Donne 1967. On plagiarism see Kewes 2003 and Eden 2008.

He has so modern, and facile a vein,
Fitting the time, and catching the court ear.
(3.4.86-92)

Lady Pol implies that people who write so that their sources are overtly on display are doing something illegitimate, and that she has the learning to catch them at it. Meanwhile Jonson implies, by Volpone's asides, as well as through Lady Pol's errors (Montaigne gains a syllable and she seems to treat Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* as the name of an author), that readers who seek to trap authors in acts of theft by identifying specific sources are themselves absurd.

The source-hunting critic is mocked at birth in this passage – though Jonson himself was probably indebted to a slightly earlier piece of satire on source-hunters by his collaborator and rival, John Marston. In *The Scourge of Villainy* 6 from 1599 Marston describes a critic, or what he calls a "new discarded academian", at work reading Marston's own satires. Naturally the critic is an idiot, since in Marston's world everyone including Marston himself is an idiot; but critics of Marston are necessarily turbo-idiots:

Then straight comes Friscus, that neat gentleman,
That new discarded academian,
Who, for he could cry 'Ergo' in the school,
Straightway with his huge judgement dares control
Whatsoe'er he views: 'That's pretty, pretty good;
That epithet hath not that sprightly blood
Which should enforce it speak; that's Persius' vein;
That's Juvenal's; here's Horace' crabbèd strain',
Though he ne'er read one line in Juvenal,
Or in his life his lazy eye let fall
On dusky Persius. Oh indignity
To my respectless, free-bred poesy.
(6.89-100)[5]

Marston's Friscus identifies not 'sources', or direct verbal debts, but what he calls "veins", or passages which are stylistically reminiscent of earlier authors. He identifies 'source' texts in this vague and

5 Quotations from the forthcoming edition of the *Oxford Edition of the Works of John Marston.*

hand-waving manner because he, like the imagined readers of Pope's *Dunciad*, has not in fact read these Latin authors but wants it to look as though he has done so. And while drawing attention to the limitations of his critics Marston insists his own poetry is "free-bred" rather than being in the "vein" of these authors.

These examples may just indicate that the category of the pedant is a transhistorical one, or they may suggest the more specifically historical claim that the 'source-hunter' as a literary character emerges in tandem with the anxieties about plagiarism which were articulated in Elizabethan satire. But they also show more than that. According to the influential schema of types of imitation established by G.W. Pigman, Marston's satires might be said to combine "dissimulative" with "eclectic" imitation: that is, Pigman might say, Marston is indebted to Juvenal and Persius, but seeks to hide those debts (Pigman 1980). This, though, may be a slightly misleading view of the matter. Marston was not simply fusing together prior texts and seeking to occlude his relationship to them. Rather this passage combines an overt display of the possibility that he has used these authors with an explicit disavowal of such a connection. Implicitly this passage suggests that Marston's writing combines the "vein" of several earlier authors into a new and "free-bred poesy" in a way that makes attempts to identify his relationship with prior texts intrinsically foolish. That is, writers of satire might represent readers who find 'sources' as pedants or fools, and they did so in order to suggest that their works were founded on much reading and many books, but that none of those books could be identified. Marston does not root his poetic practice in eclectic or dissimulative imitation. Rather he claims a genealogical relationship ("veins") to earlier writing in a way that might tempt an ignorant reader to separate and identify each of those veins, but suggests that these "veins" are fused so inextricably together in his own work that attempting to prise them apart them is folly.

These rather niche representations of source hunting critics in the work of early modern dramatists are, *mutatis mutandis*, analogous to moments in which 'sources' in the form of physical books are presented on the Shakespearean stage. Several of these onstage books appear, not coincidentally, in satirical contexts. The most notorious example occurs when Polonius discovers Hamlet

with a book and asks him “What do you read, my Lord?”. It is famously “words, words, words”, or rather, as Hamlet goes on:

> Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber or plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams. All which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am – if, like a crab, you could go backward. (2.2.198-205)[6]

The onstage book is a pretext for interpersonal exchange, and in some respects seems almost to be a *product* of that interpersonal exchange, or to be created to fit its role within the drama. Hamlet wants to tease and taunt, so the book becomes several books at once, all of them satirical: it could be Persius’s satires, or Juvenal’s or maybe Joseph Hall’s or even John Marston’s satires, none of which are kind to old men. Hamlet’s book is an early modern ‘source’ in the sense of being a book that is not quite there, but which radiates possibilities. It is a text which is unidentifiable because it is so many books, both ancient and modern. The point of such a hybrid satirical book or omni-satire is that it can stab the person who is interfering with the person reading it. The pedantic Polonius is left unable to know exactly what the book is, so completely is it assimilated to Hamlet’s particular “vein” of madness.

There is a similar effect in *Troilus and Cressida* when the learned Ulysses is asked by Achilles what he is reading. Ulysses says:

> A strange fellow here
> Writes me: “That man
> . . .
> Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
> Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection;
> As when his virtues shining upon others
> Heat them and they retort that heat again
> To the first giver.”
> (3.3.90-101)

6 Quotations from Shakespeare 1986.

Achilles replies that he knows all that, and "nor doth the eye itself, / That most pure spirit of sense, behold itself".

This onstage book is also a natural perspective with multiple identities. Critics have sometimes argued that Ulysses is reading Cicero, or Plato, or Montaigne, or John Davies.[7] But the strangest thing about the onstage moment is that it is Achilles, who is not the one presented reading the onstage book, who seems to offer the clearest summary of the contents of the book which Ulysses is holding. Indeed it might have seemed to audiences of the play in the early seventeenth century that Achilles had not only been reading Cicero and/or Plato but also Thomas Nashe's dedicatory address prefixed to *The Unfortunate Traveller*, which was dedicated to Shakespeare's patron the Earl of the Southampton, in which Nashe says that "the eye that sees round itself sees not into itself".[8]

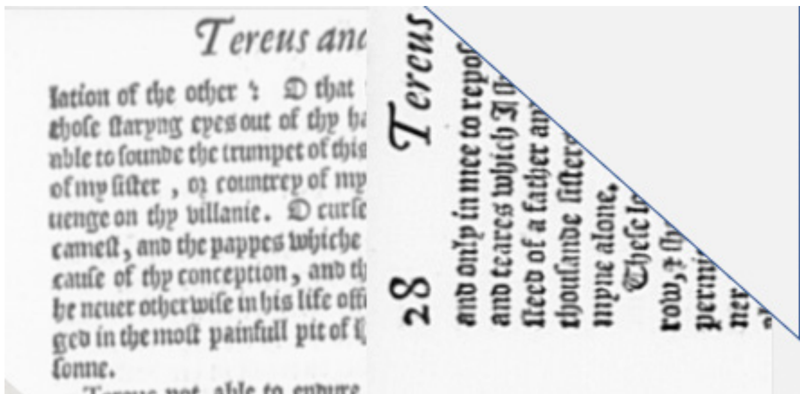
The theatrical richness of these visible onstage books, or 'sources' of conversations, may reflect a simple material fact. Playing companies probably owned a very small number of books (Wall-Randell 2020), hence a book which was actually a Bible might on different days play the part, as it were, of a volume of Galen or of Aristotle or Cicero or even the Koran. But the elusiveness of the onstage Shakespearean book, its unidentifiability, the way it evokes a wide range of prior texts, also reveals something about early modern attitudes to what are still usually called 'sources'. A book is not one simple site of one statement possessed of a single originating author; rather it can serve as the origin of a conversation, in the course of which it becomes several books, and perhaps too many for any single one to be identified.

This claim could be taken further. It is often taken for granted that when Iachimo spies on Imogen in 2.2 of *Cymbeline* she has been reading "the tale of Tereus" in a copy of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and that this is the volume of which "the leaf's turned down / Where Philomel gave up" (2.2.45-6; e.g. Burrow 2013, 28). This assumption has a logic which is perhaps more Victorian than early modern: *Cymbeline* is set in the era of Roman Britain, so it must be Ovid that this Romano-British heroine is reading, the implied argument goes,

7 Details are in Shakespeare 1953: 411-15. See Burrow 2013: 29-30.

8 Nashe 1958, 2.201. First suggested in Shakespeare 1906.

and it would be anachronistic if the book were any other book.[9] But the onstage book in *Cymbeline*, like the sources of this play itself, is multiplex. Imogen may be imagined by her author and audience as an early-modern woman reading one of those collections of *novelle*, such as George Pettie's *Petite Palace of Pleasure* (1576), which were explicitly designed for and addressed "To the Gentlewomen Readers" (Pettie 1576, sig. Aii*r*). Pettie gives the tale of Philomela the title "Tereus and Progne", and if a reader were to "turn down the leaf" at the moment when "Philomel gave up" in the *Petite Palace of Pleasure* the story becomes not just the tale of Tereus but the tale of Tereus and Tereus, because the name of Tereus from the running titles would overlay that of Progne, and so appear twice over, thus:


Tereus anc
lation of the other : O that
those staryng eyes out of thy h
able to sounde the trumpet of this
of my sister , or countrey of my
uenge on thy villanie. O curse
camest, and the pappes whiche
cause of thy conception, and th
be neuer otherwise in his life offi
ged in the most painfull pit of
sonne.

Tereus
28
and only in mee to repo
and teares which I
sleed of a father an
thousande sisters
myne alone,

Figure 1: The leaf turned down in the tale of Tereus in *Pettie's Petite Palace of Pleasure* (1576).

This is not to make the pedantic pseudo-empirical claim that Imogen 'is' reading Pettie rather than Ovid in this scene. The 'source' for Imogen's book in Figure 1 is a digitally manipulated fiction rather than a scholarly discovery of a volume with the page turned down, or with Shakespeare's or Imogen's fingerprints on it. Early modern literary culture allowed for the idea of a 'narrative source' or even a physical book which was 'maybe Ovid, or maybe one of several other versions of the story of Tereus and Philomel'.

9 On the anachronism of anachronism, see De Grazia 2021.

How might these representations of readers and source-hunters help us understand what an Elizabethan 'narrative source' was? Asking that question inevitably summons up a ghost. Enter stage left, in heavy clanking armour, the eight volumes of Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (Bullough 1957-1975). Bullough's collection is dominated by the vernacular texts he terms "narrative sources", and was the heir to a long tradition that goes back to Charlotte Lennox's collection of Shakespeare's sources called *Shakespear Illustrated* of 1753-1754. Lennox's collection was in turn founded on the belief that Shakespeare had small Latin and no Greek at all, but that he did enjoy and indeed steal plots from vernacular versions of Bandello and other Italian *novelle.* The influence of Lennox's collection on attitudes to Shakespeare's reading has been incalculable. Her focus on vernacular "narrative sources" assisted the emergence of the profoundly unhelpful critical polarization between, as it were, the T.W. Baldwins and the Geoffrey Bulloughs of the scholarly world, between those who want to prove Shakespeare's classical learning by tracing verbal allusions to classical texts in his works and those who emphasise a Shakespeare whose reading was dominated by vernacular "narrative sources" (Baldwin 1944). Binary oppositions are rarely helpful, but this one has been more than usually pernicious. Although the critical conversation has moved beyond the fruitlessly extreme versions of it (did Shakespeare warble his native woodnotes wild, or alternatively did he learnedly rehash his grammar school knowledge on the stage?), it is not entirely dead – as anyone who has given a paper about Shakespeare's relationship to classical literature to an audience of people principally interested in Shakespeare as a man of the theatre will know to their cost. Finally dissolving the antithesis between Shakespeare the native woodland warbler *vs* Shakespeare the humanist reader would be a small benefit to mankind. It could help us come a little closer towards understanding the range of ways in which early modern writers could use what they read and what they knew of past stories, and hence how they regarded what Bullough calls "narrative sources".

The first stage in dissolving this antithesis is not, perhaps, to put additional pressure on the word 'source', which has already been crushed almost to death, but to direct some pressure instead towards

that innocent-sounding word 'narrative'. What was a 'narrative' in this period? In the rhetorical tradition a *narratio* was part of a speech which offered a circumstantially plausible account of the facts designed to persuade a judge of the truth of one's case (Quintilian, *Institutio*, 4.2). A *narratio* took a 'fact', or a thing done, and might elaborate the 'circumstances' in which it occurred – the persons, the place, the time, the manner how, and so on. In *Circumstantial Shakespeare* Lorna Hutson (2015) has shown how the elaboration of these 'circumstances' could create the sense of thickly realised scene and character in Shakespearean drama. That brilliant insight into the rhetorical culture of the age might invite us, perhaps, to imagine its inverse. It might invite the question 'What would *un*-circumstantial Shakespeare look like?' What might an early modern 'fact' or thing done look like, if it were stripped bare of 'circumstantial' detail, or if the time when or the persons who acted were all changed, while the nature of the action remained the same?

In sixteenth-century vernacular rhetorical textbooks, narrations are often presented in the form of summaries of events which might provide students with an occasion for variation and elaboration. Richard Rainolde's *Foundation of Rhetoric* from 1563, for instance, gives several single paragraph examples of 'narrations'. It may simply be a coincidence, but several of these are stories of which Shakespeare was to compose highly circumstantial versions. So Rainolde gives "a narration historical upon King Richard the third, the cruel tyrant" (sig. D1*r*) as well as "A Narration Poetical Upon a Rose", which relates a story of how the rose became red as a result of the love of Venus for Adonis:

> Venus as a louer, ranne to helpe Adonis her louer, and by chaunce she fell into a Rose bushe, and pricked with it her foote, the blood then ran out of her tender foote, did colour the Rose redde: wherevpon the Rose beyng white before, is vpon that cause chaunged into redde. (D4*r*)

Neither 'narration' derives from a clear prior 'source' in the dominant sense of the word in Shakespeare studies, since 'sources' for such de-circumstantialised narrations are almost necessarily impossible to identify, and neither of them is a clear 'source' of Shakespeare in the sense of displaying verbal echoes with his

works on the same narrative subjects; but both are accounts of the 'facts' of a case – including in the version of the Adonis 'narration' a play on red and white to which early readers drew attention in Shakespeare's version of *Venus and Adonis* (Duncan-Jones 1993). If a 'source' is imagined not in the academic but in the geographical sense, however, as a small trickle in a hillside capable of gradually swelling and growing until it becomes the Vlatava as it roars through Prague, then this passage from Rainolde could be regarded as a 'source' of *Venus and Adonis.* It is a compressed origin, a 'narration' which represents the portable form of a potential poem in the form of a site for elaboration. The early-modern concept of a 'narration' positively encouraged a mode of elaborative retelling that took a bare summary of a story, and ornamented it with speeches and elaborately fashioned circumstances.

The printed European *novelle* collections which critics from Charlotte Lennox onwards have presented as Shakespeare's chief 'narrative sources' offered both the bare summary form of 'narration' and its circumstantially elaborated expansion. The tales of Matteo Bandello are relatively spare of detail: like those in Boccaccio's *Decameron* they are chiefly concerned with who does what to whom. When those tales were translated into French by François de Belleforest and Pierre Boaistuau they were frequently treated as material for rhetorical embellishment (Pruvost 1937). The French translators often added long speeches of persuasion or elaborated those which were already there. They were followed in this by the authors who are typically described as the English 'translators' of Bandello, including William Painter, Geoffrey Fenton, and George Pettie. Painter and Fenton generally worked from French versions of Bandello, and typically elaborated the French elaborations even further by expanding speeches, or writing fictional letters, or extending complaints. This process accelerated between Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* of 1566 and George Pettie's *Petite Palace* of 1576. Pettie, for all his claims to be petite, allows speeches and complaints and letters to expand so copiously that the 'source' in Bandello or Ovid or wherever it might be often all but vanishes. So his Admetus writes to Alcestis as follows:

> I had rather live with you in most misery (if he may possibly be miserable that injoyeth such a jewel as you are) then here in most happinesse (which of me is not to bee had without you) therefore wayward fortune hath only left us this way, if it please you so mutch to dishonour your selfe, & to doo me so mutch honour, as meete me the tenth of this moneth at the Chappell of Diana, standing as you know sixe leagues from you [*sic*] fathers court. I will there God willing meete you, and a priest with mee to marrie us, which dooen, we will shift our selves into Pilgrimes apparel, and so disguised indure together sutch fortune as the fates shall assign us. And thus tyll then I bid you farewell. *Yours ever, or his owne never, Admetus.* (Pettie 1576, 88)

Pettie's 'narrative sources' often seem overwhelmed by his rhetorical elaboration of them, in much the same way that Ovid's story of Venus and Adonis seems overwhelmed by ornament and speeches in Shakespeare's version of the story. But the English *novelle* of the late sixteenth century (like their European counterparts) typically also prefixed their copiously ornamented narrations with summaries of the tales that followed. These were narrative 'sources' in the sense that they gave the bare facts of a tale. So Pettie prefixes the story of Admetus and Alcestis with the following summary:

> *Admetus* sonne to *Atys* king of *Lybia*, falling in love with *Alcest*, daughter to *Lycabas* king of *Assur*, who recompenced him with semblable affection, are restrayned eche from other by their parents, but beeyng secretly married, wander in wildernesses like poore pilgrimes. *Atys* shortly after dieth, whereof *Admetus* being advertised, returneth with his wyfe, and is established in the kingdome. The destines graunt him a double date of life, if he can finde one to die for him, which *Alcest* her selfe performeth: for whose death *Admetus* most woefully lamenting, shee was eftsoones by *Proserpina* restoared to her life, and louer againe. (Pettie 1576, 82)

What early modern readers including Shakespeare 'knew' or remembered of the story of Alcestis may well have resembled this summary of 'facts', or things done in it, which anticipated the circumstantial elaboration of the story which was to follow, and, perhaps, implicitly encouraged readers to provide their own

circumstantial elaborations. Pettie's summary story of Alcestis presents the outline of a tragicomedy of love emerging from a two-part structure: a phase of elopement and disguise in the wilderness is followed by sacrifice and rebirth. Within the usual senses of the word 'source' Pettie's summary is not a 'source' for anything in Shakespeare, but its easy transpassage between the conventions of the *novella* (resistant parents, the opposition of the stars) and that of Greek tragedy (sacrifice, divine intervention) offers suggestive connections with *A Winter's Tale*. Sarah Dewar-Watson has argued, on the basis of verbal and dramaturgical parallels, that Shakespeare knew George Buchanan's Latin version of Euripides' *Alcestis*. In order to make that case (which I would not dispute) she briefly considers and then excludes the influence of Pettie, whose version of the story was the fullest version in English at this period (Dewar-Watson 2009). Certainly the relationship between Shakespeare and Pettie would be hard to prove in the forensic laboratory of source study, but that does not mean it is not there: Pettie drew the story of Alcestis into the ambit of the *novella*, and made it accommodate the wanderings and elopements, the conflicts between parents and children, the periods in the woods and wildernesses which were the staples of his version of the *novella*, and which also underpinned *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, and, for that matter, *A Winter's Tale*. That the only extended English version of the Alcestis story in this period should create those structural and generic connections provides reasonable grounds for including it within, as it were, the large, loose volume called 'early modern Alcestis stories' which fed into Shakespeare's late romance. The processes of literary and cultural influence should be thought of as cumulative, rather than as either/or choices: it is not a matter of either Buchanan or Pettie. A text could make a reader think about another text, or establish a particular story as the kind of thing which could become a play. It could also establish a broad canon of the kinds of material which could be drawn on or elaborated.

Elizabethan *novella* collections did this. They were extremely eclectic in the texts on which they drew. Bandello and Boccaccio, which tend to grab the headlines in literary histories, are only two of the many sources of stories absorbed into this most voracious of literary forms. The first volume of Painter's *Palace* provides

the names of what would now be called the ‘sources’ of each tale (these include Aulus Gellius, Xenophon, and Plutarch, as well as Boccaccio and Bandello) in its prefatory summary of their contents – and his Roman tales include that of Lucrece and of Coriolanus. His second volume goes one step further, and is prefixed by a list of what are termed “Authorities from whence these Novels be collected: and in the same avouched” (Painter 1567, sig. ***v). These ‘authorities’ include Homer, Xenophon, Plutarch, Ovid, Livy, Bandello, Boccaccio, Horace. I have argued in the past for reviving the word ‘authorities’ as a substitute for the contentious word ‘sources’ when thinking about Shakespeare’s relations to his reading (Burrow 2016). The term has not caught on, probably because it makes Shakespeare sound medieval, or because it might seem to imply that Shakespeare was subservient to his “authorities”, or because it implicitly challenges the residual but still strong belief that Shakespeare’s imagination was so free and so original that it was subservient to no one. John Drakakis (who rightly draws attention to the role of oral culture and cultural memory in the genesis of Shakespeare’s plays) favours the suggestive alternative term “resources”, and that may have more life in it than “authorities” (Drakakis 2021). The word “resources”, however, was not used by Shakespeare, and is first cited from usages in early seventeenth-century translations from French, where it tends to mean “a new spring”, and hence a return from the earth, and hence, by the mid-seventeenth century, “reserves of money”. The word “authorities” is free of these proto-capitalist associations, and as used by Painter is anything but hierarchical, since in effect it means ‘something akin to these stories that are here circumstantially elaborated can be found in the following prior works by writers of high standing’. The “authorities” behind a text can encompass a wide amalgam of prior books, akin to the volume in Hamlet’s hand, or the fusion of Pettie and Ovid that we might be invited to see in Imogen’s hand, or the work of the ‘strange fellow’ in Ulysses’ hand, in which there is something Greek and something Latin as well as a flavour of Nashe and other European vernacular writing. “Authorities” of this kind were not verbal sources which exerted power over their imitator: in many respects they were the reverse. They included “narrative sources” in the sense of outlines of tales which invited their readers

to equip them with circumstantial elaborations, and so bury them deep beneath new speeches and new rhetorical ornaments.

The collections of *novelle* which were among Shakespeare's "authorities" had cultural aspirations that extended both high and wide. As well as overtly addressing both male and female readers, they presented themselves as speaking to cultural elites. Geoffrey Fenton dedicated his collection of translations from Bandello and Boaistuau to Mary Sidney, the mother of Sir Philip. William Painter (who was Clerk to the Office of Ordinance) dedicated the first volume of the *Palace of Pleasure* to the Master of the Ordinance, the Earl of Warwick, who was the Earl of Leicester's brother and the uncle of Sir Philip Sidney. That association of *novelle* with the Leicester circle made it natural for culturally aspirational English writers in the 1590s to use these "authorities" to generate fictions which were Mediterranean in a broad geographical and historical sense – and made the *novelle*, indeed, by the time Sidney's *Arcadia* was first published in 1590, appear to be more closely assimilable to the Greek romances on which Sidney drew than literary historians often allow. The *novelle* provided invitations to fuse Greek, Latin, Italian and French writing together, and to elaborate on fictional circumstances provided by Bandello, or Plutarch, or Ovid, or Euripides, or Boccaccio. Shakespeare should be thought of – both in his choice of material and in the way he elaborated it – as belonging to that European *novella* culture.[10]

Where does that leave Greece? As Gordon Braden has noted, critics who search for traces of Greek learning in Shakespeare often present their case in a way that "has the feel of a detective story". A key textual fragment of evidence supports the overall argument for influence "like the tiny stain or partial fingerprint that clinches things in a crime lab procedural" (Braden 2016, 105), as the forensic critic seeks traces of Orestes' footprints in the graveyard in *Hamlet* or those of *Oedipus at Colonus* in *Lear*. Given the long history of denial that Shakespeare knew anything much at all, it is not surprising that critics want to 'prove' that Shakespeare knew at least some Greek tragedies in at least some form by identifying verbal echoes, as Louise Schleiner did when she argued that the "something too

10 Cf. the more limited claim made by Salingar 1974, 301-23.

much of this" with which Hamlet concludes his praise of Horatio echoes "nimium laudari" in Melanchthon's translation of Euripides' *Orestes* (Schleiner 1990).

I have no additional proofs of this kind to add, and would not seek to diminish the significance of those which have been found. But it is potentially restrictive to treat "narrative sources" as principally, or perhaps only, identifiable through verbal allusions or exact parallels. Doing so conflates the 'evidence' for influence with the thing itself. And indeed the evidence can at times seem to become the thing itself, as complex relationships are allowed to collapse into the reassuring simplicity of a verbal echo. This essay has attempted to blow a hole, ideally below the water-line, in the concept of a "narrative source" as presented by Bullough (see also Burrow 2015). I have argued that Elizabethans could think of books as hybrid entities, which (like the sammelbands into which shorter volumes were often bound in this period) appeared to contain multitudes of volumes and versions within. I have also suggested that Elizabethan satirists were very willing to mock those who attempted to pick apart the hybrid 'sources' of what they read. And I have argued that a "narrative source" is best thought of as a summary or digest of a tale which was ripe for rhetorical elaboration, and which might not come from a single origin, since "authorities" could be multiple. A text based on such a prior narration would not be expected to register a debt in the form of verbal echoes. It would be more like a remake or re-elaboration of the prior tale, which took the 'facts' or deeds of the case, and reclad them with speeches and new circumstances. The 'facts' of 'narrative sources' are therefore not the verbal reminiscences and echoes which critics have tended to produce with a triumphant flourish as the real 'facts' which prove influence: a narrative 'fact' is rather a set of things that were done, and which invites rhetorical elaboration in a new way; and that rhetorical elaboration might occlude any visible relationship with the authority from which it derives. We need not only to think differently about 'sources' when considering early modern writing, but we also need to think differently about what the word 'fact' in this period meant. This is of course a potentially anarchic set of claims. But it may be a little less anarchic than it might appear. If Shakespeare were thought of as a product of European *novella*

culture it would not be surprising that in him Greek and Latin and Italian and French were all in conversation with each other; nor would it be surprising that all and any of these languages could provide him with 'narrative sources' in the sense of a story, or a set of 'facts' or things done, which could be elaborated, ornamented, and embellished with new speeches. An early modern reader would regard a summary of a tale, like the entry for "Orestes" in Thomas Cooper's Latin Dictionary, as a 'narration' which was ripe for circumstantial rhetorical elaboration, as a 'fact' or an 'authority' which could be transformed into something new. Cooper's Orestes

> returnynge to Argos, with the consent of his sister Electra, in revengement of his fathers death, slue both his mother Clytemnestra, and the advoutrer Aegisthus. Afterwarde also he killed Pyrrhus in the temple of Apollo, for that he had maryed the lady Hermione that was before to him betrothed. For these murders Orestes was so cruelly tormented with furies, that he wandred madde in many countries, and never coulde be holpen, before that by sacrifice he purged his cruell dooynges at the aulter of Diana in Taurica. In all his troubles and adversities he had a faithfull friende named Pylades, that dyd always accompanie and helpe him, and loved him so entierly that he would have geven his lyfe for him. (Cooper 1565, N1*v*-N2*r*)

Thinking of this kind of text as a 'narrative source', or framework for elaboration, makes it natural, rather than a case that requires special pleading, to think of early modern playwrights in general as standing in a significant relation to Greek tragedy. The circumstances of place and person in the life of Orestes could be stripped away, leaving what Rainolde calls the "fact done" (sig. C4*v*), the action beneath, the matricide, the revenge, the true friend, which could then be reimagined using materials from other authorities. The figure of Orestes, mother-killer and father-avenger, could float like a ghost behind a drama recircumstanced in this way – transposed, say, to Denmark, in a play which had as one of its "authorities" the tale of Amleth in François de Belleforest's 1576 volume of *novelle*, *Histoires Tragiques*, an "authority" which was itself an elaboration of the 'facts' in Saxo Grammaticus's *Historia Danica* (See Gollancz 1926). Greek "authorities", Greek "narrative

sources", may have come to Shakespeare via Latin translations, or via Plutarch, or via plot summaries in dictionaries and *novelle*, or via extracts in rhetorical texts or prose works, or, more probably, via all those routes. But this does not mean that they came to Shakespeare in deficient forms which require the identification of verbal resemblances to prove that he 'really' knew about Greek tragedy, or that he knew a particular edition of a particular text. I would suggest, rather, that such abbreviated forms were the most potent forms in which a story could be transmitted: as "authorities" they presented bare facts which could be fed with elaborated circumstances. Thinking about inter-textual relationships in this way would enable us to recognise that Greek tragedies may have been among the most influential of the many invisible books on the early modern stage. The story of Alcestis encountered in an abstract or a *novella* could fuse with the conventions of Greek prose romance, and with a Latin translation of a Greek tragedy, and assist the genesis of *A Winter's Tale*; the tale of Orestes could blend with a *novella* about a Danish prince. These "authorities" could then all be overlayered with such copiously abundant speeches that they became truly invisible books.

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2

The Strange Case of the Singing Chorus that Was Not There. On the Authority of Authorities*

Silvia Bigliazzi

Abstract

The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia, a play often attributed to Richard Farrant and published in 1594, but possibly dating from at least the previous decade, contains a curious piece addressed to the audience. Without speech heading and misplaced in the middle of act 2, it is cast in blank verse like all the dialogues and makes an obscure allusion to a chorus that does not appear in the course of the play. While this peculiar appearance has often been noted, and sometimes seen as an example of how "the prologue refers to itself as a chorus" (Wiggins, 813. *The Wars of Cyrus, King of Persia*), it remains unclear whether it belongs to this play, what happened to the chorus it mentions, and exactly what it says about it. Its praise of the ancient chorus as a singing part in the Greek fashion as opposed to the neo-Senecan wailing chorus of contemporary neoclassical drama, tells us something about what 'authentically ancient' could mean for them. Starting from this peculiar document, the essay offers reflections on the early modern understanding of the ancient chorus in relation to ideas of choral performance in contemporary English dramas. It argues that *The Warres*' strange reference to an absent singing chorus in the Greek style lets us glimpse into complex processes of construction of ancient authorities questioning monolithic views of classical tragedy.

Keywords: Richard Farrant; *The Warres of Cyrus*; ancient and early modern choruses

"Graue antiquity": a Singing Chorus

The Warres of Cyrus King of Persia, generally attributed to Richard Farrant, was published in 1594, but possibly dates from at least the

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previous decade. In fact, if penned by Farrant, the play cannot have been composed after 1580, when he died.[1] James Brawner deems it to be "the only survivor exemplar of a type of plays drawn from classical sources and performed by the child actors" (1942, 20), probably "presented at the Blackfriars either late in 1576 or in 1577" (19). Tucker Brooke (1944) postdates the play to a period between the late 1580s and early 1590s on account of traces of Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*'s influence (1589). If its dating is uncertain, it is instead clear that it is based on Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, a text that had been translated into English by William Bercker or Barker between 1560 and 1567. The drama unfolds two main plots: the tragic events of the captive Panthea, who remains faithful to her husband Abradatas, king of Susa, and kills herself when he dies in battle at the forefront of Cyrus' allied armies against the Assirian Anthiocus; and the war between the devious and wicked Anthiocus and the generous and valiant Persian Cyrus. However, the truly tragic plot revolves around the story of Panthea only. The play as it stands has neither choruses in the ancient fashion, nor dumb shows in neo-Senecan contemporary plays, but is interspersed with music, punctuating inter-act intervals, when, as Brawner suggests, "the chorus might have been brought forward to sing" (1942, 31). Although there is no textual evidence of this,[2] it contains several references to singing and songs not extant in the play.[3] More recently, Lucy Munro has

1 Lawrence dates it from 1578 and Chambers from around 1578, vol. 4, p. 52; Wiggins (2021) from 1580; see also Lost Plays Database, *s.v. Panthea.* https://lostplays.folger.edu/Panthea#Connection_to_The_Wars_of_Cyrus.3F.

2 Branwer's remark (1942, 31) relies on Chamber's comments that "It is apparent, indeed, that the act-intervals was of a far more importance at both Paul's and the Balckfriars than elsewhere. But this is largely a matter of degree. The inter-acts of music and song and dance were more universal and longer" (Chambers 1923, 130).

3 See the following: "PAN. *Nicasia* sings while *Panth*[e]*a* sits and sighs, / But singing, sings *Pant*[he]*as* wretchednes." (95-6); "CYR. . . . Excuse me for not comming to her tent, / Bid her be merrie with her singing maides, / And say that *Cyrus* will entreate her faire. *Exeunt. Musicke. Finis Actus primi*" (345-7); "PAN. Nicasia, commaund the musicke play; / It may be musicke will alay the fit. *Musick plaies.*" (446-7); "LIB. Then shall my song be of my *Dinons* praise. [*Sings a song.*]" (943); "PAN. First at her aulter let vs ioyntly sing, / For Musicke is a sacrifice to her. [*They sing. Exeunt.*]" (1585-1586).

discussed the relevance of the lament as showing "strong cultural associations with women in non-dramatic poetry" (2017, 101). She has also remarked that the use of songs in the *Warres of Cyrus* reflects the way in which plays in the repertoire of children's companies "represented and constructed female subjectivity and agency" (ibid.).

The play also contains a peculiar, short, misplaced prologue that supplies us, if obscurely, with intriguing insights into the role of choral singing and its relevance in the construction of ideas of classical authorities. This interpolated passage is a mysterious address to the audience, without speech-heading, located in the middle of act 2.[4] It is cast in blank verse like all the dialogues and makes an unexpected allusion to a chorus that, in fact, does not appear in the course of the play. While this perplexing speech has often been noted and sometimes seen as an example of how "the prologue refers to itself as a chorus",[5] it remains unclear whether it belongs to this play, what happened to the chorus it mentions, and exactly what it says about it. Faulty printing makes it a hard read, but it remains a revealing document about contemporary practices in choral performance.

Its strange appearance prompted Brawner to suggest that perhaps "choruses and songs were originally written on separate sheets and . . . had subsequently become detached from the principal manuscript" (1942, 13). More recently, Tiffany Stern has read it as an instantiation of the essential affinity between prologue and chorus as "additional texts, designed to be spoken together" and, therefore, not surprisingly destined to leave "the play together" because "the one refers to the other" (2009, 109). And yet, we have the prologue but not the chorus. On the contrary, Tucker Brooke has speculated that the prologue might belong to "an earlier play, constructed on classical principles", since this one "has no chorus and could not be called a revival of 'grave antiquity' in any serious sense" (1944, 121), as the address instead seems to claim. The question that follows is whether

4 The prologic speech addressed to the audience appears on C3*r* with no previous mention of the beginning of act 2.

5 Wiggins 2021, 813 (*The Wars of Cyrus, King of Persia*). See for instance Charles Lamb's attribution of the speech to "The Chorus" in *Specimens of English Dramatic Poetry*, 1808, qtd in Brawner 1942, 125.

a singing chorus could, in fact, prompt the audience to rubricate the play under a classical heading. If we agree with Tucker Booke, "the 'mournful plaint' of Panthea" too, "preserved in manuscript at Oxford and signed by Farrant" (ibid.), might belong to a previous play, a conjecture upheld neither by Lawrence (1921), nor by Brawner (1942, 10-20) or Munro (2017, 103-4), and more recently Duffin (2021, 756). For all of them, that song was composed for this drama. Whichever the case, the audience address advocating the importance of an assumedly metrically refined singing chorus in the ancient fashion is worth quoting in full. What 'ancient' means here emerges from a comparison with other contemporary choral stagings in ways that suggest a controversy over ideas of what true antiquity was:[6]

To the audience

We gentle gentlemen deuise of late,
To shunne the vulgar and the vertuous,
Present to you worthie to iudge of vs,
Our workes of woorth and valiantnes at once.
What wants in vs imagin in the works, 5
What in the workes, condemne the writer of,
But if the worke and writing please you both,
That Zenophon from whence we borrow write,
Being both a souldier and philosopher,
Warrants what we record of *Panthea*, 10
It is writ in sad and tragicke tearmes,
May moue you tears, then you content, our muse
That seemes to trouble you, again with toies
Or needlesse antickes imitations,
Or shewes, or new deuises sprung a late, 15
we haue exilde them from our Tragicke stage,
As trash of their tradition, that can bring
nor instance, nor excuse. For what they do
In stead of mournefull plaints our *Chorus* sings,
Although it be against the vpstart guise, 20
Yet warranted by graue antiquitie,
we will reuiue the which hath long beene done.

Exit

6 The emendations in Brawner 1942 and Brooke 1944 are in bold and within square brackets.

Brawner 1942	Tucker Brooke 1944
We, gentle gentlemen, deuise of late	We, gentle gentlemen, deuise of late,
To shunne the vulgar and the vertuous,	To shun the vulgar, and the vertuous
Present to you, worthie to iudge of vs,	Present to you, **[who are]** worthy to judge of us,
Our workes of woorth and valiantnes at once.	**[And of]** Our works of worth and valiantness at once.
What wants in vs, imagin in the works;	What wants in us, imagine in the works;
What in the workes, condemne the writer of;	What in the works, condemn the writer of,
But if the worke and writing please you both,	But if **[i.e., Unless?]** the work and writing please you both.
That Zenophon, from whence we borrow, **[writ]**,	That **[*i.e.*, That which]** Xenophon. from whence we borrow, writ, –
Being both a souldier and philosopher,	Being both a soldier and philosopher, –
Warrants what we record of *Panthea*.	Warrants what we record of *Panthea*.
It is writ in sad and tragicke tearmes	It is writ in sad and tragic terms,
May moue you tears; then you content our muse,	May **[*i.e.*, Which may]** moue you **[*i.e.*, your?]** tears. Then **[*i.e.*, by weeping]** you content our muse,
That **[scornes]** to trouble you againe with toies	That seems **[perhaps "scorns"]** to trouble you again, with toys
Or needlesse antickes, imitations,	Or needless antics, imitations,
Or shewes, or new deuises sprung a late.	Or shows, or new devices sprung alate.
We haue exilde them from our Tragicke stage,	We have exiled them from our tragic stage,
As trash of their tradition that can bring	As trash of their tradition, that can bring
Nor instance nor excuse **f**or what they do.	Nor instance nor excuse **f**or what they do.
Instead of mournefull plaints, our *Chorus* sings;	Instead of mournful plaints our *Chorus* sings,
Although it be against the vpstart guise,	Although it be against the upstart guise;
Yet, warranted by graue antiquitie,	Yet warranted by grave antiquity,
We will reuiue the which hath long beene done.	We will revive the which hath long been done.

Brawner's interpretation of the initial lines locates the speech within the context of an anti-puritanical attack suggested by the word "vertuous" (2) as an allusion to those Puritans who "for years had been harassing the Chapel organization, along with all other play-actors, for using children in 'bawdie stage plays', and most especially for presenting them in the very house of God, even in her majesty's Chapel, and on the Lord's day" (1942, 18).[7] If this critique was implied in the speech, the address had to demonstrate both the "valiantness" (4) of the play's matter and the goodness of the performing style. The former was granted by the worthy Xenophon,[8] the latter by the prestige of an ancient tradition that had not percolated into the neo-Senecan style of contemporary plays: the Greek singing chorus. Thus, against the neo-Senecan wailing chorus of contemporary neoclassical drama the more ancient Greek singing chorus could be pitted to rely on a stronger authority not yet diluted into the "trash" of contemporary productions. Could this mean that no-one else except these children's company performed singing choruses, and to what extent was it their privilege to claim the prestige of a tradition yet untainted with contemporary "deuices"? On the other hand, it is no coincidence that this heartfelt anti-neo-Senecan claim sits somewhat awkwardly within a play that borrows the neo-Senecan five-act structure, because after all this play too is an offspring of its times. So, what is being stressed here is not the non-Greek structure, but the type of chorus it presented, as if this part of drama were the actual trademark of genuine Greek antiquity despite its dramatic articulation. In Brawner's paraphrase of the final lines, the Prologue claims that they

> have exiled all this trash for which no warrant or excuse can be found in antiquity, from our tragic stage. And instead the 'mournfull plaints' [i.e., complaining, declaiming choruses, as in true Seneca but more particularly in neo-Senecan plays which also introduced

7 "We Children of the Chapel have just devised to shun the vulgar and the virtuous [Puritan critics] by establishing our new theatre, and now present to you 'gentle gentlemen', worthy to judge of us, our works, which are at once instructive and heroic" (Brawner 1942, 125).

8 For a Herodotean reading of this play's use of Xenophon, see Dall'Olio's chapter in this volume.

> dumb shows and other "trash"], we revert to the true Greek mode of the *singing* chorus. This is against the "upstart guise", but we will revive what is warranted by grave antiquity. (1942, 125)[9]

If this reading is right, the address's implication is that choruses in contemporary plays did not sing, while Greek ones did, and the innovation announced by the speech, for all its apparent anachronism, consisted exactly in reviving that ancient fashion – something that would beautifully suit the choral and singing abilities of the Children of the Chapel mentioned in the play's title-page.

Whether this musical chorus was meant to be in blank verse, like this prologue, or in a different metric line, it is hard to tell. Early modern English metres were no reliable indication of the performance as polymetric diversification was in ancient Greek tragedy (see Bigliazzi 2021a, 15-16; 2021b, 155-8). But at least this address seems to undermine conjectures about the singing of choral odes in early neoclassical plays as, for instance, recently put forward by Ross Duffin, who found the best candidate for their tunes in the repertoire of the metrical psalms. For Duffin, when in *Gorboduc* "the choruses suddenly appear with rhyme schemes and stanza organizations, they signal that something different is happening" from the normal dialogues in blank verse (2021, 18). Surely, their metrical variations mark a new pace and dramatic quality with respect to the rest of the play. But whether this change can call for musical interpretation is harder to demonstrate, as the audience address in the *Warres of Cyrus* seems to imply. After all, the anonymous reporter of the 1562 Inner Temple performance of *Gorboduc* – a rare eye-witness document of those early performances – mentions no singing chorus. Instead, it offers a brief account of how "the shadowes were declared by the *chore*", and then a longer description of the dumb shows, although he does not call them such. As Jones and White have noticed, it is clear

9 A similar comment is in Mulready 2013, 133. Stern instead reads these lines as suggesting "another viewpoint to the narrative": "As co-commentators prepared to express a different opinion from the play's and speak out 'against' the hero: 'In stead of mournefull plaints our Chorus sings, / Although it be against the upstart guise.'" (2009, 109). However, the speech does not seem to focus on alternative views on the play, but on the quality and form of the chorus' performance.

that "these sequences of elaborate visual spectacle and movement were the most engaging and therefore most memorable parts of the play", which overall was very static and full of "sententious speeches" (1996, 5). This, too, for all its brevity and ambiguity, is a likewise interesting document on which it is worth dwelling a moment.

First, let us consider the word "declare" describing what the chorus does: although admitting that it "may seem to suggest speaking", Duffin interprets it as meaning "sang" on the evidence of Sternhold's Psalm 66: "With ioyfull voice declare abroade, / and syng vnto hys prayse". And yet, if "declare" refers to the quality and force of the utterance, while "syng" to its form, the two words cannot be synonymous, but rather indicate two different aspects of the same action. The *OED* does not record any instance of their equivalence while indicating that "sing" may also mean "to be loud in laudation" (12b). Nor can the context of a psalm be taken as certain proof of the fourteener as a verse form to be sung – as Attridge notices, the Sternhold collection, which provided a template for the ballad metre, known as Master Sternhold's metre, "established the template for psalm translation to be sung, but also frequently read, memorized and recited: fourteeners, usually set out in lines of 8 and 6 syllables" (2019, 278). Thus, neither the occurrence of "declare" and "sing" within the same psalm, nor the context of the report guarantees a musical interpretation of "declare", changing its meaning from "making clear, manifesting, unfolding" into "singing".

Similar remarks may be made about the use of the word "pronounce" as a possible aural allusion to a singing chorus in a note at the end of Thomas Hughes's 1587 *The Misfortunes of Arthur*: "Besides these speeches there was also penned a Chorus for the first act, and an other for the second act, by Maister Frauncis Flower, which were pronounced accordingly" (1587, G2*r*). Duffin explains that the word "pronounce"

> was used in a musical context on 17 November 1590 (accession Day), when Sir Henry Lee retired as Elizabeth's 'Champion' at a court ceremony in the Tiltyard at Whitehall, and John Dowland's *His golden lock time hath to silver turned* was "pronounced and sung by M. Hales, her Maiesties seruant, a Gentleman in that Arte excellent for his voice both commendable and admirable." (Duffin 2021n111, 59; see also 29)

Could the combination of these two words be proof enough of their interchangeability or is it not more reasonable to think that they identify different, if related, actions? After all, the only report of one performance we know of, that of *Gorboduc*, altogether ignores the chorus, even omitting to say whether it was spoken or sung – and this is surprising, at least in view of other reports of continental performances which did not fail to record a singing chorus. See for instance the anonymous report of the 1570 performance of Lodovico Dolce's *Giocasta* at the Accademia degli Ostinati in Viterbo: [10]

> . . . il Coro di quindici persone, diuiso in tre à cinque per coro . . . , nel fine del primo atto esci in Scena . . . cominciò à cantare il primo coro, poi cantò il secondo. Poi il terzo sempre girando la Scena e fermandose poi e facendo reuerenza à Bacco, tutti insieme cantorno, che fu molto piena dolce e dotta musica, il qual canto finito, restorno sempre in scena, facendo ale di qua, e di là, & in ogni fin d'atto vsorno il medesimo modo de cantare, separatamente, e tutti insieme. (1570 Biiii*r*-*v*)
>
> [. . . the chorus of fifteen people, divided into three groups of five . . . , at the end of the first act entered the scene moving across the stage . . . the first one began singing, then the second one. Then the third one sang, always moving across the stage, then they stopped and made a reverence to Bacchus, then they sang all together a piece of very sweet and learned music. When they finished singing, they remained on the stage, moved to the sides, here and there, and at the end of each act they sang in the same way, separately, and all together.]

To my knowledge, no such report of any ancient or early modern choric performance in England is extant. Lack of mention of a singing chorus by John Bereblock as an eyewitness account of another neo-Senecan play such as Calfhill's *Progne* performed before the Queen at Oxford in 1566, is a further clue that possibly no neo-Senecan English play had one (or attracted the attention of the reporter), including a play in Latin such as this.[11]

10 If not otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

11 For an entirely conjectural, albeit intriguing, interpretation of the play and its relation to Correr's *Procne*, see Perry 2020.

Brawner has argued that the editor's excision of all traces of a chorus in the *Warres of Cyrus* may have been dependent on his attempt "to make an old play conform more nearly to the decorum of playmaking in the year 1594" (1942, 13). However, plays with choruses as collective characters continued to be published in the following years.[12] But if Brawner is correct, when the editor "prepared the manuscript for print, he was either careless enough to overlook the illogical position of the prologue, or so unfamiliar with the play that he failed to detect the error" (ibid.). Nevertheless, if he omitted the choruses and rearranged the act division on purpose, as he possibly did, he could not have been that unfamiliar with the text.

It remains that the play we have is arranged according to the Senecan act division with a prologue claiming that its singing chorus (which is not extant) is the bearer of grave antiquity compared with contemporary plays which present a lamenting, non-singing chorus together with visual devices for spectacle alien to the ancient tradition. Brawner's comment that the prologue's target might have been Seneca's plays alongside neo-Senecan ones seems to imply that not only had the latter a non-singing chorus, but possibly that Seneca's tragedies too *were perceived* as not having one insofar as they provided a model for contemporary non-singing choruses. Thus, what this prologue seems to make a case for is the existence of a neat dividing line between two conceptions of antiquity: a truly authoritative and authentically grave one referable to the Greek choral tradition, and a less grave and prestigious one as a source for the new tragic fashion including late spectacular "trash" – the Senecan one. But if this is genuinely how the tragic chorus was perceived to the point of being treated as the distinctive trait of prestigious antiquity compared to a less authoritative one, on which grounds was it based? To get a sense of it we should turn to an often overlooked chapter in the history of classical reception.

12 For instance, Elizabeth Cary's *Mariam* (1602), William Alexander's *Monarchick Tragedies* (1603-1607), Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* (1605).

A Classical Chorus?

As Miola has aptly noticed, “the classical chorus has always provided formidable difficulties to translators and directors” (2002, 35). This is true for the Renaissance as well as for us today. An anonymous reporter of a 1568 staging at Reggio Emilia of the tragedy *Alidoro*, attributed to Gabriele Bombace, candidly avowed the common ignorance of how the chorus was sung in the ancient times, whether by one singer only or by the multitude in unison or in a mixed way. Thus, he concluded, “it is manifest that the diversity of these manners derives only from our difficulty in getting to know what precisely the ancients did”.[13] This confusion is sometimes also of modern readers of Renaissance authors. For instance, it has been suggested that Giraldi Cinthio’s “choruses were not sung, but recited by one member, the others merely standing in view of the stage” and that “even here Giraldi claims the support of an ancient Greek usage” (Cunliffe1912, xlii). However, in his discussion of the form and function of the chorus among the ancients in his “Discorso intorno al comporre delle comedie, et delle tragedie” (1554), Giraldi argued something quite different. In no way did he claim that the ancient chorus was spoken by one actor, while noticing that the single speaker intervened individually only during the acts, as one amongst other speakers; between the acts the choruses were collective characters both singing and dancing in unison (229-30). Giraldi carefully distinguished between different uses of the rhyme, underlining that it was not only “appropriate to some parts of the tragedy when the characters reason with each other”, but also and “especially in the choruses” where “mixing broken and whole lines” was “for the sake of the highest sweetness”.[14] The mention of verse

13 “Una Rappresentazione tragica a Reggio Emilia. L’*Alidoro* di Gabriele Bombace (1568)”: in Ariani 1977, 1001.

14 “Per lo contrario possono haver luoco le rime in qualche parte della Tragedia tra le persone, che ragionano, et ne i Chori, prencipalissimamente, mescolando insieme per piu soavita i rotti con gli intieri: intendendo pero per gli Chori quelli che dividono uno atto dall’altro, et non de Chori, che si pongono tra gli interlocutori; perché allhora una sola persona ragiona, et non tutto insieme” (Giraldi Cinthio 1554, 229). Broken verse = 7 syllables; whole verse = 10, 11, 12 syllables; see 228.

and rhyme is relevant to how Giraldi reinterprets the chorus by way of contemporary lyrical devices, so that the addition of the rhyme (which was absent from both Greek and Latin verses) and a combination of heptameters and hendecasyllables became the necessary features for the chorus to acquire lyrical gentleness.

Giraldi apparently identified the chorus with the Greek tradition, which he thought provided two types: he called one mobile for its inclusion of singing and dancing, and the other one static as it had melody only, not number, that is rhythm. Interestingly, he referred the latter to movement rather than to diction, following, as will be seen, contemporary commentaries on Aristotle (1554, 229). But while he called this mobile chorus Greek, he oddly brought as an example the *kommos* from Seneca's *Troades* and further explained its movement as of "moresca dances which today are made to the measure of sound" (1554, 229, 230).[15] The use of a Senecan instance for the Greek model together with the reference to a non-Greek dance seem to witness a general confusion about ideas of classical antiquity, as if Greek and Roman choruses were substantially the same and a dance form used in contemporary Italian drama could be compatible with them. Such comments prompt questions about the extent to which Seneca could be authentically considered as an instance of what a Greek chorus was like even in an Italian milieu which at the time was incomparably more versed in Greek studies than the English one.[16]

Talking about Gascoigne and Kinwelmersh's *Jocasta* (1566), Emrys Jones rightly remarked that even if this play looks more Senecan than Greek to us, despite its being advertised as an Englished Euripides, it may not have "seemed 'Senecan' to its first audiences and readers" (1977, 106). Jones' argument is that if they took Senecan qualities for granted, they may have "been all the more alert to those other qualities which were unfamiliar to them – the 'Greek' ones" (106). But in the light of the Giraldi example

15 On the tradition of the *moresca* in the sixteenth century, see Ferrari-Barassi; see also Pieri 2013, 25ff.

16 For emergent claims about the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the intellectual centres of Northern Europe and England, especially via the Wittenberg tradition, see Lazarus 2020 and references therein.

mentioned earlier, one wonders what exactly 'Senecan' meant at the time in relation to Greek and whether that meaning changed transculturally. The Italian debate over the primacy of Sophoclean or Senecan tragedy, referable to Trissino and Giraldi, respectively, is well known. But Giraldi's position about the Greek chorus exemplified by a Senecan instance recalled above shows that there were areas of overlapping that did not demand neat distinctions.

The Trissino *vs* Giraldi debate revolved around the need for the chorus always to remain present to the action in the Greek fashion or instead to go away in the Roman one for the sake of verisimilitude – this was Giraldi's argument in favour of the mobile chorus understood as moving away from the stage. Thus if Giraldi advocated the Roman fashion for the chorus entrances and exits, he referred to the Greek one for another type of mobility (his dancing).[17] After all, only a few years later (1561) Julius Caesar Scaliger would comment about the pertinence of titles in tragedy by bringing Greek and Senecan examples alike (1561, caput 97, "Tragoedia, Comoedia, Mimus"), and Antonio Minturno on speaking of the chorus would provide instances from Dolce alongside Euripides as well as Aristotle (1563, 100-1).

Despite much discussion about theories of tragedy, Renaissance writers showed a general lack of genuine understanding of the ancient chorus, although Aristotle's *Poetics* circulated widely in Europe since the early sixteenth century, at least since Alessandro de' Pazzi's, Francesco Robortello's, Vincenzo Maggi and Bartolomeo Lombardi's, and Pier Vettori's Greek-Latin editions (of 1536, 1548, 1550, and 1560 respectively). In England, in particular, theoretical reflection on classical drama and its stageability, compared to the vivacious Italian debate, lagged behind.[18] Only one edition of a Greek tragedy in Greek found its way into print in the sixteenth century, Euripides' *Troades*, published by John Day in 1575, while one comedy, Aristophanes' *Ippeis*, was printed by Joseph Barnes

17 See for instance Natale 2013, chap. 1, esp. 39-46.

18 On the English reception of Aristotle, see Lazarus 2015a, 2015b, 2016 and 2020, which beautifully support a more conscious approach to Aristotelian knowledge in sixteenth-century England. This awareness, however, did not prompt comparably relevant theoretical reflection.

in 1593. But these are peculiar editions, with neither paratexts nor commentaries, probably printed with educational aims for Greek learners (see Duranti 2021).

The question remains as to what classical antiquity meant with regard to the tragic chorus. Speaking about the English audience at the Inns of Court which attended the *Jocasta* performance in 1566, Jones further observed that "It seems unlikely that those who saw *Jocasta* performed were quite unconscious of its Euripidean qualities. They would presumably have believed that they were seeing a Greek play, and – despite the many departures from the original text – they would have been right: they would have been seeing something essentially Euripidean; they may even have been closer to the spirit of the original play than we can be" (1977, 106). What "presumably" here suggests is that mention of Euripides must have guided the spectators to recognise what was new to them – i.e. un-Senecan – as evidence of the play's Greekness. On the other hand, considering Lodovico Dolce's popularity amongst the Inns of Court and the degree of his manipulation of the Greek text in his *Giocasta* (1549), a modern reader can but be surprised by their recognition in its English version of anything in the spirit of 'Greekness' beyond its story. The play's "essentially Euripidean" quality for the audience at Gray's Inn must have relied on a combination of factors: on what they possibly considered to be 'Senecan', but also on their belief in how the play advertised itself, regardless of what they probably knew about Dolce and Italian neo-classical plays. After all, that one was doubtless a Theban tragedy.

If the play's un-Senecan qualities could presumably be mistaken for Greek in that particular circumstance, surprisingly though it may be for us, the Giraldi example shows an opposite understanding of classical antiquity: his instantiation of what he called a Greek chorus through Seneca did not foreground differences but erased them. Despite their mobile or static format in the Roman style, Giraldi placed the chorus at the core of 'classical' tragedy with an indistinct sense of unprioritised antiquity.

Considering in this light the Farrant example from which we started, the claim in *The Warres of Cyrus* that singing was the distinctive mark of Greek "grave antiquity" as opposed to contemporary choruses following the Senecan lead sounds unexpectedly clear-minded.

General knowledge about a Greek singing chorus derived from the treatises of Aristotle and Horace, as well as their commentaries. But how this form was interpreted and received in the sixteenth century, and appropriated in early modern English plays, is still blurred: did a distinction between Greek and Senecan really matter? If in certain quarters the Senecan chorus was expected to be sung and danced, as for instance Giraldi claimed, rather than spoken or recited, why did this play hold singing as relevant with regard to an implied sense of a 'classical' authority more authoritative than the one behind other contemporary plays in a different 'neo-classical' fashion?

My use of the term 'authority' here is in the sense Colin Burrow gives to it of "'[p]ower derived from or conferred by another; the right to act in a specified way, delegated from one person or organization to another' – which does not denote a blank monolith of power but a devolved and potentially plural set of forces" (2016, 32).[19] In the case of the chorus, 'classical authority' is an umbrella concept that covers diversified ideas rooted in the manifold interpretations of the ancient choral forms as well as in their early modern offspring, making for a "plural set of forces" in the sense recalled above: they are not monolithic but include the authorities of playbooks, of how they were composed and read, as well as of how they were translated and received in contemporary plays.

Reading the Chorus

Playbooks contained lists of speakers, speech prefixes, stage directions and other information concerning how a play was or could be staged. Howard-Hill (1990) has studied how the English tradition grounded in liturgical drama and recorded in the manuscripts of early modern moral plays gradually merged with the printing tradition of plays by Terence, Plautus, and Seneca, which showed very little theatrical features and a more prominent literary conception. Division into acts and scenes as well as the use of stage directions, virtually absent from print editions of classical plays, demonstrate that "playwrights became increasingly aware of

19 See also Colin Burrow's chapter in this volume, as well as 2013 and 2019.

an alternative method of organizing a script for performance and reader alike" (Howard-Hill 1990, 138, see also 140-1). But while Howard-Hill focuses on the confluence of those two traditions in general, and Tamara Atkin (2018) extensively deals with how dramas became books to be read, specific drama portions of classical origin such as choruses have not received much attention in their way from stage to print. We know very little about how early modern choral passages were performed and to what extent they were meant to be conducive to a sense of antiquity, whether Greek or Roman, or both.

It has been pointed out that at the beginning of all the editions of *Gorboduc*, the *dramatis personae* list includes the chorus among the "Speakers" in line with what was being done in related dramas (Duffin 2021, 20). Among *Gorboduc*'s contemporary plays, including the in-quarto editions of Seneca and Newton's *Tenne Tragedies*,[20] though, only *The Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587) does mention the chorus as a separate entity. Among the closet dramas of the 1590s – whose performing quality "is situated somewhere between the reading out of a long poem and the performance of a play" (Attridge 2019, 319) – Samuel Daniel's *Cleopatra* and Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia*, both dating from 1594, do the same, yet not Mary Sidney's *Antonius* (1592), where the chorus is not present in the list of "The Actors" (F1*v*). Thus, what this list tells us is that the chorus' different 'dramatic quality' is only rarely visually encoded in the mise ne page. But what else do these printed editions let us glimpse in terms of the chorus' dramatic function and performative qualities?

Considering the lack of documental evidence, such as eyewitness reports of actual early modern performances, we should raise questions on how we can now read early modern editions of plays, including choruses, in the light of how 'classical' choruses could be read then. As Cunliffe has remarked, "when plays were no longer acted" information about ancient drama could derive "from the texts and from general treatises" (1912, x), and among the latter Evanthius' *De Fabula* and Donatus' *De Comoedia* were especially relevant to

20 In the *Tenne Tragedies* collected by Newton in 1581, *Thyestes* has no list of speakers, and the *dramatis personae* list in *Oedipus* does not mention the Chorus.

the early modern reception of classical drama for their inclusion in many editions of Terence (see esp. 3.1 and 3.5 in Wessner 1902, 18, 22). The same can be said about early modern drama and the information we may obtain through early modern books in three main ways: via performance instructions, such as stage directions; through the visual layout and the printing features of the book; and by considering whether the metre may suggest any specific clue in relation to the other two aspects mentioned above. It is worth noting that, given the paucity of non-conjectural documents concerning the performance of early modern neoclassical choruses, modern readers of early modern playbooks find themselves in a somewhat similar position to that of early modern readers of editions of classical drama, except that we do not have treatises as they did about ancient tragedy.

In her recent study of *Typographies of Performance in Early Modern England* (2020), Claire Bourne has explored the "processes of textual mediation that made the perception of one medium (theatre) and its activity available in and via the raw materials of another medium (the book)" (9). The assumption is that in the preparation of the playbook efforts were made in order to seek textual correlatives for the "extra-lexical business" characterising the stage. Bourne claims that the book "neither records actual past performances nor provides scores for future performances" but "materializes in textual form what the title pages of early modern playbooks so often promised readers: that the printed text is the play as it has been (or is being) played" (10). However, one question that this statement raises is what *as* implies here by assuming both equivalence and difference between stage and page. In other words, the question is in what ways the book may be considered "a viable version of what audiences might have seen and heard" (10).[21]

It is hard for us to discern what early modern audiences may have *seen*, and, in turn, what readers may have thought about ancient choruses from books. All we have is the scant information that may be gained from reading early modern editions of ancient dramas,[22] and, in turn, from how printed editions of early modern

21 See also Bourne 2014 and 2021.

22 For a broader discussion see Avezzù 2021.

English choruses encode early modern receptions of Greek and Roman models they received through continental mediations. The reading of ancient drama in books was guided by knowledge that could be derived from theoretical treatises.

As recalled above, Evanthius' *De Fabula* and Donatus' *De Comoedia* were especially relevant to the early modern reception of classical drama for their inclusion in many editions of Terence (see esp. 3.1 and 3.5 in Wessner 1902, 18, 22). In Donatus' *De comoedia* the ancient chorus was treated as the cradle of ancient comedy, which by the gradual addition of characters was turned into a new form, later divided into five acts ("Comoedia uetus ab initio chorus fuit paulatimque personarum numero in quinque actus processit"). It was unquestionably a singing chorus, and it was precisely for its singing that it was deemed non-dramatic and an impediment to the action ("nam postquam otioso tempore fastidiosior spectator effectus est et tum, cum ad cantatores ad actoribus fabula transiebat, consurgere et abire coepit"). Thus, when plays were recorded in book form, the chorus was first omitted, but a space was left for possible addition, as in the case of Menander ("ut primo quidem choros tollerent locum eis relinquentes"), before even that space was eventually removed ("postremo ne locum quidem reliquerunt").[23] By reading Evanthius-Donatus no-one could be mistaken about the chorus being a lyrical part in ancient comedies to be sung to the accompaniment of music.

Aristotle's prescription that the chorus should be one of the actors (Po. 1456a25-7) was unequivocal, and yet this was often

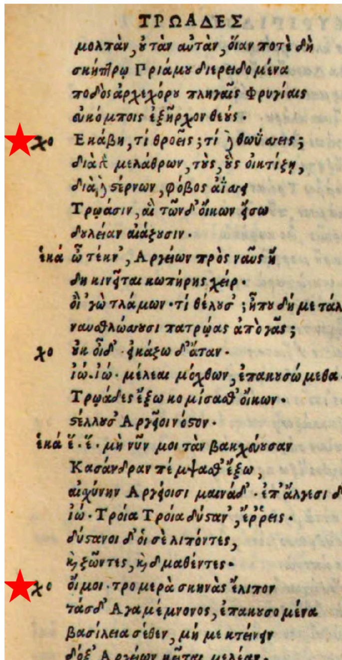
23 "3.1 The ancient comedy was at first a chorus, and little by little, because of the number of characters, it developed into five acts. And so, little by little, by a sort of reduction and shrinking of the chorus, it arrived at the new comedy, in which not only is the chorus not made to appear, but not even given any space. In fact, since the spectator became more and more hostile because of the passing of time without action and, as soon as the representation passed from the actors to the singers, he began to get up and leave, this advised, at first, the poets to eliminate the choruses leaving them a space, as Menander did precisely for this reason, and not for another reason, as others think. At last, they did not leave them even a space, and this the Latin comedians did, with the result that in their works it is difficult to catch the partition in five acts" (Wessner 1902, 18).

misinterpreted, especially when digested through Horace. In his 1567 translation of his *Ars Poetica*, for instance, Thomas Drant significantly turned the chorus into an authorial mouthpiece taking the parts of the author ("auctoris partis") instead of that of an actor ("actoris partis"), as most commentaries on the printed editions tended either to signal or to prefer, typically Aldo Manutius Junior's (Florence, 1548; Venice, 1559; see Bigliazzi 2021b). Besides, Horace clearly stated that the chorus had to "sing nothing between acts which does not advance and fitly blend into the plot" ("actoris partis chorus officiumque virile / defendat, neu quid medios intercinat actus, / quod non proposito conducat et haereat apte"; Horace 1989 and 1999), assuming that this singing chorus had no merely entertaining function in its inter-act performance, but was closely related to the action. However, commentaries on Aristotle read the relation between the different resources of rhythm, metre and song in his *Poetics* in ways that undermined a full understanding of the part of the chorus as a singing one. By connecting its performance with rhythm, Vettori for one underlined its choreutic rather than choric function, suggesting a dancing instead of a singing chorus.[24] Instances of ignorance or misunderstanding of the ancient chorus are numerous. Here suffice it to recall that what precisely the ancient chorus did, and in what ways the Greek and the Roman ones differed, remained in most cases vague if not unknown.

In spite of Howard-Hill's claim that Greek dramatists were very little influential on English playwrights and therefore not worth examining with regard to the printing of drama (1990, 131), Euripides was perhaps the most widespread Greek author in the Renaissance, and it is likely that many first encountered a Greek chorus in a collection of his plays, whether in the original or in translation. Aldus Manutius' 1503 edition does not print separate lyrical stanzas, nor does it distinguish acted from chanted, and sung parts (either monodic or choral). The indication Xo. (Choròs) is in the margin like any other speech prefix. Interestingly, Manutius' edition of Seneca's tragedies (1517) indicated CHORUS not only as a speaker, but also as a wholly separate section (new line / CHORUS centered / new line), as in previous editions of Seneca, where scenes

24 Cf. Avezzù 2021, 54.

were marked by speech headings positioned at the centre of the page.[25] This did set the norm for later editions of Seneca as well.



ΤΡΩΑΔΕΣ

μολπάν, οὐ τὰν αὐτὰν, οἵαν ποτὲ δὴ
σκήπτρῳ Πριάμου διερειδομένα
ποδὸς ἀρχεχόρου πληγαῖς Φρυγίας
εὐκόμποις ἐξῆρχον θεούς.
χο. Ἑκάβη, τί θροεῖς; τί δὲ θωΰσσεις;
διὰ γὰρ μελάθρων, τοὺς, οὓς οἰκτίζῃ,
διὰ δὲ στέρνων, φόβος ἀΐσσει
Τρῳάσιν, αἳ τῶνδ᾽ οἴκων ἔσω
δουλείαν αἰάζουσιν.
ἑκά. ὦ τέκν᾽, Ἀργείων πρὸς ναῦς ἤ-
δη κινεῖται κωπήρης χείρ.
οἳ ᾽γὼ τλάμων. τί θέλουσ᾽; ἦ πού δή με ταλ
ναυσθλώσουσι πατρῴας ἀπὸ γᾶς;
χο. οὐκ οἶδ᾽. εἰκάζω δ᾽ ἄταν.
ἰὼ. ἰώ. μέλεαι μόχθων, ἐπακουσόμεθα.
Τρῳάδες ἔξω κομίσασθ᾽ οἴκων.
στέλλουσ᾽ Ἀργεῖοι νόστον.
ἑκά. ἒ. ἔ. μὴ νῦν μοι τὰν βακχεύουσαν
Κασάνδραν πέμψασθ᾽ ἔξω,
αἰσχύνην Ἀργείοισι μαινάδ᾽. ἐπ᾽ ἄλγεσι δ᾽
ἰὼ. Τροία Τροία δύσταν᾽, ἔρρεις.
δύστανοι δ᾽ οἵ σε λιπόντες,
καὶ ζῶντες, καὶ δμαθέντες.
χο. οἴμοι. τρομερὰ σκηνὰς ἔλιπον
τάσδ᾽ Ἀγαμέμνονος, ἐπακουσομένα
βασίλεια σέθεν, μή με κτείνειν
δόξ᾽ Ἀργείων κεῖται μελέαν.

Manutius' 1503 edition of Euripides (*Troades*, 148-82, NN5*r*)

ADILON.

CHORVS.

ANAPAESTICI.

Am rara micant sydera prono
i Languida mundo·nox uicta uagos
Contrahit ignes, luce renata.

Manutius' 1517 edition of Seneca (*Hercules Furens*, 125ff., 3*r*)

Only Collinus' 1541 Latin edition of Euripides seems to follow the Senecan model, but only in the first tragedy, *Hecuba*, and with regard to the first choral ode, as in all the other odes of the same tragedy and the following ones the speech prefix is like that of any other character, positioned on the left. In 1562 Stiblinus was the first to divide Euripides' plays into acts corresponding to the ancient episodes, and also to distinguish the chorus from the rest, in this

25 See also Howard-Hill 1990, esp. 133-4: "The most readily apparent distinction is that the classical plays employed act and scene headings. At the beginning only scenes were indicated and only by the provision of speech-headings when the groupings of characters changed as they entered or left the stage. Scenes therefore had no invariable connection with stage clearance, as association later made by English dramatists, nor with localities" (134).

following Aldus' Senecan edition – but this was a parallel Greek-Latin edition and the 'Latin style' may have influenced it. Perhaps significantly, Aldus' 1507 edition of Erasmus' Latin translations of Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia Aul.* followed the printing practice of Greek dramatists, not of Seneca.

Euripides 1507
(*Hec.*, 97-8; Erasmus; only Latin)

Euripides 1541
(*Hec.*, 97-8; Collinus; only Latin)

Euripides 1558
(*Hec.*, 97-8; Xylander; only Latin)

Euripides 1562a
(*Hec.*, 97-8; Melanchton; only Latin)

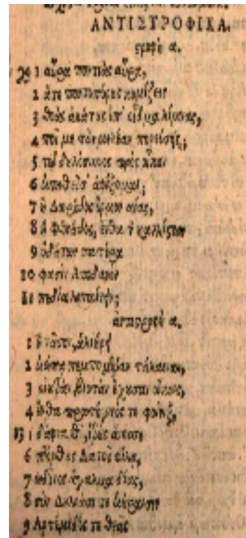
Euripides 1562b (Stiblinus; *Hec.*, 58-9, 15; first division into Acts)

These editions of Euripides reproduce the manuscript and slavishly adopt all its new lines. While the passages meant to be spoken could be easily recognised even without being well acquainted with Greek (the Latin senarius corresponds to the Greek dramatic trimeter), the generally short or very short versicles of the lyrical parts must have been perplexing for an early modern reader. Besides, all editions, including Stiblinus' Greek-Latin one, did not distinguish choral and monodic stanzas from the rest and therefore did not allow the reader to identify them visually as songs. Willem Canter in his 1571 edition was the first to mark up the antistrophic stanzas suggesting a responsive, yet not necessarily antiphonal, type of performance. Next to the Xo. speech prefix the rhythmic-melodic quality of the passage

was signalled by *ANTISTROPHIKA* (i.e. "responsive"), as well as by the indications *strophé I* and *antistrophé I*, with the numbering of the corresponding *kola*.

Turpissime sustulit fœlicem Troiam.
Chorus.
Aura, Pontica aura,
Quæ pontigradas agis
Celeres rates, sæui per stagna profundi,
Quò me miseram uehes?
Cui ancilla ad ædes
Addicta deueniam?
Ad portus 'ne Dorici soli?
An ad Phthiæ littus? ubi blandissimarum
Patrem aquarum ferunt
Apidanum agros irrigare?
An in insulam marino
Transmissam remo, miseram uehes,
Vt miseram exigam uitam domi,
Vbi primitiua palma,
Laurusq; sacros edidit
Ramos charæ Latonæ
Partus monumentum dij:

αἴσχιστα Τροίαν εἷλε, τὴν εὐδαίμονα.
Χορός.
αὔρα, ποντιὰς αὔρα,
ἅτε ποντοπόρους κομίζεις
θοὰς ἀκάτους ἐπ' οἶδμα λίμνας,
ποῖ με τὰν μελέαν πορεύσεις;
τῷ δουλόσυνος πρὸς οἶκον
κτηθεῖσ' ἀφίξομαι;
ἢ Δωρίδος ὅρμον αἴας,
ἢ Φθιάδος, ἔνθα τὸν καλλίστων
ὑδάτων πατέρα
φασὶν Ἀπιδανὸν πεδία λιπαίνειν;
ἢ νάσων, ἁλιήρει
κώπᾳ πεμπομέναν τάλαιναν,
οἰκτρὰν βιοτὰν ἔχουσαν οἴκοις,
ἔνθα πρωτόγονός τε φοῖνιξ,
δάφνα θ', ἱεροὺς ἀνέσχε
πτόρθους Λατοῖ φίλα,
ὠδῖνος ἄγαλμα Δίας,


ΑΝΤΙΣΤΡΟΦΙΚΑ.
στροφὴ α.
ἀντιστροφὴ α.

Euripides 1562b – Stiblinus, *Hec.*, 444-64.

Euripides 1571 – Canter, Hec., 444-64 (first systematic colometry)

Thus, no Renaissance edition of Euripides, including the miscellaneous Stephanus 1567 one, collecting a selection of Euripides', Sophocles' and Aeschylus' tragedies, indicated the number of speakers within the chorus. Stiblinus (1562) was the only one to separate the chorus from the other sections, and Canter (1571) the first to foreground its melodic form based on repetition and structural response. The reading of Renaissance editions of Greek drama in Greek or in Latin could hardly allow to "read through, behind or beyond the text" (Bourne 2020, 4) and only in two cases offered visual indication of its responsive form.

If we move to the Renaissance editions of Seneca, we notice that the chorus was signalled by centred speech-headings, had no divisions into stanzas, nor was the number of speakers specified. Revealingly, Badius (1514), Manutius (1517) Petrus (1529) and Gryphius (1548) printed "adilon" above "chorus", possibly a phonetic

transcription of ἀδήλων (*adélôn*), meaning indefinite, and Marmita and Badius added extensive commentary with metrical notation, stressing the literary quality of the plays as objects for learned exegesis. In one note on the second chorus of the first tragedy, *Hercules Furens*, Badius also repeated Horace's prescription that the chorus should sing nothing irrelevant to the action between the acts and take the part of the author ("Authoris partes"). Thus, Badius clearly read Seneca through Horace, who in turn was reading Aristotle on Greek tragedy.[26]

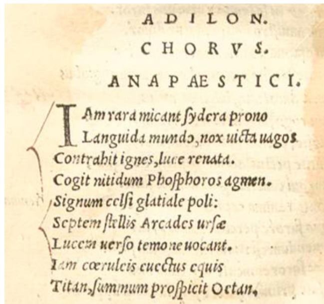
A reader of these Senecan editions would have found very little elucidation about the chorus, except long odes with occasional commentary about the metre and the content, and, as in Badius' case, massive notes in the margin, including normative references to Horace. No stage directions concerning the performance were present (the examples below are from *Hercules Furens*, 125ff. and 524ff.).

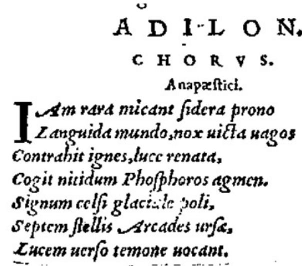
Seneca (*HF*, André Belfort 1478, 9*r*)

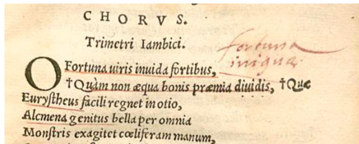
Seneca (*HF*, Marmita 1492)

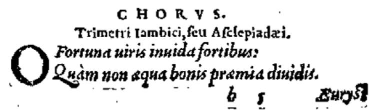
Seneca (*HF*, Badius 1514, Av.*v*, Ci.*v*)

26 On the relation between Horace and Aristotle, and their reception, see e.g. Gilbert and Snuggs 1947, Stenuit 2016.


ADILON.
CHORVS.
ANAPÆSTICI.
Iam rara micant sydera prono
Languida mundo, nox uicta uagos
Contrahit ignes, luce renata.
Cogit nitidum Phosphoros agmen.
Signum celsi glatiale poli:
Septem stellis Arcades ursæ
Lucem uerso temone uocant.
Iam cæruleis euectus equis
Titan, summum prospicit Oetan,


ADILON.
CHORVS.
Anapæstici.
Iam rara micant sidera prono
Languida mundo, nox uicta uagos
Contrahit ignes, luce renata,
Cogit nitidum Phosphoros agmen.
Signum celsi glaciale poli,
Septem stellis Arcades ursæ,
Lucem uerso temone uocant.


CHORVS.
Trimetri Iambici.
O Fortuna uiris inuida fortibus,
†Quàm non æqua bonis præmia diuidis, †Quæ
Eurystheus facili regnet in otio,
Alcmena genitus bella per omnia
Monstris exagitet cœliferam manum,


CHORVS.
Trimetri Iambici, seu Asclepiadæi.
O Fortuna uiris inuida fortibus:
Quàm non æqua bonis præmia diuidis.

Seneca (*HF*, Petrus 1529, B3*v*, C4*r*) Seneca (*HF*, Gryphius 1548, 11, 26)

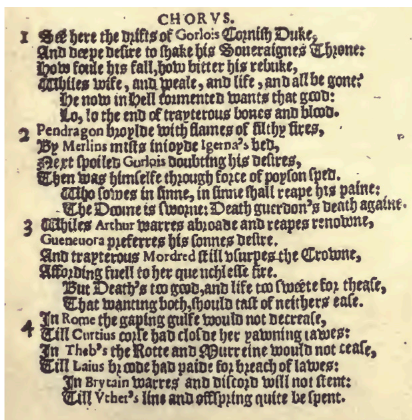
Therefore, it is no surprise that early modern readers may have been puzzled by a dramatic part which in Seneca's editions, yet not in Euripides', was separate from the rest when not involved in dialogues and remained indefinite in number. Whether the varied shorter metres were to be interpreted as songs could only be evinced from theoretical treatises on ancient drama and commentaries of Aristotle which, however, concerned Greek, not Senecan plays.

Thus, even if academic drama influenced by the Wittenberg school of Melanchton and Winshemius revived Greek plays, leaving traces of their activities on their editions, as Micha Lazarus has recently shown (2020), very little we can evince from them about *how* they interpreted those dramas. While a peculiar annotation on Camerarius' Latin version of *Ajax* in a copy of Estiennes' 1568 edition of Sophocles' *Tragōdiai hepta* (*Tragoedia*e *Septem*) with "sigla distributing the speeches of the chorus and semichorus among three different actors" (2020, 59; see Fig. 3, 60) witnesses that the play *was* performed, it does not say whether it was sung or chanted or spoken, thus leaving out any clue about its acting peculiarities.

When we move to the playbooks of early modern dramas, we find lists of speakers, speech prefixes, stage directions, and other details

concerning how a play was or could be staged. Scant information is provided about choruses. With regard to Senecan translations, Clare Bourne has noted that in Heywood's 1559 *Troas* Tottel marked the first chorus with a backward pilcrow, and in his 1560 *Thyestes*, probably printed by Richard Payne, they were marked out by "a large fleuron" with the effect of "a clean, visual distinction between dialogue and chorus" (60). No pilcrow was used by Colwell in the octavos of *Oedipus* (1563) and *Agamemnon* (1566) for the speech heading *Chorus*, which was in italics simply positioned centre page, and the text was in black letter like the dialogues. Only in Thomas Marsh' 1581 edition of Newton's *Tenne Tragedies* was a different typeface used to visually distinguish dialogues from most of the choral odes: blackletter for fourteeners, even when assigned to the chorus, and Roman for all other odes in a different metre. After all, if it is true that the chorus was assigned a different status on the page, it is also true that that status was very opaque. Thus, what these lists tell us is that the chorus' different 'dramatic quality' is only rarely recorded on the page.

There are cases of books, though, which give us at least some instructions about how to imagine the recitation of the choral parts in terms of their vocal arrangement. One such instance is Thomas Hughes' *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, a play presented to her Majestie by the Gentlemen of Grayes Inne, at her Court in Greenewich in 1587, when it also appeared in print.



CHORVS.

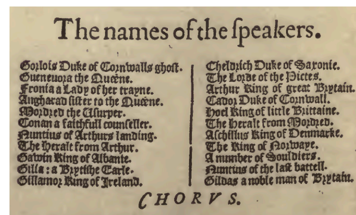
1 Sée here the drifts of Gorlois Cornish Duke,
And deepe desire to ſhake his Soueraignes Throne:
How foule his fall, how bitter his rebuke,
Whiles wife, and weale, and life, and all be gone?
He now in Hell tormented wants that good:
Lo, lo the end of trayterous bones and blood.

2 Pendragon broylde with flames of filthy fires,
By Merlins miſts inioyde Igerna's bed,
Next ſpoiled Gorlois doubting his deſires,
Then was himſelfe through force of poyſon ſped.
Who ſowes in ſinne, in ſinne ſhall reape his paine:
The Doome is ſworne: Death guerdon's death againe.

3 Whiles Arthur warres abroade and reapes renowne,
Gueneuora preferres his ſonnes deſire,
And trayterous Mordred ſtill vſurpes the Crowne,
Affording fuell to her quenchleſſe fire.
But Death's too good, and life too ſwéete for theaſe,
That wanting both, ſhould taſt of neithers eaſe.

4 In Rome the gaping gulfe would not decreaſe,
Till Curtius corſe had cloſde her yawning iawes:
In Theb's the Rotte and Murreine would not ceaſe,
Till Laius brood had paide for breach of lawes:
In Brytain warres and diſcord will not ſtent:
Till Vther's line and offſpring quite be ſpent.

Hughes 1587 11 (B2*r*).



The names of the ſpeakers.

Gorlois Duke of Cornwalls ghoſt.	Cheldrich Duke of Saxonie.
Gueneuora the Quéene.	The Lorde of the Pictes.
Fronia a Lady of her trayne.	Arthur King of great Brytain.
Angharad ſiſter to the Quéene.	Cador Duke of Cornwall.
Mordred the Vſurper.	Hoel King of little Brittaine.
Conan a faithfull counſeller.	The Heralt from Mordred.
Nuntius of Arthurs landing.	Aſchillus King of Denmarke.
The Heralt from Arthur.	The King of Norwaye.
Gawin King of Albanie.	A number of Souldiers.
Gilla: a Brytiſhe Earle.	Nuntius of the laſt battell.
Gillamor King of Ireland.	Gildas a noble man of Brytain.

CHORVS.

The numbers assigned to the stanzas seem to suggest an alternation of voices as in the case of the semichoruses of the above-mentioned Latin version of Sophocles' *Ajax*, although nothing more may be surmised.[27] Robert Wilmot's *Tancred and Gismund* (printed in 1591 after revision of the original *Gismond of Salerne* whose manuscripts date from 1567; see Cunliffe 1912, lxxxvi and 162) is another interesting example of how stage directions could refer to an actual performance (in this case at the Inner Temple in 1567-1568). Without these notations, it would be impossible to discern in what ways the choruses differ from the rest of the play, as the iambic pentameter with alternate rhymes and the Roman typeface are present throughout. Variations can be found only in the first and the second choral odes: the former presents 4 alternate voices pronouncing stanzas of 16 lines in blank verse printed in italics, and 12 lines of pentameters with alternate lines in Roman type, respectively; the latter has slightly more elaborate forms, with a sonnet printed in italics for "Chor. 3" and an added stanza in rhyme royal for "Chor. 1". Numbers next to "Chor." (1 to 4) suggest alternate recitation for each stanza, emphasised by the use of italics in the first two choral odes.[28]

But what is most relevant to the present discussion is that on two occasions we find curious directions about the actual singing of the chorus: the first one occurs at the end of 1.2 when the printer avows that the song is missing ("*Cantant. Qua mihi cantio nondum occurrit.* The song ended, *Tancred the King commeth out of his pallace with his guard*"; Wilmot 1591, A4*v*), indirectly saying that there was a song at that point. The second one appears at the end of act 2, where "*Cantant*" follows the last stanza of the chorus, leaving it unclear whether the indication is misplaced or the actual song is lacking. Finally, at the end of 3.2, a stage direction tells us that the chorus very sweetly repeated Lucrece's song, but being a fairly long passage of iambic pentameters with alternate rhymes one wonders whether it is that song it actually refers to. Duffin is positive in

27 For a discussion of this play's political engagement with relevant comments on the chorus see Perry 2011.

28 Also in this case Perry offers a very interesting political and contextual reading of the play but does not touch upon the choral problems I am exploring here.

claiming that "[a]ll four of the choruses – indeed, virtually all the dialogue portions too – are in pentameter quatrains with abab rhyme schemes, so they fit to Psalm 10" (2021, 26), a text he also considers as a possible candidate for chorus 3 of *Gorboduc* (23). And yet, a few remarks are in order.

The first reference to the missing song appears at the end of a long passage pronounced by Gismund who laments the death of her husband; she is accompanied by the chorus of four maidens and her last lines introduce a hymn in praise of the lost husband:

> Meane while accept of these our daily rites,
> Which with my maidens I shall do to thee,
> Which is, in song to cheere our dying spirits
> With hymns of praises of thy memorie.
> (Wilmot 1591, A4*v* [1.2.33-6])

These lines are not present in the two manuscripts of the previous *Gismund of Salerne* on which Wilmot's reworked, and it is unclear whether the expansion is due to the author or to his use of a different manuscript (see Cunliffe 1912, 170). In those earlier texts, Gismund was not accompanied by the chorus (which in that earlier version was of four men of Salerne). Whatever song may have been sung in Wilmot's revision, it can hardly refer to Gismund's lines, which are followed by the word "Cantant", not preceded by it, thus suggesting imminent singing.

The same can be noticed about the second choral ode, likewise followed by the indication of a vocal performance seemingly connected with the final mention of a "Pean" for the Virgin, not with the lines themselves, whose argument can hardly be called a 'praise'. The four stanzas are a lament for "the great decay and change of all women" compared to female examples of virtue such as the steadfast Lucrece (Chor.1), Queen Artemissa (Cho.2), and the stoic Portia (Cho. 3), finally contrasted with Gismund's sudden change after her husband's death as an instance of inconstance and a "mirror and glasse to womankind" (Cho.4). Cho. 1's conclusion appears consistent with a singing performance beginning soon afterwards:

> Chor. 1. Yet let vs maydens condemne our kinde,
> Because our vertues are not all so rare:
> For we may freshly yet record in minde,
> There liues a virgin, one without compare:
> Who of all graces hath her heauenly share.
> In whose renowne, and for whose happie daies,
> Let vs record this Paean of her praise.
> *Cantant.*
> (Wilmot 1591, C3*v*)

The sense of a sustained musicality not entirely recorded in the printed text is finally confirmed by Lucrece's lament about Gismund's mysterious pining away with anguish and sorrow in 3.2 – a passage that in the manuscripts is assigned to Gismund's own woman, Claudia. This one too sounds like a musical blank in the book referring to a song to come:

Gismond of Salerne [Cunliffe 1912, 3.2.47-50]	*Tancred and Gismund* (Wilmot 1591, Di*v*, [3.2.60-2])
But whereupon this restlesse life is growen, sithe I know not, nor how the same t'abate, I can no more, but Ioue that knowest it best, thow shortly bring my ladies hart to rest.	I can no more but wish it as I may, That he which knowes it would the same allay, For which the Muses with my song shal pray. *After the song, which was by report very sweetely repeated of the* Chorus, Lucrece *departeth into* Gismunds *chamber . . .*

It could be argued that those choruses were, in fact, all musical and that Tancred's line "Leauing thy maidens with their harmonie" (Wilmot 1591, B2*r*), pronounced right before departing before the first choral ode, suggests a polyphonic arrangement (Duffin 2021, 34).[29] However, it remains unclear whether it is a general allusion to

29 Duffin's argument is somewhat confused here as it assigns the line to Gismund, and refers to *Gismond of Salerne*, while the line is only in *Tancred*

their singing or refers to a four-voice performance of the following choral ode – which alternates 16 lines of blank verse and 3 quatrains with alternate rhymes – or of a song we do not have, like the one they might be singing with Gismund in 1.2. Doubtless, the choral ode following Tancred's line is not the most complex one in the play, and if any allusion to some form of melodious intonation, whether by singing or chanting, was meant to define any of their lines in the text we have, those in the second choral ode, which also includes a sonnet, are the most likely candidates, at least owing to their variety.

For all their inaccuracy and *lacunae*, the stage directions of Hughes' and Wilmot's plays let us glimpse a four-voice articulation of the choruses in ways that the printed editions of Seneca do not. Interestingly, neither Alexander Neville's *Oedipus* nor John Studley's *Agamemnon*, which, like Hughes' and Wilmot's plays, followed their stagings in 1559 at Trinity College Cambridge, and in 1566 (unknown venue; APGRD), respectively, bear traces of their performance in either their in-quarto editions (1563 and 1566) or Newton's 1581 *Tenne Tragedies*. This could be a hint that the Englished Seneca retained a more literary conception as classical drama than plays in classical fashion, and as such they probably enjoyed a different status. Fundamentally, they were books unconnected with the stage, as Renaissance editions of Greek plays and Seneca in the Latin original also were (and the annotation on Camerarius' version of *Ajax* in fact reinforces the feeling that that edition needed additional marks to point out one peculiar, circumstantial use of it). But differently from Greek and Latin conventions, English metres did not provide what Greek and Latin forms did on the printed page. They did not distinguish spoken from chanted or sung parts as most of them did not have specific generic qualities or dramatic functions. As William Webbe pointed out in his 1586 manual of poetry *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, the "natural course of most English verses seemeth to run vppon the olde Iambicke stroake" (Fiii.*v*), and all English verses may be sung or played to all manner of tunes indistinctly:

and Gismund (Wilmot 1591, B2*r*) – in the other play the chorus is not of women and Tancred's last lines before departing are missing.

> There are nowe wythin this compasse, as many sortes of verses as may be deuised differences of numbers: wherof some consist of equall proportions, some of long and short together, some of many rymes in one staffe (as they call it) some of crosse ryme, some of counter ryme, some ryming wyth one worde farre distant from another, some ryming euery thyrd or fourth word, and so likewyse all manner of dytties applyable to euery tune that may be sung or sayd, distinct from prose or continued spéeche. (Fiii.*r*)

When, in response to Thomas Campion's classical view about refusal of rhyme in his *Obseruations in the art of English poesie* (1602), Samuel Daniel applied his argument to drama, he conceded that tragedies should use the blank verse, but admitted rhyme for "the Chorus and where a sentence shall require a couplet" (1603, Hvi.*v*). Neither Campion nor Puttenham before him dealt with the chorus, except for Campion's brief mention of an instance from a chorus in tragedy (1602, 17) to illustrate the dimeter "as a part of the Iambic" which, he noticed, "is our most natural and auncient English verse" (16). If confirmation of theoretical paucity about dramatic verse with regard to choruses were needed, it would be sufficient to leaf through the pages of English theorists of versification.

Thus, when modern readers approach early modern playbooks they find themselves in a somewhat similar position to that of early modern readers of editions of classical drama as to what stood behind the text, while the text itself hardly allows for a reading conscious of its performance requirement. This is why unexpectedly encountering a critical insert about contemporary choral performances and the ancient authority they relied on in a play such as the *Warres of Cyrus* we started from remains a very intriguing experience.

Conclusion

Richard Farrant was a composer and a musician, he wrote choruses for the plays produced at Court and we also have two of his songs ("Ah, Alas, You Salt Sea Gods", and "Come, Tread the Path of Pensive Pangs"; see Munro 2017, 99-100; Brawner 1942, 47). As Brawner observes, "The esteem in which his musical talents

were held by his contemporaries is best attested by the fact that he was appointed to the mastership of the choirs of both of the Queen's chapels" (ibid.). Farrant's interest in serious classically derived plays has been set against other contemporary writers, including Richard Edwards, author of *Damon and Pithias* (1571), who may have been his training master (48). Edward's interpolates classical with native materials and uses varied rhymed metres as opposed to Farrant's choice of historical narratives and preference for blank verse (57-8). Farrant's interest in 'serious' playwriting based on classical sources such as Livy, Xenophon, Herodotus, and Plutarch, was in line with plays often composed for child actors, confirming an established interest in 'grave' drama. While this has been pointed out as marking a divide between plays for child and adult actors as typical of those coming out of the schools across the 1560s and 1570s,[30] what has not been sufficiently foregrounded is the role of the chorus in establishing this difference. Brawner only mentions that the lost singing choruses of the *Warres of Cyrus* separate them from the "declaiming chorus as in the Italianate, Inns-of-Court, neo-Senecan *Gorboduc*, *Jocasta*, and *Gismond*" (ibid.). But no mention is made of what Italianate and neo-Senecan choruses implied within the context of transcultural receptions of the ancient chorus. Claiming the superiority of a singing chorus compared to contemporary hybrid and declaiming ones was very likely relevant to Farrant's own work. It also suggests that more than one conception of antiquity was circulating at the time and could be profitably used within circumstances that required advocating the

30 Brawner 1942, 68; see also "In 1582 Stephen Gosson, referring primarily to the public stages, indicated the sources of some of the plays he had seen, as follows: 'I may boldely say it because I haue seen it, that the Palace of pleasure, the Golden Asse, the Æthiopian historie, Amadis of Fraunce, the Rounde Table, baudie Comedies in Latine, French, Italian, and Spanish, haue beene throughly ransackt to furnish the Playe houses in London.' The writers for the adult companies were making good use, no doubts, of that flood of 'fond books, of late translated out of Italian into English . . .' In contrast, the dramatists for the child actors . . . developed a new type of 'classical' plays . . . The Court was the common meeting place for the playes of the men and those of the boys; and there they reacted upon and influenced each other in many details of dramatic technique" (Brawner 1942, 67).

authority of a 'grave' tradition. In this sense, the singing chorus underlined the 'gravity of Greekness' as preferable to other ancient, less authoritative, traditions. If Brawner is correct, the authority of a 'truly' ancient Greek chorus[31] – no matter whether singing in a contemporary fashion and possibly not dancing – could be usefully claimed for self-promotion from a purist stance against puritanical attacks. Clearly, the singing itself was sufficient to establish that authority, no matter what 'truly grave' could mean. The authority of Xenophon as an established educational model did the rest to support that ancient moral stance. If this is true, the misplaced prologue in that play unveils what may be perceived as a latent 'battle of the choruses' in the processes of domestication of the classics in the early stages of early modern English tragedy; a battle that goes beyond purely aesthetic concerns to encompass cultural and political issues specifically supporting child playing and their singing against contemporary neo-Senecan drama. It provides a unique document of how early modern choruses were being performed and what implications their different staging styles could have. It helps us to re-consider the plurality of forces and factors in the construction of ideas of ancient authority and processes of reception. It also suggests different layers of antiquity in the perception of the Greek and the Latin chorus, turning this portion of drama into an 'authentic' mark of classical legacy, defining competitive traditions in the humanist programme of the Tudor age as well as degrees of 'authoritative authority'.

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31 See Newell 1983 and 1989; Grogan 2007 and 2014 (esp. chap. 1 and 118-19 for references to Shakespeare's *Henry V*); Humble 2017; Dall'Olio 2017 and 2022 (for references to contemporary drama).

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3

Classicism as Medievalism: Gower & Mediation in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

Jane Raisch

Abstract

This essay examines the role of mediation in the play *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Focusing particularly on the chorus-figure, John Gower, I argue that the play uses the self-conscious representation of acts of mediation to explore how the medieval textual tradition transmits knowledge and ideas about classical antiquity. By comparing the speeches of Gower in *Pericles* to the language of cultural mediation and difference in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, I demonstrate the way in which the play ventriloquises its own source material to articulate ideas around textual adaptation and ancient reception. In conclusion, I demonstrate the play's commitment to putting acts of cultural and textual mediation on display, suggesting this investment in the overt representation of mediation constitutes a genuine interest in indirect forms of cultural reception.

Keywords: Mediation; Classical Reception; Gower; Medievalism; Hellenism; *Confessio Amantis*

The plays of Shakespeare are rarely heralded for their historical and cultural consistency. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* happily yokes classical Athens to a decidedly English world of Faerie, while *Cymbeline* blithely moves back and forth between Roman Britain and Renaissance Italy. But of Shakespeare's many culturally fluid plays, it is perhaps *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre* – most likely a collaboration between Shakespeare and another playwright – that most explicitly examines the very idea of historical and cultural fluidity. Featuring the medieval English poet, John Gower, as a chorus and yet set in an unmistakably Greek Mediterranean world, *Pericles* presents its various cultural and historical energies as particularly unintegrated. Gower, who frames the play in medieval terms, exists in a narrative and dramaturgical register entirely distinct from the play's action. The play's action, in turn, unfolds across Hellenistic Greek city-states and is performed by characters named "Simonides", "Aeschines",

and "Cleon".[1] For this reason, the play has elicited rather divergent assessments of where its cultural loyalties lie. Linda McJannet has called the play "a Hellenistic map of the ancient world" and Vassiliki Markidou has argued that "Greek history" is "what ties all the main loci of the play together" (McJannet 1998, 95-6; Markidou 2017, 172). In contrast, Helen Cooper has decisively declared that *Pericles* is "Shakespeare's most comprehensive engagement with the medieval world" and that "it represents, not just the continuing life of the medieval, but the invention of medievalism, the valuing of the medieval world for its own sake" (2010, 196).

The argument of this essay seeks to find a middle ground between readings of the play as principally medieval English and readings of the play as principally Greek by highlighting the play's own self-conscious interest in the work of mediation. Gower's inclusion in the play is not merely a nod to the English medieval tradition writ large, it is a nod to the play's very own English medieval source material. Gower's fourteenth-century English vernacular poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, constitutes one of the play's central sources for the "Apollonius, Prince of Tyre" narrative tradition, making Gower-the-chorus a highly self-aware emblem of the play's narrative and cultural affiliations.[2] While many scholars have posited that the "Apollonius" story, with its many similarities to Greek romance, was based on a Greek original, the earliest extant text of the narrative is in Latin and dates back only to the ninth century CE (Archibald 1991, 27-51; Kortekaas 2004). In such cases, the medieval world provides our only link to a text either from or about Greek antiquity and *Pericles* unabashedly puts this fact on display. By capitalising on the self-awareness surrounding questions of narrative mediation already found in Gower's *Confessio*, *Pericles* presents the dramatization of an elusive Greek world as part of a longstanding transhistorical literary project. Far from being uninterested in the ancient world in favour of the medieval (or vice versa), *Pericles* puts the act of staging Greek

1 On the specifically Hellenistic nature of *Pericles*'s Greek setting, see McJannet 1998.

2 *Pericles* also directly draws on a 1576 prose text by Laurence Twine called *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* which is essentially a translation of the medieval *Gesta Romanorum*; see Warren 2003, 13.

antiquity on stage, self-consciously linking dramatic representation to forms of narrative reception that embrace rather than efface the role of intermediaries.

"Ancient Gower": Theorising Mediation in the Prologue

The opening lines of *Pericles*, spoken by Gower, are some of the most frequently discussed in the entire play. Many scholars have noted how the prologue puts story-telling and narrative production, as well as a thematic interest in the past, front and centre (Markidou 2017, 173; Cooper 2010, 197-200). But few readers of the play's opening have recognised the extent to which the concept of mediation governs this exploration of narrative production; narrative production is tied not simply to an idea of the past but rather to an idea of moving between multiple pasts. The first twenty lines are worth quoting in full:

GOWER To sing a song that old was sung,
From ashes ancient Gower is come,
Assuming man's infirmities
To glad your ear and please your eyes.
It hath been sung at festivals,
On ember eves and holy ales,
And lords and ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.
The purchase is to make men glorious,
Et bonum quo antiquius eo melius.
If you, born in these latter times
When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes,
And that to hear an old man sing
May to your wishes pleasure bring,
I life would wish, and that I might,
Waste it for you like taper-light.
This' Antioch, then: Antiochus the Great
Built up this city for his chiefest seat,
The fairest in all Syria,
I tell you what mine authors say.
(1.1-20)[3]

3 I refer throughout the essay to the Oxford Shakespeare edition of the

The first two lines, though deceptively simple, immediately establish the play's interest in historical multiplicity and 'multi-layeredness': "To sing a song that old was sung, / From ashes ancient Gower is come". Though both story – here archaically called "song" – and storyteller are presented as old, their respective forms of 'oldness' are differentiated. For "ancient Gower", the song he comes to sing already has an older tradition of being sung, a detail that not only presents the song itself as old but also measures that 'oldness' in terms of transmission rather than composition. Gower, brought on stage to sing a song with an already old tradition of being sung, is thus presented not as the author of the narrative to follow but rather as himself a privileged transmitter. This emphasis on transmission is made even more explicit a few lines later in the prologue when he presents his description of the first scene not as an act of dramaturgical conjuration but rather of textual consultation: "I tell you what mine authors say". In naming himself in these opening lines as "Gower", but in articulating that naming through a description of narrative reception rather than authorial production, Gower redefines the parameters of his own authority. Though Gower's name would have had immediate associations with revered notions of authorship, this association is linked not to narrative creation but rather to narrative dissemination. Gower thus exploits the work of mediation that is intrinsic to the role of a chorus and extends it to encompass the work of narrative reception. Gower's staging of the play's source material becomes inextricably linked to that source material's own narrative mediation.

By framing his introduction of the story's historical setting in Antioch in terms of textual consultation, Gower further implies a chronological difference between the story's very ancient setting and its somewhat less ancient textual reception. Though neither Gower the author of the *Confessio* nor Shakespeare and his collaborator would have known specifics about ancient chronology, the prologue nonetheless evinces an awareness of the multi-layered nature of ancient literary history. Though set in a vaguely Hellenistic Greek world (Antioch was the capital of the Seleucid empire), the Apollonius narrative, if it does indeed have roots in

play, which does not include act divisions: (ed. Warren) 2003, 81.

classical antiquity, almost certainly would have dated to a much later historical period, probably the second through fourth centuries CE, the period when most scholars believe the four major Greek romances to have been written.[4] In this period of Greek (and Roman) literature, nostalgia for previous ancient pasts (Homeric, classical Athenian or Hellenistic) was a hallmark of narrative composition, embedding a sense of historical multilayeredness in the texts that were produced (Raisch 2016, 932-5). Barbara Mowat and Stuart Gillespie have argued that Shakespeare's late romances (to include *Pericles*) particularly channel the *ethos* and narratological structure of Greek romance as a form (Mowat 2009, 236-46; Gillespie 2004, 225-40). Moreover, as Helen Moore, Tanya Pollard, and Steve Mentz have recently demonstrated, the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus was widely known and available throughout sixteenth-century England (Moore 2015; Pollard 2008; Mentz 2006). These insights suggest that even if the Apollonius narrative as it was understood in the sixteenth century lacked direct connections to Greek romance, it is entirely plausible that the play *Pericles* drew on Greek romance as a form for its approach to narrating the past.

Gower's sense of temporal and historical multiplicity pervades the prologue, even infusing his commonplace pleas for the audience's approval. When asking the audience to "accept my rhymes", he couches this request in terms of historical difference: "If you, born in these latter times / When wit's more ripe, accept my rhymes". Gower thus injects yet another temporal layer – the time period of the contemporary audience – into the play's opening. Roger Warren has suggested that these lines constitute an allusion to the seventeenth century specifically by evoking the growing popularity of poetic wit, famously associated with John Donne and the Metaphysical poets (Shakespeare 2003, 91n12). Gower is therefore not only pointing out the archaism that his own poetic tradition represents but does so by gesturing towards the poetic

4 It is for this reason that B.P. Reardon includes the ninth-century BCE Latin story of "Apollonius, Prince of Tyre" in his collected English translations of Greek romances. As he himself points out, the story shares many thematic similarities with other Greek romances and there is some evidence there may be a lost Greek version of the story, Reardon 2019, 856-98. See also Kortekaas 2004.

fashions of a specifically imagined contemporary moment. Gower thus presents himself in the prologue as operating across at least four distinct temporalities: the very ancient (nominally Hellenistic) past of the setting of *Pericles*, the ambiguous pasts of the story's creation and reception, the medieval "ancient" past of his own time, and finally the contemporary present of the audience. Seen in this way, Gower's medievalism becomes yet another expression of Gower's intermediary position – Gower and the medieval necessarily function as a conduit between antiquity (or antiquities) and the seventeenth century.

Gower's position as an intermediary is both underscored and complicated by his own ghostliness. Risen "from ashes" he has been revivified specifically for the purpose of relating this story, an idea which immediately connects Gower's dramaturgical function as chorus to the play's thematic interest in recovering the past. Although he has taken on human corporeal form ("man's infirmities") to serve as narrator, his observations regarding the on-going popularity of the story ("It hath been sung at festivals / On ember eves and holy ales") implies a long historical view of the story's reception. He is cast as a spectral witness to the narrative's circulation both before and after his own time. In this sense, Gower introduces perhaps even a fifth temporality into the prologue, or perhaps, better put, a kind of atemporality. His ghostly ability to be both of a time and outside of all times captures the strange relationship between temporality and mediation, a relationship perhaps best understood via the Derridean *portmanteau* of the hauntological (Derrida 2006). The play's investment in the hypervisibility of its source material manifests as a failure of normative narrative ontology; Gower comes back from the dead to conspicuously bring the play's narrative into existence, overtly contaminating the narrative's theatrical present with the spectre of its poetic past.

Gower's status as a ghostly intermediary is therefore characterised by a sense of distance to and difference from the story and the audience; Gower 'belongs' with neither group. And while dramatic choruses are always situated in a kind of representational limbo as neither diegetic nor exactly exegetic, the complex historical layering that so defines the opening lines of the play links that representational 'inbetweeness' to a self-conscious exploration

of narrative mediation. Indeed, one of the most overt expressions of Gower's difference – his use of octosyllabic couplets instead of iambic pentameter – exemplifies this link. Meant to imitate the meter of the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower's use of the octosyllabic locates his difference precisely in his association with the play's narrative sources. The intrusion, so to speak, of the style of the source text separates Gower from both the world he is representing and the audience he is guiding. The conceptual work of mediation, dramaturgical and cultural, that Gower exemplifies becomes directly linked to the work of textual transmission and reception; Gower is not merely a general figure of ancient *gravitas* but rather a specific figure of textual authority, a kind of 'ventriloquiser' of his own poetic text.

Gower as Author: Mediation and Adaptation Between the *Confessio Amantis* and *Pericles*

The particularly explicit evocation of the *Confessio Amantis* in a play self-consciously concerned with questions of mediation and reception is no coincidence. In delivering his description of historical mediation via the metrical style of the *Confessio*, Gower gestures towards a deeper overlap between the themes of *Pericles* and those of the *Confessio* as a literary work. While the fourteenth-century poem does furnish the play with its plot, its narrator, and its metrical variety, it also, I want to argue, partly imbues the play with the very sense of cultural and narrative self-consciousness this essay has been exploring thus far. The *Confessio* is a source itself preoccupied with questions of sources, a text that embraces its own status as a textual intermediary and as a space for ancient literary receptions.

It is with the question of adaptation and navigating past traditions that Gower (the author) opens the *Confessio* as a whole:

> Of hem that writen ous tofore
> The bokes duelle, and we therfore
> Ben tawht of that was write tho:
> Forthi good is that we also
> In oure tyme among ous hiere
> Do wryte of newe som matiere,

Essampled of these olde wyse,
So that it myhte in such a wyse,
Whan we ben dede and elleswhere,
Beleve to the worldes eere
In tyme comende after this.
(Prologue, 1-11)

As in the opening of *Pericles*, the temporality of narrative reception here is multidirectional; the past ("Of hem that writen ous tofore") is both the model for, and the source of, "newe matiere", which in turn functions as a cornerstone for future knowledge and learning after Gower and his historical moment have passed ("whan we ben dede and elleswhere"). The creation of new texts is therefore presented as intrinsically intermediary, a crucial pivot – or what Russell Peck has called a "bridge" – between the inherited learning of the past and the ongoing learning of the future (2006, 1).

To a degree even more pronounced than in *Pericles*, where the Apollonius story is initially called a "song", in the *Confessio*, this preoccupation with the learning of the past is presented in explicitly bookish terms. Reading, writing, and the production of texts suffuses how these introductory lines imagine the historical continuum between past, present, and future. In describing "bokes" as repositories – as things that "dvelle", glossed by Peck as "remain" – for those who have "writen ous tofore", Gower ascribes a kind of immortality to the written word as it is preserved in the material text (Peck 2006, 43). In one sense, then, we might see the atemporal haunting of *Pericles* by the ghostly Gower-chorus as an adaptation of the *Confessio*'s own preoccupation with lasting presences of the past. But where in the *Confessio* these presences are envisaged through the material book as a vehicle for conveying wisdom, in *Pericles*, these presences are more dramatically and hauntologically conceived through the resurrection of the authorial persona himself. The shift in conceiving of past tradition as principally textual to principally oral mimics the adaptation of the play's material from poetry to drama. The figure of Gower as chorus, not just the work he does as a theatrical device, becomes an enactment of the work of adaptation.

But as we have seen, the *Confessio*'s emphasis on bookishness is not entirely absent from *Pericles*. The *Confessio*'s vision of the past

as experienced primarily as material text finds expression in the chorus Gower's reference to consulting his "authors":

> Gower This' Antioch, then: Antiochus the Great
> Built up this city for his chiefest seat,
> The fairest in all Syria,
> I tell you what mine authors say:
> The king unto him took a fere . . .
> (1.1-21)

This reference to a bookish vision of past narrative tradition comes right when Gower is describing the play's first ancient setting, Antioch. Such a moment of theatrical and imaginative conjuration – a moment when the audience is being asked to suspend their disbelief and let the theatre work its magic – is an odd place to interject an almost citational reference to book-learning. A quasi-scholarly idea of past narratives as contained in books ripe for consultation intrudes upon a theatrical idea of past narrative as urgently and immediately recreated through the conceit of dramatic representation. Antioch here is at once footnote and vivid theatrical restoration. Such an idea conforms to Constance C. Relihan's apt observation that the Gower of *Pericles* "has a simultaneous function as a means of creating dislocation and identification" (1992, 293). At precisely the moment we might expect Gower to fully immerse the audience in the ancient world of Antioch and the story he is about to tell, he punctures that immersion by subtly (and briefly) relegating Antioch (and the Apollonius story) to the pages of books.

The intrusion of this bookish reference in the midst of Gower's recreation of Antioch and the Apollonius narrative serves to present the ancient Greek world specifically as an object of mediation. It is not Gower as chorus alone who is responsible for the story's recreation on stage, but rather a transhistorical 'team' of authors to include Gower the author and Gower the author's own collection of authors. This emphasis on the textual mediation of both Antioch specifically and the Apollonius story more generally is itself fittingly drawn from the *Confessio*. Echoing the importance of "bokes" in the opening lines of the poem, the opening lines of the Apollonius episode frame the narrative in terms of its own textual sources:

> Of a cronique in daies gon,
> The which is cleped *Pantheon*,
> In loves cause I rede thus,
> Hou that the grete Antiochus
> Of whom that Antioche tok
> His ferste name, as seith the bok,
> Was coupled to a noble queene,
> And hadde a dowhter hem betwene:
> (8.271-8)

In language similar to (though, again, more overtly bookish than) the prologue of *Pericles*, Gower the author presents his own role as that of a reader and narrative transmitter rather than a writer. Twice in the space of only four lines Gower draws his readers' attention to his own reliance on other textual sources: he "redes" the story of Apollonius in a book called *Pantheon* and affirms that his information about Antioch comes from "the bok". Like Gower the chorus's reference to "mine authors" in the prologue to *Pericles*, Gower the author's qualification – "as seith the bok" – in the midst of his introduction of Antiochus and Antioch presents the city as a product of texts. The act of evoking Antioch is thus explicitly framed as, in part, a transhistorical act of reading; Antioch's status as an ancient locale that emerges from the pages of books is consistently emphasised in this story's retelling.

The *Confessio*'s emphasis on the mediated nature of the Apollonius story is underscored by the opening evocation of a specific textual source: the twelfth-century Latin chronicle, *Pantheon*, by Godfrey of Viterbo. Offering a more overtly scholarly image of narrative transmission than the general reference to "mine authors" or the "old" in *Pericles*, the *Confessio* frames the story of Apollonius in explicitly citational terms: an assertion of antiquity – "a cronique in daies gon" – is linked to a specific, named historical source (Godfrey's *Pantheon*). This emphasis on citational specificity captures the Apollonius narrative's particularly central role in networks of textual transmission and reception in the ninth through the fourteenth centuries. Elizabeth Archibald has argued that the Apollonius narrative is a particularly rich, and underappreciated, example of cross-cultural textual transmission in the context of

medieval England and Europe. The story “appears in one hundred and fourteen Latin manuscripts, written between the ninth and seventeenth centuries; vernacular versions were produced all over medieval Europe, as far afield as Denmark and Greece, Spain, and Bohemia” (Archibald 1991, 3). It is also “the earliest known English ‘romance’ and ‘must be the only fictional narrative to survive in Old, Middle, and Modern English” (ibid.).

Gower, of course, would not have fully appreciated the long and cross-cultural history of reception associated with the Apollonius narrative, but it seems likely he had a strong sense of the story’s penchant for being retold. As evidenced by his inclusion of several plot details not found in Viterbo’s version of the Apollonius story (or found in the version repeated in the *Gesta Romanorum*, a text Gower also almost certainly knew), it is clear that Gower relied on sources beyond Viterbo that he did not elect to name (Archibald 1998, 192). Peck has suggested that Gower may have consulted an eleventh-century Latin prose version, simply titled the *Historia Apollonii Tyrii*, which may have been, in turn, a source used by Viterbo (2006, 279). At a minimum, then, Gower understood that the Apollonius story enjoyed widespread circulation in Latin texts going back several centuries, that it was an artefact of perpetual retelling, that is, of perpetual mediation.

Throughout this long history of retelling and reception, the Greek dimensions of the Apollonius story remained an important part of its narrative identity. In Viterbo’s *Pantheon*, which is structured according to the chronology of human history, the story of Apollonius comes right after a discussion of the conquests of Alexander the Great, locating it firmly within a Hellenistic vision of the Greek Mediterranean (Archibald 1991, 185-6). John Ganim has argued in his study of Gower’s use of space and place that the *Confessio* particularly puts the Hellenic origins of many of these stories on display (Ganim 2007). For Ganim, Gower’s authorial preoccupation with representations of geography manifests itself via an intensification of markedly Hellenic narratological tropes and conceits: “exile, abduction and displacement, and their often accidental and coincidental episodic motivation” (2007, 105). Gower, in a sense, accesses the embedded Hellenism of his non-Greek sources through the concerns of his narrative craft; Greekness

expresses itself not simply via geography but also through the intersection of geography and narratology.

Even when Gower is clearly ignorant about the specifics of Greek cultural practice, he articulates this ignorance through an attentiveness to the fact of cultural difference. The episode at the gymnasium in Pentapolis, one that was often challenging for medieval writers because of its depiction of a specifically Greek conception of athletic competition, offers a useful example. While one of the earliest editors of Gower's works, G.C. Macaulay, focuses on Gower's lack of understanding of Greek custom in his garbled portrayal of some sort of naked ball game, Gower's description of the game is not principally concerned with details about the game itself (which he clearly did not feel confident about) but with the game as an expression of local cultural custom (Peck 2006, 282n679):

> He [Apollonius] goth to se the toun aboute,
> And cam ther as he fond a route
> Of yonge lusti men withalle.
> And as it scholde tho befalle,
> That day was set of such assisse,
> That thei scholde in the londes guise,
> As he herde of the poeple seie,
> Here comun game thanne pleie;
> And crid was that thei scholden come
> Unto the gamen alle and some
> Of hem that ben delivere and wyhte,
> To do such maistrie as thei myhte.
> Thei made hem naked as thei scholde,
> For so that ilke game wolde,
> As it was tho custume and us,
> Amonges hem was no refus:
> (8.670-86)

The playing of the "commun game" is described as part of "the londes guise" ("the custom of the land") tied to an unspecified day of celebration ("that day was set of such assisse"; Peck 2006, 168). The only other detail provided about the game is that it is played naked, and Apollonius's consequent nakedness in order to take part is defended as a reflection of older and different customs: "as it was

tho [then] custume and us". For this reason, the reader is assured that Apollonius's nakedness "was no refus" ("was no disgrace"; Peck 2006, 168).

For Gower, the stakes of this episode lie not in showcasing the specifics of ancient Greek everyday life (specifics he did not have access to) but rather in demonstrating how narrative creates a space for acknowledging cultural difference. In presenting Apollonius as an exemplary figure, Gower goes out of his way to contextualise that exemplarity in terms of changing historical norms; naked princes might not be seen as acceptable in fourteenth-century England, but (Gower asserts) they certainly were acceptable in the world of Greek antiquity. In a sense, the elusive idea of the naked games becomes a kind of shorthand for Greek cultural difference; the poem revels in its ability to present that difference even if it cannot entirely explain it.

Gower as Guide: Staging Mediation in *Pericles*

At first glance, the episode of the games at Pentapolis might seem like a clear example of *Pericles*'s preference for medievalism over Hellenism. Departing from the *Confessio* (and the larger Apollonius narrative tradition) by excising naked gymnasium athletics entirely, Shakespeare and his collaborator opt to represent a thoroughly medieval vision of competition in the form of a tournament fought by knights in armour complete with squires, triumphs, and *impresa* (Archibald 1998, 72-5). Despite the tournament notionally taking place "in Greece", the scene's intense focus on armour particularly as an expression of identity gives the entire episode a distinctly medieval feel (5.104). Gone are Gower the author's attempts to represent – and defend – culturally alien forms of athletic practice, replaced by the representation of far more culturally familiar – and normative – forms of competition.

But while *Pericles* has indisputably reimagined the episode at Pentapolis in terms that would be more familiar to a Jacobean audience, I would propose that this reimagination still functions to make a Greek world legible. The introduction of the various knight-competitors by the King Simonides and his daughter, Thaisa, serves as a "live-action" catalogue of ancient Greek city-states (Sparta,

Macedon, Antioch, and so on) represented through the norms of the medieval tournament. As is customary, each knight presents himself to the king and his daughter, who in turn identify (and comment upon) the knights for the audience:

> ([*Flourish.*] *The first knight passes by* [*richly armed, and his page before him, bearing his device on his shield, delivers it to the Lady Thaisa*])
> SIMONIDES Who is the first that doth prefer himself?
> THAISA A knight of Sparta, my renownèd father,
> And the device he bears upon his shield
> Is a black Ethiope reaching at the sun.
> The word, *Lux tua vita mihi.*
> [*The page presents it to the king*]
> (6.17-20)

Indeed, as both spectators and narrators of the knights' introductions, Simonides and Thaisa take on a role similar to that of Gower the chorus. They are dramaturgically charged with making the scene legible for the audience, and thus function themselves as mediating figures for both the play's action and the knights' identities. Imperfect, culturally contaminated even, the knights of the tournament are nonetheless representatives (quite literally) of the Greek world, here put on display and made apprehensible for multiple audiences.

But practical dramaturgical concerns were surely also central to Shakespeare and his collaborator's choice to reconceptualise the episode in Pentapolis. Clearly, Gower and other medieval authors found the description of Greek gymnasium practices depicted in the Apollonius story confusing. Gower's version is especially muddled in its description, and he produces, as we have seen, a very general account of the competition focused more on cultural difference than on presenting logistical specifics. A poet, like Gower, can (by and large) get away with this; a dramatist, looking to stage this episode, cannot. Simply put, as a form of competition known to Jacobean audiences and one more-or-less 'stageable', the jousting tournament solves the problem of how to stage an ambiguous and poorly understood form of ancient competition. But the jousting tourney also adds a further dimension to this episode. Grounded in the ritualistic and performative context of medieval court culture,

the jousting tourney is a form of competition that is intrinsically 'presentational' – tournaments are as much about display as they are about martial competition. As such, the inclusion of the tourney – while ostensibly a departure from the narrative's Hellenism – intensifies the centrality of self-conscious mediation in the tradition of the Apollonius story. Like the figure of Gower as chorus, it functions as a way of seeing, a way of putting an elusive and hard-to-access Greek world on display. Through the grafting of medieval elements onto a Greek world, the tourney becomes a manifestation of how medieval forms of thought and knowledge organise access to Greek antiquity, even if that access is only partial.

But *Pericles* is not entirely devoid of the kind of overt attention to cultural difference seen in Gower's *Confessio.* At the opening of Act 4, as Gower muses on his own role as chorus in largely conventional terms, he draws attention to the play's negotiation of cultural difference (it is not clear why he slips out of the octosyllabic here):

> GOWER Thus time we waste and long leagues make short,
> Sail seas in cockles, have and wish but for't,
> Making to take our imagination
> From bourn to bourn, region to region.
> By you being pardoned, we commit no crime
> To use one language in each several clime
> Where our scenes seem to live. I do beseech you
> To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you
> The stages of our story . . .
> (18.1-9)

While Gower's apologies for truncating time and space are typical of chorus-speeches in Shakespeare (cf. *Henry V* and *A Winter's Tale*), his apology for effacing the multilingualism of this cross-cultural story is unusual.[5] It not only belies an attentiveness to the

5 Shakespeare and his collaborator do not seem entirely clear about the linguistic context of the ancient Greek Mediterranean. Though Gower the chorus is correct to imagine that the Hellenistic Mediterranean was a linguistically diverse place, the specific anxiety articulated in these lines regarding monolingualism does not seem to account for Greek's status as a *lingua franca*, a fact conveyed in the Apollonius story through the consistent use of Greek proper names in every distinct locale.

story as representing multiple non-English cultures, but it also suggests that cultural difference as a category is germane to the business of theatrical representation. If linguistic diversity is part and parcel of larger questions of dramaturgy, the theatre becomes explicitly linked (as it of course implicitly is) to acts of translation and cultural adaptation. Negotiating linguistic realism becomes as foundational to narrative adaptation as negotiating the passing time and the movement between different places.

Alongside this attentiveness to the fact of cultural difference, Gower vividly emphasises his own role as a dramaturgical and narratological intermediary. Unlike in the opening lines of the play, where Gower primarily understood his intermediary position in historical and hauntological terms, in these lines, Gower shifts his focus to the very architecture of dramatic narrative. In language far more direct than any speech by *Henry V*'s chorus, Gower defines the liminality of his own position by appealing to a language of "gaps": "I do beseech you / To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you / The stages of our story . . .". Editors have compared Gower's use of the word "gaps" to that of Time in *The Winter's Tale* (Warren in Shakespeare 2003, 189n5):

> Time Impute it not a crime
> To me or my swift passage that I slide
> O'er sixteen years, and leave the growth untried
> Of that wide gap, since it is in my power
> To o'erthrow law and in one self-born hour
> To plant and o'erwhelm custom.
> (*WT* 4.1.4-9)

But the two uses of the word are, in fact, rather different. For Time, the "wide gap" refers more or less directly to the span of years ("o'er sixteen years") that separates act 3 from act 4. For Gower, the gaps in which he "stand[s]" seem to represent several different facets of the play's structural and narratological composition: gaps in time, yes, but also gaps in the play's geographic settings ("from bourn to bourn, region to region"), gaps between language traditions, even the gaps between scenes – "the stages of our story" – that lend the play its distinctly episodic structure (reflected in the choice by some editions, like the Oxford Shakespeare, to organise the play entirely

by scenes eschewing act divisions entirely). "The gaps", as Gower describes them, function as spatial extensions of his role as chorus, affirming the centrality of Gower's status as an intermediary, as, indeed, almost an expression of the state of 'inbetweenness'.

In imagining the gaps as the condition of possibility for his own status as chorus, Gower further differentiates his speech from that of Time. For Time, the "wide gap" is significant only in so much as it can be abbreviated and negated, Time does not so much operate within the gap as above and beyond it. In contrast, Gower sees his own powers of explication – here overtly described in pedagogical terms – as directly tied to the idea of the gaps: "I do beseech you / To learn of me, who stand i'th'gaps to teach you / The stages of our story". The gaps are the spaces that allow for Gower to make the play legible, they are the *raison d'être* for this role as chorus. Unlike Time, then, who draws attention to the gap in order to erase it, Gower draws attention to the gaps in order to leave them visible. He stands in the gaps rather than seeking to close them. Gower embraces his own position in the middle.

I would like to conclude this essay by turning to a modern production of *Pericles* in which the power of the play's conceptual interest in "gaps" was made particularly vivid: a 1998 production of the play by the Washington Shakespeare Theater directed by Joe Banno (Gossett 2004, 98-9). In this production, which made use of a large warehouse space to set up no less than seven different stages, the audience moved between these stages as the play moved between its different locales. As the audience moved from location to location, Gower conducted them as a kind of tour guide, presumably delivering his explanatory monologues almost as if ushering a tour group through exhibitions at a museum. It is hard not to read this radical approach to staging *Pericles* as a literalization of Gower's self-description in the lines we have just been examining. In this production, Gower – and the audience – find themselves literally in the gaps between literal 'stages' of the story. Furthermore, in imagining Gower as a tour guide of sorts, the pedagogical function Gower ascribes to himself in these lines is also underscored: Gower does indeed "stand i'th'gaps to teach".

Emma Smith has suggested in her book *This Is Shakespeare*, that Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre is defined precisely by a fascination

with gaps, what she calls "the sheer and permissive gappiness of his drama" (2019, 2). For Smith, this "gappiness" exists precisely at the intersection between narrative and dramaturgy. In her estimation, it is between the things unsaid in the playtext and the things necessarily made explicit on the stage where interpretation happens; gaps become a privileged concept for understanding the very workings of Shakespearean drama itself. Perhaps, then, we might see Gower standing in the gaps as an inflection point of sorts for Shakespeare – and his collaborator's – understanding of the role of drama. As we have seen, the gaps in this play are myriad, not simply between time periods and settings, but also between the ancient Greek world the play seeks to represent and the medieval English source material in which that world was made available. And yet, rather than downplay this gap or try to efface it, the play puts it on display, indeed celebrates it as part of the power of dramatic narrative. And if we can see cultural reception and adaptation as not just an end result but as a story – as a process worthy of its own narrative adaptation – then perhaps *Pericles* succeeds more than we realise as a play about classical reception.

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4

An Idea of Old Comedy: Ben Jonson's Metatextual Appropriation of Aristophanes*

Alessandro Grilli

Abstract

This study argues that the relationship between Ben Jonson and Aristophanes evolves considerably over time and starts displaying an allegiance to Attic Old Comedy mediated in fact by Horace's satiric poetry. Through Horace, Jonson was led to think of Aristophanes as a forerunner of Roman satire – an idea that was widely shared in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century culture. In Jonson and Horace's view, Aristophanes' dramatic art was essentially equated with his sharp representation of characters. Explicit references to Aristophanes in the metatheatrical sections of *EMO*, in contrast to the almost complete lack of close intertextual passages linking Jonson's 'comical satires' to the Aristophanic *corpus*, suggest that up to at least 1606 Jonson was not familiar with Aristophanes' comedies, but only with their metatextual representation in literary texts and studies, from antiquity to his time. This is why I would propose to understand the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship entailed in the 'comical satires' of 1598-1601 as a form of 'metatextual appropriation'. Jonson's effort to place his 'comical satires' under the banner of Attic Old Comedy results in a peculiar triangular relationship linking him to Aristophanes through Horace, and unveils his need for an eminent precursor in whose shadow he could stand out as both a satirist and a playwright.

Keywords: Ben Jonson; Aristophanes; Horace; Transtextuality; Imitation

An Aristophanic Playwright

The main purpose of this study is to reconsider the relationship of Ben Jonson's comic theatre with its most distant model, Aristophanic comedy. Understanding whether and to what extent Ben Jonson's comedies can be interpreted as a reworking of themes and dramaturgical models of Attic Old Comedy is a relevant question in

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the history of Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre. Underlying the whole issue is the fact that Jonson's privileged relationship with Aristophanes is already explicitly (though only occasionally) mentioned in Jonson's own texts and those of some of his contemporaries.[1] The link between the work of Jonson and Aristophanes has thus been considered an established fact: it has been the subject of specialized studies or commentaries, which have carried forward from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century the idea of the indisputable relevance of Aristophanes for an understanding of Jonson's dramaturgy. Evidence of this can be found in the studies of F.E. Schelling (1898) and E. Baldwin (1901), throughout the many notes and commentaries of the Oxford edition by Herford and Simpson (1925-1952), as well as in some comparative readings of individual plays (Thayer 1959; Davison 1963; Potter 1968). This critical tradition was finally systematized by a few contributions in the second half of the twentieth century (Gum 1969; Lafkidou Dick 1974; Armes 1974), whose book-length investigations helped shape a shared vision of the issue. Indeed, later contributions (Barton 1984; Ostovich 2001, 18-28; Miola 2014) seem to rely on the results of those studies, accepting their basic tenet: Ben Jonson's dramaturgy starts from a conscious 'Aristophanean' choice in opposition to the Hellenistic-Roman tradition of the earlier comedy. In the authoritative words of Anne Barton (1984, 114),

> [b]oth *The Case Is Altered* and *Every Man In His Humour* had borne witness to Jonson's uneasiness with the kind of linear, boy-gets-girl plot inherited from Greek New Comedy, the plot which for other Elizabethan dramatists was staple. The comical satires to which he turned next at least abandoned any pretence to interest in changeling children, resurrections from the dead, or romantic love leading to marriage. Yet 'words, above action: matter, above words' had turned out to be an unsatisfactory substitute, especially in performance. Jonson had not been really successful in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels* or *Poetaster* at replacing the well-tried organisational principles of contemporary comedy with any effective dramatic, as opposed to literary, structure. From this impasse he was rescued by Aristophanes.

1 The main passages are quoted and discussed below, 144ff; 150ff.

Although Barton implies that Aristophanes only exerted his dramaturgical influence from *Volpone* onwards, Jonson's close relationship with his predecessor's *corpus* is (for her) never in doubt, not even for the years before 1606:

> As Camden's pupil, and also as a man naturally interested in the comedy of the ancient world, both Roman and Greek, Jonson *must have been acquainted* with what survives of Athenian *vetus comoedia* long before he addressed himself to *Volpone*. But it was not until 1606 that he seems to have discovered Aristophanes creatively, understanding how this great dramatist might provide for him what Greek New Comedy had given most of his dramatic contemporaries, including Shakespeare: a basic comedic structure capable of subtle variation and extension. (1984, 113; first emphasis mine)

It is precisely the familiarity of Jonson with Aristophanes in the early stages of his career that deserves, in my opinion, more in-depth reconsideration. Indeed, recent contributions (Harrison 2023; Grilli and Morosi 2023) have drawn attention to some interesting features of this specific imitative relationship, made up of explicit statements that are not accompanied by equally perceptible echoes. An important premise of my discussion is that it is precisely through the peculiarities of this imitative relationship that certain aspects of intertextual processes in Renaissance poetic practice can be identified and better understood.

Although theoretical approaches to intertextuality point out that imitative phenomena are not an object that can be thought of merely as close textual rewriting or allusion (Pigman 1980; Greene 1982; Burrow 2019, esp. 1-34), some reference studies on the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship (Gum 1969, in particular) tend to overestimate the incidence of precise Aristophanic allusions in Jonson's plays.[2] Indeed, the term 'intertextuality' is often employed as a single concept, when in fact it refers to a constellation of practices with very different objectives and modalities.

2 On the history and multilayered meanings of 'intertextuality' see at least Bernardelli 2000 and 2013; Allen 2002. Relations with Renaissance poetics are discussed by Carter 2021, in particular 107-14. Theoretical connections between intertextual practice and literary genre are explored by Genette 1979 and Most 1987.

Understood in its broadest sense, intertextuality is an intrinsic property of the text (as such, it is the last of the "seven standards of textuality" outlined and investigated by text linguistics: de Beaugrande, Dressler 1981, chapters 1 and 9); in its most narrow sense, on the other hand, intertextuality coincides with citation, that is, the partial superimposition of a text on another text (Compagnon 1979). Between these two extremes, the phenomenon of the relationship between texts presents itself in a great variety of forms, whose relevance goes beyond the mere knowledge of literary history and involves the very dynamics of poetic creation.

In order to better describe different relationships between texts, I adopt in this study the terminology of Genette 1982, which begins by distinguishing 'transtextuality', that is a generic relationship between texts, from its various forms. Genette's taxonomy is also the most suitable to account for two crucial aspects: 1. transtextual practices range from a maximum to a minimum of specificity;[3] 2. the pragmatic dimension, although difficult to investigate, is crucial to the understanding of any transtextual relationship. This is why the term 'intertextuality/intertextual', which in current usage refers to all varieties of relationship between texts (Allen 2000; Bernardelli 2000), is defined by Genette as the "actual presence of a text within another" (Genette 1997, 2): it entails a direct, specific link between a hypotext and a hypertext resulting from its close textual elaboration ("quoting", "plagiarism" and "allusion" being the main cases brought up by Genette).

3 Genette distinguishes between transtextual and intertextual relationships, the former being a hyperonym of the latter: in Genette's words, transtextuality is "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1997, 1), and as such occurs in different forms (intertextual, paratextual, metatextual, hypertextual, and architextual relationships, according to Genette, who lists those five types "in the order of increasing abstraction, implication, and comprehensiveness": ibid.). The complex semantics of intertextuality, particularly in early modern poetics, is duly accounted for by Carter 2021, 107-12. For my purposes, in this article I will use transtextuality to refer to a more generic form of relationship between texts, whereas hyper- and/or intertextuality will denote a closer, clearly detectable rewriting of a known hypotext.

In my opinion, a more analytical approach to the issue can modify and integrate received notions about Ben Jonson's relationship with Aristophanic comedy. At the basis of my argument is the idea that the relationship between Ben Jonson and Aristophanes is an important one, but one that evolves over time: the occurrences of Aristophanic themes, code traits and dramaturgical situations are to be found in Jonson's middle or late production, while his early comedies express a programmatic intent that is not matched by an objectively demonstrable intertextual presence of Aristophanes.

I will focus precisely on the first phase of Jonson's comic theatre, and argue that it does not bear traces of an actual intertextual reworking so much as of a *metatextual* appropriation. Broadening Genette's definition of 'metatext',[4] we can understand metatextual appropriation as a relationship that the text (or rather its author) entertains a second-degree discourse about the text to be taken as a model, that is with a mere *idea* of it. Hence the title of this study: this 'idea of Old Comedy' is nothing other than the image of that genre reflected, simplified and mediated by other sources: not only literary texts (such as, in this case, the Latin poets central to Jonson's poetics of satire) but also secondary literature, from literary history treatises to commentaries, or other critical metatexts. This line of reading takes into account the peculiarities of Aristophanes' dissemination in England in the sixteenth century: a relative abundance of references indeed confirms that Aristophanes was well known (see Miola 2014 for an analytical review), although in a quite superficial way – a peculiarity that is easy to explain on the one hand by the author's historical-literary importance, and on the other by the linguistic and exegetical difficulty of his works (Lever 1946).

In the following pages, I will attempt to show how Jonson's works reflect a considerable familiarity with critical texts relating to Aristophanes, in contrast to the scarcity of actual parallel passages between the two authors. This discrepancy is consistent with the assumption that Jonson had an abstract idea of Aristophanes

4 Genette 1997, 4: "The third type of textual transcendence, which I call metatextuality, is the relationship most often labeled 'commentary'. It unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it (without summoning it), in fact sometimes even without naming it".

in mind, rather than a precise textual memory of his comedies. As a consequence, the *purpose* of Jonson's claim to similarity to Aristophanes can be understood as an attempt to place his experiments in comic dramaturgy under the banner of an illustrious but not overly popular author. In so doing, Jonson privileges some aspects of Attic Old Comedy over many others: his Aristophanes is basically the forerunner of Roman satire. In this, Jonson adheres to the image of Aristophanes prevalent among his contemporaries, an image founded on Horace's mentions of Attic Old Comedy in his *Satires* and *Ars poetica*.

Reading Texts or Metatexts?

That Jonson had direct knowledge of Aristophanes' text is a matter of unquestionable agreement. However, this should not prevent us from asking more specific questions, namely when, in what form, and to what extent it is reasonable to think that Jonson gained this knowledge. To answer these questions, the data in our possession includes contextual information about the playwright's library and documented readings on the one hand, and traces of intertextual contact on the other – which must, however, be limited to the (admittedly very rare) cases in which it is entirely beyond doubt.

Now, as to the time, it is certainly reasonable for us to assume an early knowledge of Aristophanes in some form on Jonson's part, since the Greek playwright is already explicitly mentioned in *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599) and in *Poetaster* (1601). This knowledge is not surprising, given that Aristophanes was included, at least in part, in a school curriculum to which Jonson himself may have been exposed during his years at Westminster School;[5] and given, above all, that Aristophanes is a pillar of that Greek literary tradition that Renaissance classicism was so invested in.[6]

5 On which see Kay 1995, 8-11.

6 Lord 1963, 102ff. On the dissemination of Aristophanes' study in the English Renaissance see in particular Miola 2014; for an understanding of his influence on Ben Jonson it may be relevant to recall that *Clouds* was included in the curriculum of both universities, and was performed at St John's College Cambridge in 1598.

In practice, however, we can only formulate conjectural hypotheses on the actual channels of this knowledge, of which no specific evidence remains: Jonson's library, as it can be reconstructed today, includes only two editions of Aristophanes, dated 1607 and 1616 respectively,[7] which would lead us to date our author's reading of Aristophanes rather late.

In fact, the documentary evidence of 'Jonson's library' is not compelling in this case, and for several reasons: firstly, it is not certain that Jonson only ever read the ancients in his own editions – indeed, McPherson 1974 emphasises the relevance of Jonson's intellectual (and bibliographical) exchanges with other scholars, among which those with John Selden are particularly important. Secondly, it is well known that in 1623 a fire destroyed part of Jonson's personal library.[8] As I have argued elsewhere (Grilli and Morosi, 2023, 27), what we know of Jonson's habits makes it plausible that precisely the books that Jonson read and used most, those with the richest and most in-depth annotations, perished in the fire, of which we can form an idea on the basis of Petrus Scriverius's Martial (Leiden, 1619), preserved at the Folger Library (McPherson 1974, no. 121, 68-70). But it is possible that Jonson decided to purchase a complete translated and annotated edition of Aristophanes precisely because of his desire to deepen his knowledge of an author he had previously only known in a more superficial way.

External evidence, in short, is of little help when we seek to establish the extent and manner of Jonson's assimilation of Aristophanes. We must turn to indubitable intertextual references, which are, however, surprisingly few in comparison to the many that are evoked in the studies (see e.g. Gum 1969, 132-186). In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), the Aristophanesque character of the setting and characters, already recognised by Rechner (1914, 54), and analytically explored by Potter 1968, appears more evident than elsewhere, even if it is not substantiated by precise intertextual references. Instead, we find some of the latter in a play whose overall independence from the Aristophanean model is recognised

7 McPherson 1974, nos. 8 (25-6) and 95 (57-8).

8 On that occasion Jonson composed *Execration Upon Vulcan* (H&S, 8.202-12).

by Coburn Gum himself, *The Devil is an Ass* (1616):[9] in that play the measurement of flea jumps is mentioned, which undoubtedly alludes to Aristophanes' *Clouds* (*DA* 5.2.10-4 ~ Ar. *Nub.* 149-52).[10]

From the same play comes the only explicit quotation from the Greek text, that of *Wealth* 850-2, included (with a significant omission) in *DA* 5.8.112-4. As I have shown elsewhere (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 27-31), the quotation does not signal a deep semantic resonance with the intertext, because it is motivated solely by the connotation of the signifier: in a scene simulating glossolalia of a demonic nature, the quotation of a passage in which the word δαίμων occurs several times is expressively appropriate, even though the Greek κακοδαίμων has nothing particularly demonic about it, as it simply denotes the unhappiness of those struck by misfortune.[11]

Undoubtedly Aristophanic, as has already been observed (H&S 2.177), is also the Canting College in *The Staple of News* 4.4 (1626), where other unquestionable allusions to Aristophanes emerge, such as Pennyboy Senior's trial of his dogs, which evidently recalls *Wasps* 836ff.[12] To these long-known elements one could add a deeper dramaturgical feature, highlighted by Francesco Morosi in this volume: in *The Staple of News* the dynamic of intergenerational conflict takes an opposite form to that of Hellenistic-Roman comedy, and conforms instead to the atypical father/son clash of Aristophanes' *Clouds* and *Wasps*.

Finally, these passages should be supplemented with the observations on Aristophanes that Jonson notes in his commonplace book *Discoveries* (published posthumously in 1641 and the subject

9 "In *The Devil is an Ass* Aristophanic allegory seems out of place, for the play is developed along Plautine and Terentian lines, which exclude allegorical features" (Gum 1969, 175).

10 The passage is reported and discussed among others by Lafkidou-Dick 1974, 8.

11 Jonson's expressive goal is made clear by his omission of a hemistich (ὡς ἀπόλωλα δείλαιος), which would have the disadvantage of making the divergence of contexts obvious. As Coburn Gum also observes, since these words "are essential to the meaning of the passage, their absence reduces it to gibberish" (1969, 176).

12 Besides H&S 2.184, the reference is already in Schelling 2.265.

of much controversial interpretation by the poet's biographers and editors).[13] Here again, the explicit mention of Aristophanes is considered a sure indication of Jonson's familiarity with this author (Miola 2014, 497), and a retrospective testament to the importance of Attic Old Comedy in the development of his career as a playwright. A closer look at these references, however, allows to clarify further important aspects of the matter at hand (*Disc.* 1876-96):

> So that what either in the words or sense of an author, or in the language or actions of men, is awry, or depraved doth strangely stir mean affections, and provoke for the most part to laughter. And therefore it was clear that all insolent and obscene speeches, jests upon the best men, injuries to particular persons, perverse and sinister sayings – and the rather unexpected – in the Old Comedy [1880] did move laughter, especially where it did imitate any dishonesty; and scurrility came forth in the place of wit; which who understands the nature and genius of laughter cannot but perfectly know. Of which Aristophanes affords an ample harvest, having not only outgone Plautus or any other in that kind, but expressed all the moods and figures of what [1885] is ridiculous, oddly. In short, as vinegar is not accounted good until the wine be corrupted, so jests that are true and natural seldom raise laughter with the beast, the multitude. They love nothing that is right and proper. The farther it runs from reason or possibility with them, the better it is. What could have made them laugh like to see Socrates presented – that example of all good life, honesty, and virtue – to have him hoisted up with a pulley, and there play the philosopher in a basket; measure how many feet a flea could skip geometrically by a just scale, and edify the people from the engine? This was theatrical wit, right stage-jesting, and relishing a playhouse invented for scorn and laughter; whereas if it had savoured of equity, truth, perspicuity, and candour, to have tasted a wise or a learned palate, [1895] spit it out presently.

13 Hutson 2014. One should also bear in mind C. Burrow's remarks urging caution about what Jonson wrote in *Discoveries* and the extent to which we should be guided by it when we consider his literary practice (Burrow 2019, 240).

What appears to be a coherent Jonsonian reflection on the essential features of the ridicule is actually a rather accurate translation of a page by Daniel Heinsius, and not just any page: in the edition of Horace that Heinsius prepared for Elzevier in 1612,[14] the Dutch scholar includes his annotations on the author (*De satyra Horatiana libri duo*), in which he addresses problems of textual criticism and provides the interpretation of numerous problematic passages. This *excerptum* by Jonson, therefore, also confirms the reading hypothesis of *Poetaster* that Francesco Morosi and I have recently proposed in a contribution where, among other things, we emphasised the role of Horace's mediation in the relationship of Jonson's 'comical satires' with Aristophanes' comedy (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 113 and n121).

The lines translated in *Disc.* 1876ff. belong to the remarks *In epistolam ad Pisones de arte poetica* (1612, 67ff.), and are extracted from a long digression on 270-84: this passage from Horace provides an extremely succinct (and not particularly perspicuous) account of the development of theatrical history in Greece, from Thespis and Aeschylus to the authors of ancient comedy ("vetus . . . comoedia", 281). Heinsius' note takes advantage of Horatian references to the earliest phases of Greek theatre to expound a broader and more systematic reflection on the nature of tragic and comic theatre (1612, 78-99).

As we can see, Heinsius' relationship with Aristophanes is doubly metatextual, as the philologist comments on a page of Horace that, despite its poetic form, is itself a treatise on literary history. Indeed, Horace's remarks stand as an overall interpretation of the evolution of ancient Greek theatre. The nature of a treatise also emerges in Heinsius' notes, which follow the conceptual and argumentative schemes of Aristotle's *Poetics* at several points. For example, on page 79[15] Heinsius states that comedy and tragedy can be understood in parallel ("Cum eaedem propemodum comoediae ac tragoediae sint partes, finis quoque idem ex parte, ex parte diversus, multa communia esse utrique, est necesse. Comoedia enim delectat et docet. Neque minus comici διδάσκαλοι et κωμῳδοδιδάσκαλοι,

14 Reprinted in Leiden in 1629; on the critical-literary theories of Daniel Heinsius see Meter 1984.

15 Mistakenly, Lorna Hutson's commentary *ad locum* indicates p. 52.

quam tragici a Graecis dicuntur")[16] and the definition of the comedian that is given in this very passage is that of Aristotle, *Poetics* 5.1-2.

On this double metatextual framework is grafted Jonson's page, which in this section of *Discoveries* sets out to reflect on the nature of poetry and the prerogatives of the poet, and selects passages from various works by Heinsius (in particular the *Animadversiones in Horatium*, and the *De tragoediae constitutione liber*) focusing on the definition of various literary genres, tragedy and comedy *in primis*. It is, in short, a third-degree metatextual discourse, within which Aristophanes' work is reduced to a few hints. It is precisely their selective and stereotypical character that is the point of greatest interest in our eyes. From the entire bulk of the Aristophanic *corpus*, so vast and varied, only a couple of commonplace details are recalled: the caricature of Socrates in the *Clouds*, suspended in a basket ("to have him hoisted up with a pulley, and there play the philosopher in a basket"), and the measurement of the flea's leap ("measure how many feet a flea could skip geometrically by a just scale"). This patently superficial selection provides us with a valuable indication of what the gist of Aristophanes' poetics was for the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century reader (we will return to this later).

Imitating an Idea

The combination of these premises (scarcity of intertextual reworking and relative abundance of metatextual references) is consistent with the assumption that Jonson had no thorough knowledge of Aristophanes' texts at the beginning of his career as a playwright. As we shall see in greater detail in a moment, in the first phase of his production Jonson refers to Aristophanes as an authority, but no textual or dramaturgical allusions to the Attic Old playwright are

16 It may be interesting to note that the didactic (i.e. moralistic) nature of Jonson's 'comical satire' is completely in tune with Heinsius' vision of ancient comedy. Interestingly, Jonson follows Heinsius in a misinterpretation of the term διδάσκαλος, which in the Athenian theatrical context had the technical meaning of 'chorus master', i.e. 'director', whereas the great philologist (and Jonson with him) interprets it in an educational sense.

easily recognizable in his 'comical satires'. It is possible, and very reasonable, that Jonson was initially familiar with *Clouds*, if we are to believe the possible parallels highlighted by Helen Ostovich in her rich commentary on *Every Man Out of His Humour*.[17] In general, then, a change of perspective on the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship can help bring into focus misunderstandings of various shapes and sizes. This is why it is worthwhile to briefly review the documentary and textual evidence, also highlighting the history and some conceptual limits of these interpretations.

As we have seen, indubitable references to Aristophanes are increasingly common in Jonson's mature production, from *Volpone* onwards, and peak between 1614 and 1616. In my opinion, it is reasonable to assume that at the beginning of his career Jonson could not rely on a deep, complete, first-hand knowledge of Aristophanes: his illustrious predecessor was a figure of prestige providing an excellent reference point as a poetic authority. In particular, a close analysis of the 'comical satires' reveals that all explicit allusions to Aristophanes between 1598 and 1601 do not entail a direct knowledge of his comedies. Their vagueness shows that they can easily have been mediated by other texts – literary, primarily, such as Horace and Lucian, but also reference books and critical works of ancient and modern scholars. Jonson's Aristophanes, in other words, is the Aristophanes that Horace, Lucian, as well as Quintilian and Donatus – but also Castelvetro, Julius Caesar Scaliger, Robortello and Minturno, not to mention William Camden, Roger Ascham or Gabriel Harvey – present to Ben Jonson.

This change of perspective has several advantages, the main one being to explain the *forms* of the revival, which go far beyond imitative rewriting (such as Jonson's meticulous reworking of Horace's *Satire* 1.9 in *Poetaster* 3.1-3) and often entail structural and ideological transformations. Even when the contact between Jonson and Aristophanes seems most likely, due to the close parallelism of the dramaturgical situation, the 'imitation' can imply a considerable updating of the ideological posture. Interestingly, this updating is not an indication of 'eristic imitation' (Pigman 1980): Jonson's metadiscursive hints to Aristophanes make clear

17 See esp. Ostovich 2001, 26-8.

that he is convinced of faithfully following his predecessor; yet his partial, inevitably subjective understanding of the model inspires him passages where the form of his hypotext is preserved, but the content reversed. What Jonson seems to retain is Aristophanes' censorious attitude, even his targets, but not his worldview. Such is the case with the meta-performance of the poet, or the situations in which a poet attempts to gain acceptance as a member of a prestigious group. This situation, in itself rather peculiar and thematically marked, recurs several times in Jonson's theatre, from *Every Man In His Humour* to *Poetaster*, from *The Alchemist* to *Bartholomew Fair*, and takes forms that closely resemble those attested in Aristophanic comedy. The problem is that in spite of the dramaturgical similarity, the ideological tendency of these scenes in Aristophanes and Jonson is *radically opposite* – anti-elitist in Aristophanes, elitist in Jonson. This is the main clue that leads one to read this apparent transposition as a *mediated* transposition: and in fact it is easy to see that behind the poet-postulator is not the poet or the dithyrambographer of Aristophanes' *Birds*, but the bawler of Horace's satire 1.9. As Francesco Morosi and I have recently shown (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 116-20), Aristophanes' postulant is negative because he is pretentious and profiteering, whereas Jonson's postulant is mocked and despised as incompetent – both too rough and too bombastic to be a true poet. The positive pole in Aristophanes, consequently, is an everyman's anti-intellectual stance, while in Jonson the positive pole is represented by the intellectuals who know the poetic art but are exempt from both uneducated clumsiness and pedantry.

Even in Jonson's mature comedies, however, formal revival is sometimes accompanied by ideological reversal, as in the conversion of Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*, where the theatre-averse Puritan is finally transformed into a 'beholder' no different from any other show lover.[18] Although in principle it formally re-proposes the conversion of Kreitton Logos at the end of the *Clouds* agon,[19] in

18 *BF* 5.5.93: "Let it go on. For I am changed, and will become a beholder with you!". The comparison is reported and discussed in Gum 1969, 174.

19 Ar. *Nub.* 1102-4: ἡττήμεθ'· ὦ κινούμενοι, / πρὸς τῶν θεῶν δέξασθέ μου θοἰμάτιον, ὡς / ἐξαυτομολῶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

terms of content it polarises the trend: Kreitton Logos personifies naive adherence to ethical ideals practised in good faith, and his conversion is the subject of marked irony (the good guy switches sides). Busy's conversion, on the other hand, is a restoration of common sense, opposed to the stubborn and fanatical rejection of theatre typical of Puritans and hypocrites: here it is the wicked Busy who finally passes over to the side of the good. Needless to say, even when studies point out the comparison (such as Gum 1969, 174) they omit to note the – far from secondary! – element of ideological updating. We are not to think, of course, that influence is only a matter of agreement (as Pigman 1980 makes abundantly clear); yet, any deviation, correction, or reversal of the hypotext should be highlighted by interpreters as meaningful, since it indicates the aims and purpose of the imitation. All the more so in this case, where Jonson's imitative stance seems to be unwillingly "adaptive" (Burrow 2019, 9, 169ff.): from *EMO* onwards, Jonson claims his conformity to Aristophanes the satirist, even if the ideological implications of imitated passages are opposite.

The profound transformation of 'Aristophanic' elements in Jonson, in short, makes the search for parallels a complex and fraught path: sometimes, even when the parallel is well-founded, studies provide readings of it that, while acknowledging Jonson's imitative freedom,[20] fail to value the extent and tendency of the transformation; in most cases, however, alleged parallels are based on vague similarities which do not resist a closer look at the context. For example, Gum forces the argument when he claims that in *SN* 3.2.123-5 the "ridiculous traffic in abstractions may have been suggested by Aristophanes" (177). In fact, references to the cost of education in *Clouds* are much more marginal than in *The Staple of News*. They are presented as a secondary element (only Strepsiades mentions a tuition fee), and moreover filtered through the focus on a character as obsessed with material goods as the old protagonist (Grilli 2001, 24-9). In cases like this, therefore, the hypothesis of a specific intertextual derivation of a single element

20 In relation to the dogs' trial in *SN*, Gum (1969, 181) correctly observes: "These differences between the two trials indicate Jonson's customary free adaptation of his borrowings, from Aristophanes and other classical authors".

is only a reflection of the general assumption that there is an indisputable contact between the two authors and their texts. In *The Staple of News* this contact is guaranteed in relation to very marked elements, such as the dog trial derived from *Wasps* (above, para. 2), or the very structure of the Canting College exemplified in Socrates' *Phrontisterion*, but it is not at all guaranteed in the case of particular elements or sections of the text for which no actual analogy with sections of the hypotext can be demonstrated (the petty sale of news evokes much more immediately incongruous practices of selling abstract goods – from indulgences to offices – than the sale of knowledge in a school; let us not forget that in England, education, then as now, was anything but free).

In general, it should be borne in mind that in the case of the relationship between Jonson and Aristophanes it is rather risky to try to identify textual analogies, where the context reveals their ultimate inconsistency. One example among many: the relationship between *DA* 5.5.28-30 ("Fitzdottrel Out, you rogue! / You most infernal counterfeit wretch! Avaunt! / Do you think to gull me with your Aesop's fables?") and Ar. *Av.* 471 (Ἀμαθὴς γὰρ ἔφυς κοὐ πολυπράγμων, οὐδ' Αἴσωπον πεπάτηκας, "That's because you've an unintelligent, uninquisitive nature, and haven't studied your Aesop." transl. Sommerstein) is reported by Graves (1954, 13) and taken up by Gum (1969, 176):[21] in the two passages reference is made to Aesop's fables. But the radical difference in context makes the polygenetic nature of the reference clear. Whereas, in Aristophanes, Peisetaerus reproaches the birds for ignoring Aesop's fables, in Jonson, on the contrary, Fitzdottrel reproaches Pug for knowing them and using them inappropriately. To postulate a contact between the two passages, in short, one would have to assume that Jonson needed Aristophanes to mention Aesop's fables – which in my opinion is highly unlikely.

21 Gum justifies the legitimacy of the comparison by the fact that the word πολυπράγμων is emphasised in the 1607 edition of Aristophanes that belonged to Jonson (so already Graves 1954, 64; but McPherson [1974, 26] observes that the annotations on this volume, preserved today at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, are not "of the kind usually made by Jonson").

Looking for a Forefather

Indeed, the quest for parallel passages is not the most productive way to pursue the analysis of the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship. It is not just a question of focusing on *what* goes into a transtextual contact, but how, and above all *for what purpose* – in other words, it is a matter of getting an idea of the *pragmatics* of the transtextual relationship entailed in a text. The purposes can be of various kinds, and this variety of intentions also helps to better understand the variety of forms in which contact between texts takes place. Intertextual rewriting does not always imply total alignment: many texts are written in a 'corrective' mode, and the transtexual relationship presents itself as an occasion for self-definition and more or less polemical opposition to a model.[22] In the case of Jonson's relationship with Aristophanes, rather the opposite is true: from an examination of explicit statements, and of many aspects of Jonson's dramaturgy, the effort to assimilate, to identify, to legitimise oneself by exhibiting familiarity with the model is evident.[23]

Jonson's relationship with Aristophanes seems to begin under the banner of projection: a relationship more exhibited than substantiated by real familiarity with the text. This hypothesis is consistent with our main documentary evidence, a metaliterary

22 As early as 1980, in his study of imitation metaphors in Renaissance theoretical texts, George W. Pigman III introduces the notion of 'eristic' imitation, one substantiated by a dialectical – polemical or corrective – attitude (it is surprising not to find Bloom 1973 among Pigman's references; on this issue see also Greene 1982). In a comprehensive study on Renaissance imitation, Colin Burrow deals extensively with the pragmatics of the imitative relation. Burrow draws attention in particular to 'adaptive imitation', which is able to account for both the veneration of the ancients and the moderns' need for self-assertion (Burrow 2019, 169ff.). Burrow does not specifically address the issue of Jonson's imitation of Aristophanes, but one of his remarks seems to me to capture the substance of this literary relationship: "*Imitatio* is such a complex process and such a multiplex concept that no one who imitates can be expected ever to be quite sure what they are doing, or how exactly they stand in relation to their textual origins" (Burrow 2019, 32).

23 This aspect is particularly emphasised by Hui 2013; see also Burrow 2019, 235ff.

statement of the 'philosopher-critic'[24] Cordatus in the *Induction* to *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599: CEWBJ Online, 224-43):

> MITIS You have seen his play, Cordatus. Pray you, how is't?
> CORDATUS Faith, sir, I must refrain to judge. Only this I can say of it, 'tis strange, and of a particular kind by itself, somewhat like *Vetus Comoedia*. A work that hath bounteously pleased me; how it will answer the general expectation, I know not.
> MITIS Does he observe all the laws of comedy in it?
> CORDATUS What laws mean you?
> MITIS Why, the equal division of it into acts and scenes, according to the Terentian manner; his true number of actors; the furnishing of the scene with Grex or chorus; and that the whole argument fall within compass of a day's efficiency.
> CORDATUS Oh, no, these are too nice observations.
> MITIS They are such as must be received, by your favour, or it cannot be authentic.
> CORDATUS Troth, I can discern no such necessity.
> MITIS No?
> CORDATUS No, I assure you, signor. If those laws you speak of had been delivered us *ab initio*, and in their present virtue and perfection, there had been some reason of obeying their powers. But 'tis extant that what we call comoedia was at first nothing but a simple and continued satire, sung by one only person . . .

This is a crucial passage in the play's *Induction*, since it provides a kind of metaliterary reading key: to Mitis's questions, who asks about the play to be performed, Cordatus responds with a critical judgement that is also, and above all, an attempt to orient the recipient towards a formal understanding. One should not expect a traditional comedy that conforms to Hellenistic-Roman grammar ("the Terentian manner"), but rather an attempt to recover the spirit of primitive comedy ("*Vetus Comoedia*"), which originates from a *non-dramatic monody* with satirical content ("that which we call comoedia was at first nothing but a simple and continued satire, *sung by one only person*"; emphasis mine). Jonson's intention, through the character of Cordatus, is to place his new proposal under the banner of a return to its more remote origins, which are outlined in

24 Martin 2014 (*Introduction* to *EMO* in CEWBJ Online).

a very interesting way – on the one hand with the technical term *Vetus Comoedia*,[25] on the other with a genealogical reconstruction of the technical innovations that lead from poetic satire to comic drama (details are provided by Cordatus in the lines following the quoted text: 243-55).

This passage is crucial to the understanding of Jonson's relationship with Aristophanes. Two details are particularly meaningful: firstly, its phrasing is predominantly *negative*. The point is *opposition* to the comedy of the Terentian tradition, not so much assimilation to Aristophanes. It is no coincidence that Aristophanes is evoked in 246 along with Cratinus and Eupolis (a quite significant association, as we shall see), and not as a prominent author, but as part of a broader genealogical succession. Not only that: conformity to this model, identified through the use of a technical term and an overview of literary history, is presented as vague ("somewhat"), not as total conformity to an *alternative* code. Secondly, it is worth noting that the passage speaks not of an author but of a genre ("*Vetus Comoedia*") – one that Jonson, like us, knew only from the Aristophanic *corpus* and fragments of indirect tradition, accessible to him presumably through Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* (it is worth noting, however, that Jonson's extant copy was published only in 1612: McPherson 1974, 27-8, no. 14). Also in *Discoveries*, as we have seen above, Jonson translates Daniel Heinsius's remarks on Aristophanes and the 'Old comedy' as part of a general commentary on Horace's *Ars poetica.* It is significant that in both cases Jonson makes use of terminology that is drawn not so much from the ancient comic texts as from the paratexts and metatexts that have accompanied them throughout the tradition (Evantius, Donatus and their modern epigones). Which means that in this passage Jonson has in mind, rather than specific literary texts, a series of general connotations, which do not cite texts but *describe the genre* in metadiscursive terms. Jonson, in short, does not take up Aristophanes' *corpus* directly, but *a discourse on the comic form mediated by pages of literary criticism.*

25 It may be useful to recall that in the technical lexicon in Jonson's time the term Old Comedy is also used to refer to older phases of English comedy: see e.g. Nashe 1958, 1.100.

This is why I would propose to understand the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship entailed in the 'comical satires' of 1598-1601 as a form of *metatextual* appropriation. This would be a particular case of that second-degree appropriation in which one author recalls another through the mediation of a third, even when the older author is not known to the more modern – a bit like Dante's Homer, whose presence in the *Commedia* is guaranteed by the mediation of Virgilian poetry.[26] In that case, moreover, the mediating text has a hypertextual relationship with its hypotext (the *Aeneid*, as is well known, is a hypertextual reworking of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*), while in the Jonson/Aristophanes relationship the appropriation relies on texts which are already in a metatextual relationship with the source text (such as the various treatises that Jonson evidently knew well from having studied them in the course of his training. In a later stage of his life Jonson may even have profited from this knowledge for the lectures he possibly gave at Gresham College – the impressive amount of these readings is attested in *Discoveries*).[27] The figure of Horace offers a double possibility of mediation, insofar as works such as the *Ars poetica* (which Jonson translated in 1604, although a revised version of it was posthumously printed by John Benson in 1640 and in F2: Burrow in CEWBJ Online, *Introduction*), but also various passages from the *Satires*, stand both as metatexts relating to literary history and as hypertexts of specific models.

These clarifications, which seem to me to be of particular importance, are generally neglected by studies that aim to account for the imitative relationship in terms of concrete intertextual references. This is as true of what I would consider the weaker studies (such as Gum's monograph, which spends an entire chapter analysing mostly implausible parallels: 1969, 132-86) as it is of the more convincing ones, such as the pages devoted to the problem by Helen Ostovich (2001, 18-28). Even in the latter case, however,

26 It is well known that in *Discoveries* Jonson also recommends an imitation that can also include literary models of its own models: CEWBJ, 7.582. The issue is discussed in Burrow 2019, 245-7.

27 I am following here C.J. Sisson's suggestive hypothesis (1952) that *Discoveries* originates from notes made by Jonson for his lectures as deputy Professor of Rhetoric at Gresham College. More on this topic in Hutson 2014.

the terms of comparison, which are described and analysed with great acuity, are not considered within a more complex system of influence. This leads to an inadequate appreciation of the fact that Jonson's Aristophanism at this stage is not so much dependent on Aristophanes as on an *image of* Aristophanes that Jonson derives from other authors, primarily Horace. The association of Aristophanes with Eupolis and Cratinus, in fact, is a clue that reveals the passage's dependence on the famous lines of Horace's satire 1.4 (1-5), from which the idea that the *comoedia prisca* is the proper antecedent of the Roman satire also comes:[28]

> Eupolis atque Cratinus Aristophanesque poetae
> atque alii, quorum comoedia prisca virorum est,
> siquis erat dignus describi, quod malus ac fur,
> quod moechus foret aut sicarius aut alioqui
> famosus, multa cum libertate notabant.

The most immediate confirmation of this derivation can be found in a passage from the *Apologetical Dialogue* in the appendix to *Poetaster* (1601), in which Jonson clearly reveals his inclination to equate ancient comedy with satire:

> POLYPOSUS Oh, but they lay particular imputations –
> AUTHOR As what?
> POLYPOSUS That all your writing is mere railing.
> AUTHOR Ha! If all the salt in the old comedy
> Should be so censured, or the sharper wit
> Of the bold satire termed scolding rage,

28 Also of great interest is what Heinsius, in his *Liber de satyra Horatiana* (1612, 39-40), quotes from Isidore, who considers comedy and satire two different historical stages of the same literary genre: "Duo sunt genera comicorum, id est, veteres et novi. Veteres, qui et ioco ridiculares extiterunt: ut Plautus, Actius, Terentius. Novi qui et Satyrici, a quibus generaliter vitia carpuntur, ut Flaccus, Persius, Iuvenalis". Of course, Heinsius criticises Isidore's errors ("homo imperitus", 40), but explains them with the structural similarity of comedy and satire ("Hoc autem [scil. Isidore's error] nos docet Veterem, quae sic revera fuit dicta, in plerisque convenisse cum Satyrica, Comoediam. Immo prope eandem fuisse. Nam et numeros, et compositionem, et ex parte formam eius expresserat Lucilius": ibid.), a similarity confirmed by the Horatian passage quoted above.

> What age could then compare with those for buffons?
> What should be said of Aristophanes?
> Persius? Or Juvenal? Whose names we now
> So glorify in schools, at least pretend it.
>
> (*Poet.* in CEWBJ Online, 171-9)

In responding to the criticism levelled at his dramatic experiments, the author invokes the principle of authority and places his own creations under the aegis of two ancient art forms, which are treated as disjunct ("*or* the sharper wit of the bold satire"; emphasis mine) but parallel and, as far as "railing" is concerned, equivalent: ancient Attic comedy and Roman satire. Undoubtedly, Jonson assumes Horace's historical reconstruction in *Serm.* 1.4, which makes Lucilius' work derive directly from Aristophanes, accompanied by Eupolis and Cratinus. It is interesting, therefore, that in citing the most significant exponents of both literary genres, Jonson mentions Aristophanes in an atypical triad of poets that associates him with Persius and Juvenal, thus confirming the idea that the ultimate forefather of his 'comical satires' could only be an author of 'dramatic satires'. Even more interesting is the fact that the glory of these ancient authors is explicitly attributed to school readings – a hint to the role of education in establishing the classical canon. The postulate "at least pretend it" ironically scorns the perfunctory deference of teachers and students to classical authors, more celebrated than read or understood. If perused carefully, however, their works would show how faithful Jonson's plays are to their ancient models – yet another indirect indication of the playwright's conviction that he is their true heir.

Aristophanes as a Satirical Poet

In assimilating Aristophanes to satire, i.e. in considering Horace's partial and tendentious genealogical reconstruction to be reliable, Jonson is by no means alone, let alone against the tide: a quick review of critical texts from the English Renaissance shows that Aristophanes is understood in very general terms in a narrow canon of preserved

Greek poets spanning different literary forms;[29] or as a significant junction in chronologies relating to the history of comedy;[30] or finally as a forerunner of satirical poetry, in contexts that are clearly dependent on the genealogy presented in Horace's satires.

A chronologically relevant testimony is in William Webbe's *A Discourse of English Poetrie* (London 1586; reprinted in Smith 1904, 1.226ff.), from which we infer Horace's relevance to similar overviews:

> After the time of Homer there began the firste Comedy wryters, who compyled theyr workes in a better stile, which continued not long before it was expelled by penalty, for scoffing too broade at mens manners, and the priuie reuengements which the Poets vsed against their ill wyllers. Among these was Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes; but afterward the order of thys wryting Comedies was reformed and made more plausible: then wrytte Plato (Comicus), Menander, and I knowe not who more. (Webbe [1586] in Smith 1904, 1.236)

The triad Aristophanes, Eupolis, and Cratinus is in fact taken from *Serm.* 1.4.1, while the reference to the censorship suffered by ancient comedy for its excessive freedom of expression recalls *Ars* 283-4. Both aspects, in short, concur in attributing to *vetus comoedia* the role of precursor of Roman satire. The connection is even more explicit in the canons that Georgius Fabricius of Chemnitz draws from the *Ars poetica*, and which Webbe finds so useful that he proposes a translation at the end of his treatise (Smith 1904, 1.290-8). Chapter 23 reads:

> Some Artes doo increase; some doo decay by a certayne naturall course. The olde manner of Commedies decayde by reason of slaundering which therein they vsed against many, for which there was a penaltie appointed, least their bitternes should proceede to farre: *In place of which, among the Latines, came the Satyres.*

29 E.g. in R. Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, London, 1570, Book 2 ("Of Imitation"), quoted from Smith 1904, 1.23 (Aristophanes is associated, among Greek authors, with Sophocles, Homer and Pindar); see also 29.

30 See e.g. G. Harvey, *Letter to Edmund Spenser* IV, in Smith 1904, 1.116.

> The auncient Authors of Comedies were Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes; of the middle sorte Plato Comicus; of the last kinde Menander, which continued and was accounted the most famous. (295; emphasis mine)

As can be seen, the discourse on Aristophanes is in total conformity with the genealogy of Roman satire that Horace proposes, which ultimately makes Aristophanes the forerunner of Latin satirical poetry and its modern successors. It is no coincidence that, even when Jonson associates Aristophanes with other comic poets, as in the Shakespeare memorial poem prefixed to the *First Folio of* 1623,[31] Aristophanes is qualified as "tart", i.e. capable of the biting and aggressive mockery proper to satire, while Terence and Plautus deserve the epithets of "neat" and "witty" respectively, emphasising qualities of style and humour.

In general, it is quite clear that the English Renaissance, and Ben Jonson in particular, have a rather selective image of ancient comedy, which marginalises many thematic and dramaturgical peculiarities of Aristophanes' texts in order to focus on the aspect of personal satire, and especially on satire of manners. But the latter, as any reader of Aristophanes knows, is far removed from the practice of ὀνομαστὶ κωμῳδεῖν characteristic of ancient Attic comedy. The tendentiousness of these historical reconstructions clearly reveals the fact that Aristophanes' profile in sixteenth-century England (and in Jonson's view, as a special case in point) is primarily a metatextual aftermath, i.e. an image constructed from partial and already simplified visions, which are disseminated through the mediation of historical syntheses and critical metatexts.

This is particularly evident in another place in Webbe's treatise, where the reference to Aristophanes does not seem to rely on any direct knowledge of the texts:

> But not long after (as one delight draweth another) they began to inuent new persons and newe matters for their Comedies, such

31 "The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes, / Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please, / But antiquated and deserted lie, / As they were not of nature's family" (*To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Master William Shakespeare, And What He Hath Left Us*, 51-4).

> as the deuisers thought meetest to please the peoples vaine: And from these they beganne to present in shapes of men the natures of vertues and vices, and affections and quallities incident to men, as Justice, Temperance, Pouerty, Wrathe, Vengeaunce, Sloth, Valiantnes, and such like, as may appeare by the auncient workes of Aristophanes. (Webbe [1586] in Smith 1904, 1.248-9)

Indeed, much can be said about Aristophanes' comedy, but surely not that its main trait was the moralistic, stereotypical portrayal of characters that is extolled in this passage. The personification of Poverty may well allude to the character of Penia in *Ploutos* (which is Aristophanes' latest extant comedy, in many respects bearing the mark of a new dramaturgical model), but the other figures are clearly derived from Christian morality and a post-Aristophanic worldview. Here, once again, Aristophanes is only mentioned to put a name on a literary form: he is nothing more than a leading figure in literary history to whom the glory of comedy as a dramatic genre is attributed.

This latter aspect explains, among other things, Jonson's tendency to assimilate himself to his predecessor, not unlike his repeated efforts to establish himself as the new Horace. This is clear, for instance, when metatheatrical utterances of Aristophanes' *parabaseis* are hinted at in Jonson's 'inductions' or 'intermeans': even if in thematic aspects and enunciative posture they primarily recall Terence's prologues, the presence of Aristophanes in some of the paratexts of Jonson's comedies is undeniable, particularly those in which intertextuality is enhanced by a suggestion of personal identification. This is the case, for instance, in *The New Inn*, where the author's recriminations in the first *Epilogue* (4-7) closely recall the *haploun* of the first *parabasis* of *Clouds* (521-6).[32] But it is no coincidence that this is one of Jonson's last plays, decades after that passage in *Every Man Out* which for centuries has been taken as evidence of his early, systematic and extensive familiarity with Aristophanes.

The core of the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship can thus be seen as the result of a complex dynamic, involving scholarly misunderstanding and wishful thinking. Both of these misleading

32 On this analogy, see Gum 1969, 181, who is certainly right in drawing attention to this parallel. Jonson's debt to the parabasis of Aristophanes' *Clouds* is explored in depth by Hubbard 1991, 231-40.

factors can be traced back to Jonson himself, and his desire to stand out as a new Aristophanes in the eyes of his contemporaries. It is not surprising, therefore, that this is precisely what happened: the epideictic quirk of celebrating a contemporary talent as the embodiment of an ancient model is one of the most common *topoi* of poetic praise. Jonson himself is praised for having renewed the glories of ancient poetry and been worthy of his predecessors.[33] Indeed, it seems remarkable to me that in 1603, having only the set of 'comical satires' behind him, Jonson was celebrated as "our English Horace",[34] while in the following years the praise expanded to make the playwright the rightful heir to the theatrical glories of the ancients: in 1607, Edmund Bolton speaks of Jonson as an explorer who opened the doors of Greek and Latin drama to the English theatre,[35] while in the epigraph accompanying the portrait prefixed to the first folio edition of Jonson's works (1616), the poet is described as "scenae veteris novator audax".[36] Consider, moreover, what Jonson himself writes in the above-mentioned Shakespeare memorial poem: the genius of the celebrated poet eclipses that of his ancient predecessors, who in this case are evoked as a textbook triad (Aristophanes, Terence and Plautus). This is exactly what

33 Richard James, about 1625. Ad Doct. Franciscum James: "Credo si reviviscerent jam patres illi [Tertullianus, Cyprianus, Chrysostomus] libenter spectarent ingenium foecundissimi Beniamini Jonsoni, quem ut Thuanus de Petro Ronsardo censeo cum omni antiquitate comparandum si compta et plena sensibus poemata ejus et scenica spectemus" (Bradley 1922, 138).

34 Henry Chettle, *England's Mourning Garment; worn here by plain Shepherds, in Memory of their sacred Mistress, Elizabeth; Queen of Virtue, while she lived; and Theme of Sorrow, being dead*, London 1603 (Bradley, Adams 1922, 34-5).

35 Edmund Bolton, 1607. *Ad Utramque Academiam, De Benjamin lonsonio.* "Hic ille est primus, qui doctum drama Britannis, / Graiorum antiqua, et Latii monimenta theatri, / Tanquam explorator versans, foelicibus ausis / Praebebit: magnis coeptis, gemina astra, favete." Prefixed to Volpone, 1607, with the initials E. B. In the folio of 1616, the poem is signed E. Bolton]. In Bradley 1922, 56.

36 Ab[raham] Holl[and], 1616: "Lines beneath the engraved portrait prefixed to the 1616 (and 1640) folio of Jonson's *Workes.* The portrait seems also to have been printed and sold separately, since it has below it the statement 'Are to be Sould by William Peake.'" (Bradley 1922, 94).

happens in Jonson's case, who in the celebrative poems introducing his printed works is equated not only with Horace or Plautus – but even with Plato![37]

In scene 4.2 of *Lingua*, an academic play attributed to Thomas Tomkis and dated about 1602,[38] chronologically very close, therefore, to the texts most relevant to our argument, the antonomastic figure of the comic poet, Comedus, is associated with his "great grandfather Aristophanes", who, as being too "satirical", is considered deviant from the most typical form of the genre:

> Phantastes Your ears will teach you presently, for now he is coming. That fellow in the bays, methinks I should have known him; O, 'tis Comedus, 'tis so; but he has become nowadays something humorous, and too-too satirical up and down, like his great grandfather Aristophanes. (*OEP*, IX, 416)

The Comedus who appears in the passage is usually identified with Jonson on the basis of the hypothesis of J.F. Bradley and J.Q. Adams, who include him (albeit with some caution: "The passage quoted *seems to be* directed at Jonson": Bradley and Adams 1922, 33; emphasis mine) in their list of allusions to the poet. A few things should also be noted: in the entire collection of Dodsley and Hazlitt's *Old English Plays* (4th ed. 1874-1875), Aristophanes is mentioned only two times, both in this play. The first is in the verses above, the other in a passage in 2.4, where Memoria evokes the first performance of *Clouds* and recalls that Socrates was among the spectators and had reacted with meekness in the face of the derision he suffered:

37 John Selden, 1616. Ad V. Cl. Ben Jonsonium, Carmen Protrepticon. [Prefixed to *The Workes of Benjamin Jonson*, 1616.] "In mentem subiit Stolonis illud, / Lingua Pieridas fuisse Plauti / Usuras, Ciceronis atque dictum, / Saturno genitum phrasi Platonis, / Musae si Latio, Jovisque Athenis / Dixissent. Fore jam sed hunc et illas / Jonsoni numeros puto loquutos, / Anglis si fuerint utrique fati." (Bradley 1922, 95).

38 The first, anonymous edition is from 1607 (*Lingua, or The Combat of the Tongue and the Five Senses for Superiority*, London: Eld), but a reference in 4.7 suggests that the first performance predates the death of Elizabeth I. More about Tomkis in Ellerbeck 2009. I quote from Dodsley and Hazlitt's collection (*OEP*, IX, 331ff.).

> Communis Sensus O times! O manners! when boys give to traduce men in authority; was ever such an attempt heard?
> Memoria I remember there was: for, to say the truth, at my last being at Athens – it is now, let me see, about one thousand eight hundred years ago – I was at a comedy of Aristophanes' making. I shall never forget it; the arch-governor of Athens took me by the hand, and placed me; and there, I say, I saw Socrates abused most grossly, himself being then a present spectator: I remember he sat full against me, and did not so much as show the least countenance of discontent.
> Communis Sensus In those days it was lawful; but now the abuse of such liberty is insufferable.
> (*Lingua* 2.4, in *OEP*, 9.376-7)

From this detail two elements of considerable weight can be inferred: at the end of Elizabeth's reign Aristophanes is still known more to the academic reader than to the general public, and even then the information about him seems to be mediated by other texts, rather than derived from direct reading. In the allusion to *Clouds*, Plato's mediation is obvious: the *Apology of Socrates* informs us that Socrates reacted with benevolent tolerance to the theatrical mockery he suffered in 423. In the *Lingua* passage, moreover, Aristophanes' profile conforms to the image of the Old Comedy as the forerunner of satire, an image that goes back at least to Horace, as we have seen above, and that is received as exhaustive and unproblematic in the most important theoretical and historical-literary texts of those years. Finally, it should be noted that, even in the passage from Heinsius translated by Jonson in *Discoveries* and commented on above, the mention of Aristophanes seems to be antonomastically associated with his treatment of Socrates. This linkage, moreover, seems to be a long-lasting phenomenon: the *Clouds* were the first and most popular of Aristophanes' comedies included in the Byzantine triad, and even the didactic interest they aroused was primarily due to the presence of Socrates among its characters. Similarly, Plato's judgement on that play, attributed to Socrates in the *Apology*, seems to have survived to our own time, fuelling the scorn of which Aristophanes has been the object in every age, an accomplice in the downfall of the "most virtuous of the Greeks" (Voltaire 1767, 40).

Imitating an Imitation

These observations allow us to formulate a hypothesis: the idea that Jonson seems to have of Aristophanes reflects a widespread, generic and somewhat superficial view of the comic poet as the *princeps* (chronologically, Horace being the actual summit) of satirical poetry. Given the effort that Jonson makes to realise the project of an English poetry in direct continuation of the ancient tradition (as well as, beyond the classics, of Italian and French predecessors),[39] flaunted imitation unveils the effort to accredit himself in the eyes of his cultured contemporaries with a precise poetic investiture. Aristophanes comes into play because of the prestige enjoyed by the *corpus* of his comedies, which, however, beyond specialist studies, appears to have been assimilated rather superficially throughout Europe at the end of the sixteenth century. The image that Jonson wants to project of himself as a new Aristophanes, i.e. as an author of 'comical satires', is thus based on a *preconception* of ancient Attic comedy that was widely shared in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century culture, and in my opinion it is this preconception that forms the core of Jonson's later reception as an 'Aristophanesque' author up to the present day.

One example suffices to prove the existence of such an 'Aristophanic bias': a passage from an eighteenth-century study considered to be the pioneer in the investigation of the relationship between Jonson and Aristophanes, John Upton's *Remarks on Three Plays of Benjamin Jonson* (1749). In the short treatise, which collects his reading notes to the second *Folio* of Jonson's plays (in the 1640 reprint), Upton clarifies obscure passages, in a linguistic and intertextual sense. In one example (1749, 97), Aristophanes is cited as a parallel to a vernacular expression of *The Alchemist* (1.1.1), "I fart at thee", which according to Upton reflects an expression common to both Greek and Latin:

> The reader too, perhaps, is to be informed, that our learned comedian does not deal in vulgar English expressions, but in vulgar Attic or Roman expressions. "– I fart at thee," πέρδω [*sic*] σου, *oppedo tibi.* Aristophanes in *Plut.* v. 618, τῆς πενίας καταπαρδεῖν, *paupertati*

39 See the passage from James quoted above, n3.

> *oppedere.* Horace, the polite Horace, did not think himself too delicate for this phrase: *'Vin' tu curtis Iudaeis oppedere'* L.I.S. IX v. 70.

Upton's note is not entirely accurate: the word πέρδω does not exist (its present form is πέρδομαι, in the middle diathesis); in particular, the genitive regency is only possible in the compound καταπέρδομαι (in composition with προσ- the verb holds the dative; the simple form has only absolute use). It is therefore clear that Upton, who also reads and quotes Aristophanes in the original text, knows Greek less well than Latin.[40] An inaccurate but honest note: Upton intends here to argue that Jonson echoes expressions from the classical languages, without implying a direct quotation from Aristophanes. This partly conflicts with the statement of principle on which his essay is built – that annotating Jonson is necessary because of his constant intertextual references to ancient texts ("Jonson has few passages that want correction, but many that want explanation: which is, in a great measure, owing to his allusions, and to his translations of ancient authors": Upton 1749, Pref. 5). Upton might at most imply that such an expression was already present in English usage, even if for obvious reasons not attested in literary texts;[41] but we understand that for him the point is to show that even in his most vulgar verses, when he only aims apparently at reproducing the language of contemporary rascals, Jonson does not in fact dispense with the usual, conscious, ultimately commendable imitation of the ancients.[42]

40 Perhaps the fact that even the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften's *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* refers to a non-existent verb καταπέρδειν under the heading *oppēdo* is sufficient to excuse Upton's minor blunder.

41 The *OED* records the phraseological use of the verb as 'fart against' while there are no attestations of 'fart at' before *Alch.* 1.1.1. It cannot be entirely ruled out, however, that such an expression in the vernacular register was already in use before Jonson, and that only with *The Alchemist* does it make its way into the written language (Barish 1960 provides still today the most reliable account of the shaping of Jonson's comic style). Also according to *EEBO*, there are no attestations of 'fart at' before Jonson; however, in James Howell's *Lexikon* (1659) "fart at you" is given as a translation of a proverbial expression, which might imply a wider diffusion as a popular idiom.

42 It is worth mentioning that one of the sharpest and most intelligent

Now, two centuries later, Upton's honest commentary becomes, in the leading study of Aristophanes' influence on Jonson (Gum 1969, 165), a "verbal parallel" linking *Alch.* 1.1.1 and Ar. *Pl.* 618. Why is it, one wonders, that the parallel does not affect the other passages where the verb is attested, *Pax* 547 (κατέπαρδεν ἄρτι τοῦ ξιφουργοῦ 'κεινουί) or *Ve.* 618 (βρωμησάμενος τοῦ σοῦ δίνου μέγα καὶ στράτιον κατέπαρδεν)? The answer is simple: Upton only quotes the *Wealth* passage, and Gum is directly dependent on Upton, what's more in forcing its implications – a common problem of Gum's study, which often sees in random, polygenetic or mediated echoes indications of a direct quote from Aristophanes. On the other hand, it is true that this very passage, even without assuming that the expression 'fart at' was usual in English speech in the vernacular register, disproves Gum's assumption, and confirms Horace's priority in the system of Jonsonian intertextual references: the only place where the verb is attested in Latin, Horace's *Serm.* 1.9.70, is precisely, as we have seen, one of the texts most familiar to Jonson, at the basis of the extensive reworking of *Poetaster* 3.1.[43] The expression 'fart at thee' is thus a lexical clue that helps to clarify both the dynamics of intertextual reworking and the tendentiousness of Jonsonian studies: on the one hand, Aristophanes is undoubtedly present as a literary patron, but peeps out from behind another model, which is much closer and more influential: Horace's satiric poetry (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 113ff.); on the other, we realise to what extent the desire to emphasise Jonson's direct dependence on Aristophanes

'sons of Ben', Thomas Randolph, was acutely aware that Jonson's literary excellence depended not so much on his close commerce with the heights of the literary sublime, as on his ability to explore reality in all its manifestations, even the basest and most vulgar (*An Answer to Master Ben. Jonson's Ode, to persuade him not to leave the Stage*, in Bradley, Adams 1922, 143-5, in part. 145: "And though thou well canst sing / The glories of thy king, / And on the wings of verse his chariot bear / To heaven, and fix it there; / Yet let thy muse as well some raptures raise / To please him as to praise, / I would not have thee choose / Only a treble muse; / But have this envious, ignorant age to know: / Thou, that canst sing so high, canst reach as low.").

43 The centrality of Horace, particularly of his *Satires*, in Jonson's poetics was recognised early on in Jonsonian studies (Reinsch 1899); its relevance in the 'comical satires' is explored in depth by Armes 1974. For a recent reconsideration of the problem see Moul 2010, in particular 142-7.

prevents us from grasping the complex and triangular character of the imitative paths Jonson treads.

The Jonson-Horace-Aristophanes line is in fact configured, at least in the first phase of Jonson's comic production, as an imitative plexus in which the relationship between the English and Greek poles depends on the mediation of the Latin poet.[44] This hypothesis – here perhaps its most interesting aspect – entails two meaningful corollaries: on the one hand, when speaking of Aristophanes, Jonson does not necessarily refer to the Attic poet he had read first-hand. What he actually has in mind is *Horace's* Aristophanes, both from *Satire* 1.4 and the *Ars poetica* – that is, a partial Aristophanes, adapted to a view of literary history that tends to emphasise only some aspects (the *vis satirica*) to the detriment of many other, no less distinctive, features. On the other hand, less obviously but no less importantly, Horace was not an utterly unreliable mediator of Aristophanes: as a satiric poet, he consistently tries to place himself in the groove of Attic Old Comedy. Horace takes up Aristophanes in a thousand little ways (Ferris-Hill 2015), which Jonson in turn makes his own perhaps without even realising how Aristophanesque the Horace he is imitating is.[45] The congruity between Jonson and Aristophanes thus derives from the assimilative effort that the Horace of the *Satires* makes towards the champion of Attic Old Comedy. This is precisely what can be inferred from the relationship between Horace's *oppedere* and Jonson's 'fart at': the Latin verb is an Horatian *hapax* attested only in *Serm.* 1.9.70, and thus stands as an immediate intertextual source of the passage in *The Alchemist.* But its Greek equivalent appears linked as a kind of *senhal* to the language of Aristophanic comedy: καταπέρδομαι is in fact attested only in Aristophanes (three times) and (once) in a poet of Middle Comedy, Epicrates (PCG fr. 10: Kassel, Austin 1986, 5.162). However,

44 Grilli and Morosi 2023, 33. Horace's theory that Roman satire is largely derived from ancient Attic comedy is taken up and intelligently explored by Jennifer L. Ferriss-Hill (2015, 3-23), whose discussion obviously begins with the analysis of Hor. *Serm.* 1.4.1-5 and the other mention of *prisca comoedia* in *Serm.* 1.10.14-7.

45 For a comparison between *Poet.* 3.1 and Hor. *Serm.* 1.9 see Grilli and Morosi 2023, 108-12, especially n118.

Epicrates' fragment is such a blatant parody of *Clouds*[46] that it indirectly confirms a kind of commonplace association between (κατα)πέρδομαι and the Aristophanic *corpus*.[47]

Assuming a mediated, triangular[48] relationship between Jonson and Aristophanes is a good starting point to finally reconsider some tenets of Jonsonian scholarship. Some views asserting Aristophanes' decisive character for Jonson's elaboration of a new form of comedy, for instance, could be toned down, or at least articulated more precisely. Let us consider once again Anne Barton's view of the question:

> Jonson had not been really successful in *Every Man Out of His Humour*, *Cynthia's Revels* or *Poetaster* at replacing the well-tried organisational principles of contemporary comedy with any

46 In particular, the expression κύψαντες . . . διεφρόντιζον (21-2) recalls οἱ σφόδρ' ἐγκεκυφότες (Ar. *Nub.* 191); but it is the analogy of the situations that certifies the intertextual connection: Epicrates, just as – long before him – Aristophanes in *Clouds*, mocks the futility of philosophical discussions about nature. In Epicrates' fragment, the young disciples argue at length, and with inconsistent results, about the classification of the gourd; in *Clouds*, as we know, Socrates' knowledge teaches how to distinguish between the genders of nouns and many other things, in a way which is represented as uselessly analytical and full of contradictions.

47 Apart from this passage from Epicrates, καταπέρδομαι is attested only in Ar. *Pax.* 547; *Ve.* 618; Pl. 618. The basic form of the verb, on the other hand, is also attested mostly in comedy (Eup. PCG frr. 7.10; 92.10; 5.99; Pherecr. PCG 88.1; 12.1); Aristophanes thus remains the main witness to its use in the colloquial registers of fifth-century Attic (*Eq.* 639; *Nu.* 9 and 392; *Ve.* 1177 and 1305; *Pax* 335; *Ra.* 10; *Ec.* 78 and 464; *Pl.* 699). It should also be considered that Jonson's obsession with 'visceral' imagery creates the preconditions for selective assimilation – even on a quick or partial reading of the texts, it is likely that Jonson was as impressed by Aristophanes' scatological vividness as he was by the scatological or sexual vulgarities of the Latin epigram. On the problem see Boehrer 1997, in part. 176ff.

48 This is not the place to systematically explore the contribution that René Girard's theory of mimetic desire (1961) can make to the study of imitative practices in Renaissance literature, and in Jonson's theatre in particular. I addressed this issue in the paper "The Flaunting of Influence: Glamorous Models and the Liberty of Creation" I presented at the second PRIN conference at the University of Verona (*Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama*, Jan 10-11, 2023).

> effective dramatic, as opposed to literary, structure. From this impasse he was rescued by Aristophanes. (Barton 1984, 114)

Barton's interpretation is reasonable, straightforward and very suggestive. In my opinion, however, it is somewhat misleading, and depends more on the way the question is set (and possibly the scholar's literary views) than on a careful analysis of the evidence. Barton argues that Jonson's effort to go beyond the "Terentian manner" of *The Case Is Altered* leads him to pen some plays which were not "really successful" in their "dramatic . . . structure". This "impasse" is overcome, in her opinion, through an imitation of Aristophanic dramaturgy. This view is not entirely accurate: the *Induction* to *EMO* shows clearly that Jonson thought of his 'comical satires' as an Aristophanic experiment; *that* is the moment of his career when he is most conscious of his link to his Attic forefather. On the other hand, the relevance of Aristophanes in the genesis of later plays such as *Volpone,* which Barton strongly affirms, seems in fact much less cogent once one discovers, for instance, that the main theme of that play (the social plight of the *heredipetae*) is in no way attested in Aristophanes; on the contrary, that same theme has an almost obsessive relevance in one of Jonson's most prised Greek writers, Lucian, who targets it ironically in many of his works.[49] Patently, in conceiving and elaborating a dramatic text Jonson took great account of *all* the authors most familiar to him, indifferent

49 On Lucian's crucial role in Jonson's poetics see Duncan 1979 and Miola 2019. In relation to the theme of the quest for inheritance, it is significant to observe how in Aristophanes it is invariably traced back to a direct, interpersonal dialectic of power. In *Wasps*, for instance, the old Philocleon deludes himself that he can inherit the patrimony that his son controls, and that he can thus free the young *aulos*-player and make her his concubine (Ar. *Ve*. 1351-8); in *Birds*, on the other hand, a fleeting reference to inheritance is put into the mouth of the Parricide, who states that he wants to kill his father in order to πάντ' ἔχειν (Ar. *Av*. 1352). In both cases, it is clear that the desire for money is not so much a matter of material greed, as of a desire for self-assertion in a power relationship. The perspective changes completely in the *nea*, where the *heredipeta* finally appears in the form of a miserly man eager to take possession of goods to which he is not entitled (a good example is provided by the miser Smicrines in Menander's *Aspis*).

to their theatrical dimension.[50] This goes to say that we should not think of an 'Aristophanic dramaturgy' as a definite feature directly taken over by Jonson. His relationship with his comic predecessor is much more elusive and complex: it is shaped first by Horace's view of Old Attic Comedy as satire, and then resurfaces as occasional loans and allusions throughout his playwrighting career. Scholarly emphasis on the 'Aristophanic model' reflects rather a kind of *Vorurteil* (Gadamer 1960) aiming to stress Jonson's debt to the Greek theatrical canon, but in so doing underestimates the eclecticism of the poet's references, and the real hierarchy of his personal repertoire.

On a point of logic, the weakest point of Barton's 1984 reasoning is perhaps its binary structure: since – she seems to assume – antiquity has handed down two different models of comic drama, departing from one (Hellenistic-Roman comedy) *necessarily* implies falling back on the other (Attic Old Comedy). In fact, Jonson's choice must not be reduced to just two options: going beyond Plautus and Terence does not mean replacing consistently a traditional dramatic structure with a different one. This is shown by the different transtextual presence of both models, respectively in Jonson's first comedic endeavor and in his later plays. In *The Case Is Altered* (1597) Jonson still conforms to the practice of imitation common in European sixteenth-century comedy, hypertextually contaminating the plot of Plautus' *Captivi* and *Aulularia* and closely reworking passages of both plays. The dependence on a precise dramaturgical model could not be more evident. This is not the case with Aristophanes, whose influence, both in Jonson's 'comical satires' of 1598-1601 and in his later plays, is never a matter of systematic hypertextual reworking and quite rarely of direct intertextual allusion.

Taking Aristophanes as a model, then, implies a quite different practice of imitation. In his first dramatic endeavours, which are the main focus of this study, Jonson's inspiration seems indeed to go back to Attic Old Comedy, but only through a second-degree

50 It is not to be overlooked, however, that inheritance hunters are insistently scorned in Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, a text blending satire and dialogic form.

imitation of Aristophanes; his comical satires do not presuppose Aristophanic texts, but only an *idea* of Aristophanes he inferred from both various metatexts and the 'Aristophanic' works of his favourite model, Horace. Apparently, this 'metatextual appropriation' is a specific feature of the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship: as a matter of fact, the 'comical satires' brim with imitative passages, that is with translations, citations, intertextual reworking of ancient authors – except that none of these models is ever Aristophanes: Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Martial, Juvenal, Lucian, Libanius and others are clearly recognisable in the dramatic structures, and in the frequent intertextual allusions,[51] while Aristophanes is only explicitly mentioned in the metadiscursive sections. This has much to do, as I have tried to show, with Jonson's small familiarity with and peculiar view of Aristophanes: whereas for Lucian or Latin poetry, especially satirical poetry, we can be sure that Jonson had a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the *texts*,[52] Aristophanes seems to be reduced to the abstract model of a literary form. My main point, then, and main adjustment of Barton's hypothesis, is that in his early career Jonson did not go beyond Horace's conception of Attic Old Comedy as a direct ancestor or Roman satire, a view taken up more or less consciously in all sixteenth-century literary historiography. It is true, then, that after 1597 Jonson did try to replace Terence with Aristophanes, except that his Aristophanes, at least in his early career as a playwright, was nothing more than a metatextual appropriation, a testament to his knowledge of and love for Roman satiric poetry more than Greek comic drama.

Abbreviations

CEWBJ = Bevington, David (gen. ed.). 2012. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*. 7 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

51 A general reconsideration of the problem in Harrison 2023, which also emphasises the relationship with ancient comedy.

52 Duncan (1979) highlights the many places where Jonson is closely dependent on Lucian, especially in terms of dramatic invention and satirical cues.

CEWBJ Online = Butler, Martin (gen. ed.). 2014. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/ (Accessed May 14, 2023)

H&S = Herford & Simpson eds. 1925-1952. *Ben Jonson*, 11 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press.

LSJ = Liddell, Henry George and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., revised by Henry Stuart Jones and Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1940).

OED = *Oxford English Dictionary*

OEP = Robert Dodsley, William Carew Hazlitt eds. 1874-1875[4]. *A Select Collection of Old English Plays*. 11 vols. London: Reeves and Turner.

PCG = Poetae Comici Graeci. Edited by R. Kassel and C. Austin. Berlin: De Gruyter.

TLG = *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*

TLL = *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*

Aristophanes' Works

Aristophanes' extant plays are quoted from Wilson's edition (Wilson, Nigel G. 2007. *Aristophanis Fabulae*. Oxonii: e Typographeo Clarendoniano. Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis).

Ach. = Acharnians
Av. = Birds
Ec. = Ecclesiazousae
Eq. = Knights
Lys. = Lysistrata
Nu. = Clouds
Pax = Peace
Pl. = Wealth
Ra. = Frogs
Th. = Thesmophoriazousae
Ve. = Wasps

Jonson's Works

All quotations from Jonson's works are from CEWBJ/ CEWBJ Online.

Alch. = The Alchemist

BF = *Bartholomew Fair*
Case = *The Case is Altered*
CR = *Cyntia's Revels*
DA = *The Devil is an Ass*
Disc. = *Discoveries*
EMI = *Every Man in His Humour*
EMO = *Every Man Out of His Humour*
Ep. = *Epicoene*
NI = *The New Inn*
Poet. = *Poetaster*
SN = *The Staple of News*
Volp. = *Volpone*

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5

“Of gentle and ignoble, base and kings”: the Transformations of the Homeric Simile on the Early Modern English Stage

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Abstract

The simile is a fundamental element of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Praised by such early modern students of Homer as Jean de Sponde and George Chapman, the simile opens a window into a world beyond the battlefield, contrasting the day-to-day activities of housewives and reapers with those of the warriors. But can it be considered a mode of thought that goes beyond the epic narrative? Early modern drama on the Trojan War – George Peele’s *The Arraignment of Paris* (1584), Thomas Heywood’s *The Iron Age* (1632), James Shirley’s *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* (1659), Elkanah Settle’s *The Siege of Troy* (1707) – repeatedly juxtaposes common, non-heroic Greeks and Trojans with their canonical ‘betters’. Highlighting alternative patterns of behaviour, these comparisons help scrutinise the commended epic models and the widespread Renaissance practice of relying on such classical *exempla* for moral guidance. This paper probes whether it is productive to take these recurrent parallels as a response to the Homeric simile rather than as variations of the “servants” subplot; whether thinking with and through comparisons is something inherent to the Trojan myth, appearing independently in its various iterations; and, finally, whether this might provide a case study of how classical forms are unconsciously received alongside plots and characters.

Keywords: Homer; Chapman; Peele; Heywood; Shirley; Settle

Early Modern Drama on the Trojan War and the Reception of the Homeric Simile

Two armies, both alike in potency, stand on the battlefield. The poet sings:

> But as a spinster poor and just ye sometimes see strait-laced
> About the weighting of her web, who, careful, having charge
> For which she would provide some means, is loath to be too large
> In giving or in taking weight, but even with her hand
> Is doing with the weights and wool till both in just peise stand,
> So ev’nly stood it with these foes . . .
> (*Ils.* 12.426-31, corresponding to *Il.* 12.433-6)

In the marginalia to *The Iliads of Homer Prince of Poets* (1611), George Chapman, via whose translation we have just entered the world of the Trojan War, continuously flags up similes akin to this one, which likens opposing forces to weights in a spinster's hand. "Ingenious" and "inimitable", the similes are clearly a feature of the epic dear to the translator (Chapman 2017, 402, 37). So, next to the verses cited above, he writes: "A simile . . . in which comparing mightiest things with meanest illustrating the mightiest, both meeting in life's preservation and credit, our Homer is beyond comparison and admiration" (238). According to Chapman, Homer's talent here lies in juxtaposing the noble and the lofty with the low, the common, and the mundane; similes, cutting across social divides which separate the Greek and the Trojan heroes from, for instance, a labouring woman, are one of the poet's trademarks.

The myth of the Trojan War is a myth of comparisons. Starting with the three goddesses who contend for the status of the most beautiful, it depicts how gods and heroes alike enter battles, whether physical or rhetorical, to distinguish themselves. From individual strifes, often between those on the same side, to the war itself, the Trojan story abounds in such instances of social juxtapositions. This is what many of the epic similes reflect: the warriors in the above quote are first and foremost likened to each other, with the equilibrium of a closely fought battle, in turn, bringing about the comparison with the spinster. Both in action and in language, the myth of the Trojan War displays and debates similitude between people, events, phenomena. Recognising the importance of such juxtapositions, early modern English drama on the Trojan War, I suggest, appropriates the formal epic expression of the Trojan myth's comparative core: it transposes the Homeric simile from the page to the stage.

Considering a gathered corpus of the period's extant plays on this myth, one is struck by a single recurring feature: the appearance of Greek and Trojan commoners. Shepherds or urban dwellers, these characters have no claim to the illustrious pedigree of the myth's heroes, but are, nonetheless, a constant on the early modern stage. Nicholas Udall's *Thersytes* (acted 1537, published 1562), George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* (acted between 1581 and 1584, published 1584); William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

(probably acted circa 1602, published 1609), Thomas Heywood's *The Iron Age* (probably acted circa 1610, published 1632), James Shirley's *The Triumph of Beauty* (published in 1646) and *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* (published in 1659), John Banks' *The Destruction of Troy* (acted and published 1670), Elkanah Settle's *The Virgin Prophetess* (acted and published 1701) and *The Siege of Troy* (acted between 1698 and 1701, published 1703) – all contain at least one such non-heroic character, leaving George Granville's *Heroick Love* (published 1698) as the only exception to the rule.[1] What is more, in five out of the nine plays which feature the common folk, these lowly men and women are introduced specifically to act as living mirrors or doubles of their canonical 'betters'. Through their actions and, indeed, inaction, they not only offset the choices Trojan and Greek heroes make, but also highlight alternative paradigms or patterns of behaviour. When each of the five plays is explored in isolation, existing critical tools might seem sufficient to explain this dramatic juxtaposition of low- and high-born figures. In individual cases, one can, perhaps, talk of foil characters, thematic parallels, or "that old chestnut of Elizabethan drama, the double plot" (Moir 2010, 110), such as that of servants imitating their masters. However, when the plays are taken together, the above vocabulary becomes inadequate. Instead, as I hope to demonstrate, this recurring phenomenon of early modern drama on the Trojan War gains from being analysed via the Homeric simile. Simply put, the epic's comparisons between, in Chapman's words, the "mightiest" and the "meanest" are not forgotten when the myth is staged. By contrast, early modern playwrights embrace the impulse behind such similes for its potential to scrutinise the comparative urge that lies at the centre of this foundational mythical war of Western literary canon.

Humanists were clearly troubled by Homer's similes. Read against the more reserved and somber Virgil, to whose literary technique they were much more accustomed, Homer's stylistic choices could come across as frivolous and occasionally even vulgar. For instance, Petrarch, while ardently wishing to be charmed by the Greek poet's

1 According to the surviving "backstage plot", Henry Chettle and Thomas Dekker's lost *Troilus and Cressida* (1599) featured "beggars" (see *Lost Plays Database*).

language, cannot but remark on "the inappropriateness of the notorious simile in which Ajax is compared to an ass" (Sowerby 1997, 47). Even more anti-Homer is Julius Caesar Scaliger who, throughout his treatise on poetics, paints the Greek as the less decorous of the two. As Sanford Shepard points out, according to Scaliger, one of Homer's main faults is his lowly presentation of gods and mortals. For example, the way Andromache receives the news of Hector's death is "unsuited" to her status as a noblewoman, whereas the response of Euryalus' mother in the *Aeneid* is faultless (Shepard 1961, 328). Homer's epithets are "often cold, childish or out of place" ("saepe frigida aut puerila aut locis inepta"); how can, wonders Scaliger, a sleeping Achilles be still called πόδας ὠκύς (swift of foot) or a feasting Apollo ἀργυρότοξος (with silver bow) (Scaliger 2003, 4.94)? The similes are likewise inappropriate and debasing, as Scaliger ironically indicates: "Principio cum personae comparantur, earum status, mores, studia exprimenda, . . . vel ipsius Homeri doceamur auctoritate . . . Leoni in stabulis Diomedeum in acie. Muscis in stabulis circum mulctras Graecos et Troianos circum Sarpedonis cadaver. Et Aiacem cedentem fortissimo asino obstinatae lentitudinis" ("At first, when characters are compared, it is their status, nature, inclinations that should be expressed, . . . even as Homer's authority teaches us . . . To a lion in an enclosure, Diomedes in the line of battle. To flies in flocks around milkpails, the Greeks and the Trojans around the body of Sarpedon. And Ajax most mightily beaten to an ass of obstinate sluggishness"; 4.92, 94, translation mine).

Despite such detractors, Homeric similes also received growing support throughout the early modern period. Jean de Sponde's commentary on the *Iliad* (1583), laying the foundation for, among others, Chapman's translation, responds to Scaliger's and other humanists' preference for Virgil's diction by endorsing and defending Homer's. For example, the comparison between Athena's diversion of an arrow flying towards Menelaus and the mother sweeping a fly off a sleeping child's forehead (*Il.* 4.130ff.) is accompanied by the following remark: "Haec est una ex comparationibus humilibus, quas interdum Homerus usurpat ad res grauiores significandas" ("This is one of the lowly comparisons, which Homer occasionally employs to signify greater matters";

Sponde 2018, 1.550-2, translation mine). For Sponde, there is nothing unbecoming or tasteless about the epic picture being interrupted by phenomena that do not belong to it. By contrast, he describes such figures as elegant – "eleganti comparatione" (*Il.* 4.275, 15.410), "eleganter exprimit" (*Il.* 8.306); as admirable and almost inimitable – "admiranda et pene inimitabilis comparatio" (*Il.* 12. 421); as praiseworthy – "laudatur" (*Il.* 12.433) (1.564, 2.100, 604). Chapman, in turn, goes even further in his refutation of other scholars' criticism of Homer. In particular, he contends Sponde's conclusion that Homer's comparisons are subject to the law by which similes always limp on one foot, that is, that one can always discover an incongruity, in modern linguistic jargon, between the simile's tenor and vehicle. For Chapman, Homer's comparison of soldiers and bees – which kindles Sponde's remark on the figure's conventional deficiency – is perfect as it is, but it has, together with other "inimitable similes", suffered "incredible violence" in the hands of humanist writers (Chapman 2017, 73).

Embodying the Similes: the Trojan plays of Peele, Shirley, Heywood, Settle

Whether praised or condemned then, Homeric similes were certainly attended to in the early modern period. Depicting the peaceful, productive, and non-heroic activity of, for instance, reapers (*Il.* 11.63-6), anglers (*Il.* 16.388-92), or curriers (*Il.* 17.335-43), in the *Iliad*, it is largely the similes that introduce the commoners to the epic world. Simultaneously, by their very grammatical structure, the similes reinforce the sense that juxtapositions and comparisons form the nucleus of the Trojan myth. Without the Homeric similes of the "meanest" and the "mightiest", I suggest, it is impossible to fully comprehend the parallels that the Trojan plays, produced for extremely varied audiences over the period of almost a hundred and fifty years, draw between the myth's canonical high-born characters and the newly introduced low-born ones. Not dismissing the importance of the comic subplot which, stemming from the Vice figure of the late medieval morality plays, is undoubtedly a distinctive feature of Elizabethan theatre (see Bevington 1962), I

argue that the contact with the epic simile reconfigures this native dramatic structure. Having recognised this, one starts to discern that most early modern English plays on the Trojan War are, in fact, imbued with a peculiarly Homeric type of parallelism.

This dramatic doubling of base and royal Trojans appears for the first time in George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris*. The play shows Paris's relationship with Oenone, his judgement of the three goddesses, and his trial in front of Jupiter and other Olympian gods which is believed to be Peele's invention (see Benbow's introduction in Peele 1970). It also features a miserable lovestruck shepherd, Colin.[2] The corollary nature of this subplot is sometimes noted dismissively: "Colin's unrequited love for Thestylis and his accompanying deadly pain *simply* offer a parallel to the theme of Oenone's love and pain" (emphasis mine; Lesnick 1968, 164). Paige Martin Reynolds, however, demonstrates that the shepherd's affection and Thestylis' subsequent punishment – since the maid's rejection brings about Colin's death, Venus forces her to lovingly pursue "a foul croked Churle" (stage direction after line 721) – foreground the play's central themes of justice and partiality. While blaming Cupid for his "parciallitie" in having wounded Colin but not Thestylis, the goddess shows herself to have a "vested interest in Paris's abandonment of his beloved"; the fact that she overlooks Paris's treatment of Oenone discredits the Olympian trial which charges the prince with the very same fault (Reynolds 2010, 267).

Importantly, not only is the comparison between the two unhappy lovers openly acknowledged in Peele's text – the shepherd Thenot brings it up in his conversation with the lamenting Oenone – but also, when he does, it is, syntactically, a simile: "Poore Colin, that is ill for thee, that art as true in trust / To thy sweete smerte as to his Nymphe Paris hath bin unjust" (Peele 1970, 597-8). The juxtaposition can be seen as distinctly Homeric in its use of dissimilarity as the basis of the comparison. As David H. Porter convincingly shows, many of the *Iliad*'s similes are based around a "vast distance" or "yawning gulf" between the likened phenomena: a young man dying is compared to a blossoming flower heavy

2 On Colin as a literary heir to Colin Clout of Edmund Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) see Reid 2016.

from the rain (*Il.* 8.306-9); a bleeding wound is compared to the process of colouring an ivory ornament (*Il.* 4.139-47) (Porter 1972, 12). So too, Colin's truthfulness is likened to Paris' unjustness. The simile's gender switch, in which Thestylis is the prince's double and the shepherd Oenone's, is equally Homeric: recall, for instance, the comparison of Penelope to a just king (*Od.* 19.108-14) or of a weeping Patroclus to a crying female child (*Il.* 16.7-11). Finally, looking at this as a simile, i.e. as an active comparison, rather than as an inert thematic parallel or a subplot that can be enjoyed on its own terms, activates the importance of its foreboding nature. When Myrmidons gathering for a battle are likened to a pack of wolves that has already murdered a stag (*Il.* 15.156-66), the simile anticipates what is going to happen. Likewise, the juxtaposition of Paris and Colin not only delineates the status quo but also foreshadows the future: the shepherd's death is a portent for the casualties of the Trojan War. Not allowed to enter the masque's pastoral world and ruin its triumphant conclusion, catastrophe, nonetheless, looms in the periphery. In the prologue, Ate proclaims that "Proude Troy must fall" and "statellie Iliums loftie towers be racet"; later in the play, Apollo, in an offhand comment, calls beauty "the wracke of Priams Troy" (Peele 1970, 8-9, 827). The simile's main function is proleptic: Colin and Thestylis are there to remind the audience of the suffering Paris and Helen will cause their countrymen.

Shirley's play on the judgement of the goddesses also draws a parallel between Paris and one of the shepherds, but contrary to Colin who, by his very presence, discreetly alerts the audience to the myth's canonical dark undertones, Shirley's Bottle is brought on stage to question the tradition and foreground what is usually ignored. Like Peele, Shirley was a university man, and hence must have encountered Homer's works as part of his formal education. What is more, in his capacity as a schoolteacher, he published manuals on grammar and composition, an activity that again presupposes minute attention to language and syntax. Finally, it is important to note that Shirley was, according to Anthony à Wood's *Athenae Oxonienses*, "a drudge for John Ogilby in his translation of *Homer's Iliads and Odysses* . . . with the writings of annotation on them" (Wood 1817, 339-40). One cannot establish whether any of the marginalia that pinpoint and analyse Homer's similes – such as the

"rich Simile of a poor spinster" which the commentator imagines to be an allusion to the poet's mother (Ogilby 1660, 277) – might have been penned by Shirley, and, moreover, the translation is published after his plays on the Trojan War. Nonetheless, it is hard to imagine that as a friend and collaborator of Ogilby and, indeed, a man of letters himself, Shirley, did not understand the significance of the similes to the epic corpus. It is then unsurprising that the logic of the Homeric simile, as I will show below, infiltrates his Trojan plays.[3]

The Triumph of Beauty prefaces the contest for the golden apple by showcasing Paris' life on Mount Ida. The pastoral world of Shirley's play differs significantly from that of Peele's: instead of a lovestruck Colin, here one finds a progeny of the mechanicals from *Midsummer Night's Dream* – a band of dramatically inclined shepherds, led by a certain Bottle, want to entertain Paris by staging the story of the Golden Fleece. While the actual performance never takes place, the shepherds succeed, to Paris' growing irritation and dismay, in drawing the lone and self-proclaimed melancholic into conversation:

> PAR. I prethee leave me.
> BOT. Leave my young Prince in a wood? A word to the wise – are not you in love?
> PAR. In love? with what?
> BOT. Nay, I doe not know what wilde beast hath entangled you: but I have a shrewd suspition; for thus simply did I look by all report, when I was in love too, it had almost undone me, for it infected me with Poetrie; and I grew witty to the admiration of all the Owles in Ida.
> (Shirley 1646, 10)

3 Little is known about the actual production of the plays; they might have been written for a performance by Shirley's pupils (see Ashbee 2016) or "at the request of a patron such as Thomas Stanley or the Earl of Newcastle" (Burner 1988, 193), but there is no conclusive evidence for either hypothesis, or any certainty as to how much prior to publication they had been composed. For *The Triumph of Beautie*, Wiggins and Richardson offer 1634 as the likeliest date, following the 'conceptual links' that exist between the masque and Shirley's 'cannon cluster of the 1630s' as well as judging this as the most probable time for a collaboration between Shirley and William Lawes, who set at least one of the play's songs to music (Wiggins Richardson 2012, 2435).

In fact, this Paris is not in love: Shirley's version of the story does not include Oenone, and the prince is yet to learn of Helen and be enamoured with her beauty. Rather, what he laments in the woods of Mount Ida is his abandonment and banishment. However, Paris's countenance as well as the burden of the pastoral tradition convince the shepherd that the prince is suffering from love. Proposing to cheer Paris with the dance that he has prepared with his fellow countrymen, Bottle also reminisces about his own youth, explaining that what had saved him was a beating: "But I thank my dutifull father, hee cur'd me with a Flaile, and most learnedly thresh'd blinde Cupid out of my sides" (11). Subtly and almost surprisingly, Paris's lack of parental guidance, which he has been bemoaning, is brought to the forefront. The play engages with the canonical image of Paris as lover, but does not reflect it tragically like Peele's masque did. Instead, *The Triumph of Beauty* humorously imagines what could have been if Priam was a "dutifull father" as Bottle's was. The resulting comparison between Bottle and Paris is inconspicuous but effective; it forces us to look differently at an element of the myth – Paris' abandonment by his parents – that is brushed aside by the more conventional narratives.

Shirley's other Trojan play, *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses*, similarly uses doubling of low and high-born characters to present alternatives, if not to say outright challenges, to the assumed models of epic or heroic behaviour. Having taken the basic story of the contest for Achilles' armour from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Heywood's *The Iron Age* (see Ochester 1970), Shirley significantly expands the material, adding numerous new characters, including the pages Didimus and Lysippus. Attending Ulysses and Ajax respectively, the pair gets almost as much on-stage time as their renowned lords. At first, their story seems to unfold along the lines of a typical servants' subplot – like that of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, for example – with the pages keen to imitate their masters. When Ajax and Ulysses are about to debate who is more worthy of Achilles' armour, their servants heatedly discuss who is superior among their two lords:

> Ly. You know me Sir?
> Di. For one that wants good manners; yes, I know

Your name, and best relation, you attend
A Page on Ajax Telamon.
LY. And you
In such an office wait upon Ulysses,
But with this difference, that I am your better,
In reference to my Lord, as he exceeds
Your Master both in Fortitude and Honour.
(Shirley 1659, 97-8)

As the play progresses, however, the servants gain dramatic independence, deciding that, unlike Ulysses and Ajax, they can reconcile. Didimus tells Lysippus that "we may now be friends", explaining that he is "not / the more exalted for [his] Masters triumph" and, moreover, is ready to respect Ajax for his brave deeds (119). Lysippus agrees and proclaims that thanks to this newly struck friendship he too "will love Ulysses" (ibid). The original similitude between servants and masters gradually and surprisingly dissolves.

As soon as they make up, the men find a new enemy which unites them further. A character named Polybrontes (i.e. "of much thunder" from πολύς + βροντή) comes on stage to brag of his military achievements such as the purported slaughters of Hector and Paris; the former, of course, has been killed by Achilles and the latter, at this moment in the war, is still alive, as the pages cheekily acknowledge.[4] The men's merry banter is interrupted by the appearance of Ajax who beats up the braggart. By including this conventional comic punishment of a *miles gloriosus* in a play which revolves around the recital of heroic deeds, Shirley makes the audience question the validity of the heroes' contention. Afterall, while some of the statements they make have real-world evidence, others, especially Ulysses' assimilation of Achilles' deeds – he is the one who brought the hero to the war, who "arm'd Achilles first" (111) and, therefore, according to his logic, has a claim to all of the former's achievements – come dangerously close to Polybrontes' assertions. Taking from Ovid Ulysses' deft manipulation of the facts, such as

4 Polybrontes' status is unclear. The character list refers to him as a "small Souldier", which might, however, equally apply to his height or to his position in the army since he is later jokingly addressed by Lysippus as "my Low, and Mighty Polybrontes" (120).

the above idea that none of Achilles' feats would have been possible without Ulysses (see *Met.*13.162ff.), Shirley displaces the speech by having Polybrontes present other heroes' martial triumphs as his own. Together with the pages' agreement to eschew enmity, this bending of truth and reality to one's advantage problematises the portrayal of the Greek lords, painting them as similarly quarrelsome and deceitful to their inferiors, but significantly more obstinate.

This comparison between the servants and their masters can also nuance our understanding of the play's solemn conclusion. Standing over Ajax's body, Calchas proclaims a poem which, while originating with Shirley and this play, is "frequently anthologised" without any reference to *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* (Ownbey 1951, 54):

> The glories of our blood and state,
> are shadows, not substantial things
> There is no armour against Fate;
> Death lays his icy hand on kings:
> Sceptre and Crown
> Must tumble down,
> And in the dust be equal made,
> With the poor crooked scythe and spade.
> Some men with swords may reap the field,
> And plant fresh laurels where they kill . . .
> (Shirley 1659, 128-9)

The oracle describes death's power to eliminate all social differences. The nobles' various martial successes, like those recited by Ulysses and Ajax during the contention, inevitably come to naught.

Read out of context, this lamenting viewpoint of nobility seems all there is. But if one returns the poem back to the Trojan world of the play, a different, richer interpretation emerges. There is, in fact, nothing lamentable or frightening to this post-mortem equality. First, the poem's juxtaposition of sceptres and spades is strongly reminiscent of one Homeric simile:

> And as upon a rich man's crop of barley or of wheat,
> Opposed for swiftness at their work, a sort of reapers sweat,
> Bear down the furrows speedily, and thick their handfuls fall,
> So at the joining of the hosts ran Slaughter through them all
> (*Ils* 11.63-6, corresponding to *Il.*11.67-71)

According to the epic poet, it is not only in death that warriors and harvesters are alike but also in life. What is conspicuously absent from this analogy is the anxiety about social status and prestige that Calchas voices. While the heroes struggle for distinction, the *Iliad*, to the disappointment of some of its early modern readers (e.g. Scaliger), does not always concern itself with demarcating the ways in which heroes differ from common men and women. Singing and glorifying the deeds of the warriors, the epic nonetheless persists in putting the life on the battlefield into the context of life beyond it. In Shirley's play then, the mode of thinking realised in the Homeric simile's capacity to reach across the social divide confronts the presumptions which underlie the masters and servants' subplot: the simile calls into question the latter form's adherence to the notions of rank or degree.

Attending to the early modern perception of Hades further complicates a straightforwardly tragic interpretation of Calchas' poem. Given the popularity of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* (see Kenward 2018, Temple 2021), it seems right to assume that in early modern England the Greek underworld is not terrifying, but everyday and, occasionally, even funny. In *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses*, the scene of Polybrontes' beating clearly reflects this vision of hell:

> Aja. Art thou not dead?
> Pol. Oh yes Sir, I am dead,
> Give my Ghost leave to walk a little.
> . . .
> Pol. I were best to make haste, Sir, Charon stays for me,
> And I shall lose my tide.
> aja. Then vanish.
> POL. Presto. *Exit.*
> (Shirley 1659, 124)

By the time the audience witnesses Ajax's self-demise and hears the oracle's reflection, it will have already laughed at the above exchange. There is little gravity to the prospect of dying; to side with Calchas and bemoan the loss of distinction becomes, if not completely impossible, then at the very least challenging.

Choosing to dramatise the contention, which his Agamemnon

calls “the difference between these great Competitors” (Shirley 1659, 100), Shirley focalises one of the myth’s underlying concerns. As an archetypal story of war in the Western literary canon, a war supposedly triggered by the act of juxtaposing the three goddesses and comparing them in terms of beauty, the Trojan myth explores how individuals and groups search for ‘difference’ via constant acts of comparison. The playwright’s profound understanding of just how deep-rooted comparative practices are to the Trojan War becomes much clearer if we approach his plays with the idea of the simile rather than solely that of the double plot of masters and servants. Shirley’s plays on the Trojan War alert us to the fact that thinking with and in similes is constitutive to the Trojan myth. Furthermore, the way he uses such comparisons helps expose the social and classist biases that early modern audiences (and, indeed, twenty-first-century ones) might be unconsciously bringing to Homer.

The cases of Peele and Shirley begin to illuminate how the comparison of the “mightiest” and the “meanest” emerges in early modern drama on the Trojan War both in language – in the actual use of similes – and in action – in the correspondence of plots. This, as I hope to demonstrate, is likewise true of Shakespeare’s and Settle’s treatment of the myth. Heywood’s *The Iron Age*, however, a play that was one of Shirley’s sources for *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* and thus very likely affected his portrayal of the commoners, presents a noteworthy exception to this general trend. Here, the parallel is not so much linguistic or structural, but visual. By utilising theatre’s main affordance – the fact that the Trojans are literally embodied on stage – Heywood shows the juxtaposition to be integral to the characters’ very appearance. This, I think, further testifies to the idea that the comparative thinking encapsulated in the Homeric simile becomes an inalienable part of how the myth of the Trojan War is presented beyond the epic medium.

With the horse brought into the city, Heywood’s Greeks, led by Pyrrhus, try to surpass one another in producing gory images of exactly how Troy shall fall and its people suffer. Responding to what Synon has called a “braue show” – boats swimming through rivers of Trojan blood – Menelaus specifies that this blood will flow “From thousand Springs / Of gentle and ignoble, base and Kings” (Heywood 1874, 380-1), darkly foreshadowing what is about to happen not

only to the royal family but also to the common folk. An alarm sounds, and the audience sees what Claire Kenward, describing Heywood's mixing of classical and medieval sources, considers his most compelling addition to the tradition: two common Trojan citizens appear only to perish almost immediately at the hands of the Greeks. For Kenward, the husband and wife serve as an onstage reflection of the audience. They are the "anonymous citizens sacrificed to the pursuit of heroic fame, whose deaths will not be recorded in Pyrrhus' note, the English chronicles, or Homer's epic"; the theatregoers of Troynovant witness and reflect the demise of their classical forebears (Kenward 2017, 96).

While not discarding Kenward's reading which associates the members of the audience with the nameless Trojans, I suggest that the chiasmic switch in Menelaus's prophetic line on "gentle and ignoble" indicates that the play itself draws a direct parallel between the Trojan commoners and Troy's ruling family. The stage directions to the scene with the nameless couple offer the following instructions: "Enter a Troian in his nightgowne all unready" and, a while after, "Enter his wife as from bed" (Heywood 1874, 381). On its own, the description of the citizens' appearance is not surprising – it belongs to the early modern convention of marking night scenes. As Alan C. Dessen writes, with "no way to dim his stage" the early modern playwright had to rely on other recognisable visual or audible cues, such as the actor's words, the use of torches or "appropriate costumes, especially nightgowns" (Dessen 1980, 3). However, at the beginning of Act 2 the same stage direction is applied to a different and very distinguished character: "Enter Priam in his night-gowne and slippers" (Heywood 1874, 385). The king's gown might have been adorned to indicate his high status or the prop from the previous scene might have been used again. Either way, the same type of dress appearing in the two scenes clearly establishes a visual link between the Trojan man and the king. Further, the dialogue between Priam and the women of the royal household is replete with verbal echoes of the scene between the citizen and his wife. In both, an appeal "Oh Heauen" (381, 385) and a pleading question about a place to hide precedes the slaughter; Pyrrhus concludes both episodes by evoking imagery of noise and fire – "flye the word along . . . / fire-brands tosse" (382) and "Then

Trumpets sound / Till burning Troy in Troian blood be drown'd" (394). If the members of the audience recognise themselves in the nameless Trojan citizens, as Kenward argues, the following scene foregrounds that in the end, in the eyes of the Greeks, the difference between low and high birth means nothing. Like Calchas' lament at the end of *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses*, *The Iron Age*'s matching scenes present death as an ultimate equalizer between various social strata.

In a late seventeenth-century dramatization of the Trojan myth – *The Siege of Troy* – this similitude of the "meanest" and the "mightiest" is, finally, realised not in death, but in life. While the nobility's quest for distinction is already problematised in *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses*, it is Settle's Trojan play that, as I will try to demonstrate below, completely does away with differentiating between heroes and commoners. Historically, Settle's work, including his turn-of-the-century Bartholomew Fair hit *The Siege of Troy*, has been largely ignored: the plays were primarily remembered for their playwright's appearance in Alexander Pope's *The Dunciad* (1728) where he is portrayed as the newly deceased king in the empire of dullness (see Rogers 1975). Edith Hall, however, has recently encouraged critics "to reject the time-honoured tradition of aesthetically condemning Settle's droll as trivial and ephemeral", arguing that paying attention to the Bartholomew Fair play will benefit the study of classical reception and help bridge the chronological gap between Dryden and Pope (Hall 2018, 459).

Written significantly later than all other plays studied in this article, Settle's comic take on the Trojan War mocks the tradition – which has existed from antiquity but was revitalised in the early modern period – of recalling the heroes for purposes of moral *exempla*. In the droll, the commoners, like Shirley's pages, seem eager to copy the behaviour of those above them, but the paradigms they choose are clearly presented as questionable. So, as the Trojan mob feasts and drinks in the scene that precedes the city's fall, Bristle, the newly elected captain to the mob, openly voices the idea that his fellow countrymen should adhere to the models set by their rulers: "And we his Loyal and Obedient Subjects after his own pious Example, walk uprightly, and live soberly. and are all drunk

for Joy" (Settle 1707, 18). Personally, he explains that he will "keep a Whore like Prince *Paris*" (ibid). To this his wife, sharing a joke with the audience, replies "Thou shalt keep me, my Dear" (ibid). In the beginning of the droll, as the audience knows, she and Bristle fight because he prevents her from "galloping amongst the Mob" to visit the miracle horse (6). When he and most of the citizens depart, the wife, making the acquaintance of another Trojan citizen and encouraging his amorous advances, finds "comfort" elsewhere (7).

Although never articulated by any of the characters, this similitude between Bristle's wife and Helen is evidently implied. The episode culminating with the kiss between the wife and the unnamed Trojan citizen is followed by the appearance of Helen, Paris, and Cassandra. As the prophetess shouts abuse and shames the couple's "vile Adultery" (8), she offers a frame of reference which applies to the previous scene as much as to the current one. Further, while in his moralistic epilogue, warning the female part of the audience against extramarital affairs, Ulysses names only Helen, the speech cannot but evoke the play's other adulteress. Finally, the similarity is reinforced by the fact that the cobbler's wife shares Helen's tragic fate and punishment: Bristle tells the other citizens that his spouse has burned alive during the city's siege, whereas Helen's suicidal leap into the fire is witnessed onstage. Throughout the play then, the wife continuously thwarts her husband's self-fashioning. Although Bristle is included in a love triangle like the one which has brought about the Trojan War, it is not in a role of his choosing; he is not Paris, but Menelaus.

When it comes to the matters of state, Bristle has more success in following royal *exempla*. In the beginning, having referred to himself as "the second Man in the Nation", he compares himself with Priam: "I'd have you to know that I am the Man that put such a stout pair of Soles upon the King's last Neat leather Shoes, that he has kickt the whole *Grecian* Army quite out of the Kingdom, and his Majesty and I are the two great Savers of the Nation" (7). As the droll comes to an end, Bristle's earlier claim suddenly turns prophetic, once again recalling the proleptic nature of some epic similes. Settle's Menelaus, acting, to my knowledge, without any precedent in the myth's long history, decides to pardon the war's survivors. With the royal family killed, he tells the commoners:

"Here I have finished my Revenge. Enjoy Your Lives and Liberties, go and rebuild your Troy" (23). The mob shouts "huzzah" and the war concludes with a song and dance. What seems to enable this new order is Bristle's profession. As Alison A. Chapman convincingly demonstrates working with various texts from the end of the sixteenth and the first part of the seventeenth century, the king and the cobbler were, in fact, linked in early modern England. In the period's cultural imagery, the feet and the head of the body politic were both endowed with a power to affect "calendrical and ritual order" (Chapman 2001, 1467). In other words, when Bristle explains that his labour makes him the king's equal and that he has helped end the war, he might, for the time being, miss the mark as regards the war's conclusion, but is, nonetheless, perfectly right to assert his similitude with Priam. In the end, a new order is, indeed, established: the ruler, Priam, has died, but a new one, Bristle, immediately takes his place. Registering the mechanics of Homeric comparisons, Settle's droll gives them closure; what starts off as a simile – a cobbler is *like* the king – turns into a metaphor, the cobbler *is* the king.

As I have tried to demonstrate, throughout the early modern period, dramatists working with the myth of the Trojan War on the English stage followed Homer in juxtaposing the "meanest" and the "mightiest". The parallels, as we have seen, were realised in multiple ways and for multiple purposes. Akin to the Homeric simile, the comparisons drawn between the newly introduced commoners and the myth's actual heroes could be proleptic, foreshadowing what is about to happen, as was the case with Peele and, to an extent, Heywood. Furthermore, the comparative logic behind the figure of the simile could help scrutinise the social and hierarchical presuppositions of conventional comic subplots, with Heywood, Shirley, and Settle, further using it to interrogate the notions of status and social differentiation. Finally, and most importantly, such cross-class comparisons allowed the playwrights to challenge the ideas and assumptions that have crystallised around the Trojan myth itself: is the heroes' quest for distinction worthy of our praise and imitation?

Comparative Thinking in *Troilus and Cressida*

William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* does not stage such cross-class comparisons of the "mightiest" and the "meanest". The two added low-born characters – Cressida's and Paris' servants – do not come across as even remotely interested in being like their masters; there are neither implicit, nor explicit comparisons between them. Indeed, this unwillingness to "follow" a princely model emerges when Paris' servant deliberately misconstrues Pandarus' question:

> Pandarus Friend, you! pray you, a word: do not you follow
> the young Lord Paris?
> Servant Ay, sir, when he goes before me.
> (Shakespeare 2015, 3.1.1-3)

Likewise, while Shakespeare's Thersites undoubtedly challenges epic paradigms, he does not mirror any of the heroes.[5] It is his metacommentary, his crude and direct remarks, that encourage the audience to question the heroic tradition. Nonetheless, I suggest that *Troilus and Cressida* does attend to epic juxtapositions, further testifying to the period's profound engagement with the myth's underlying comparative practices as well as their particular linguistic manifestation in the simile.

By studying *Troilus and Cressida* in context, that is against the backdrop of other contemporary dramatic treatments of the Trojan War which have been explored above, one gets a better grasp of the exact ways in which Shakespeare went against the flow and conceived new interpretations of this perhaps timeworn myth. In particular, it becomes clear that while Shakespeare was not alone in recognising comparative thinking as a force behind many of the events of the Trojan War, he was unique in questioning what effect this might have on one's psyche. As I will try to show, presenting comparisons as constitutional to both action and thought – they motivate individuals and determine their very identities –

5 In a sense, it is he who gets such a mirror in "the bastard son of Priam", Margarelon or Margareton, whom Shakespeare takes from Lydgate or Caxton.

Shakespeare's take on this myth asks whether an overdependence on comparative thinking, in fact, effaces all meaning and essence.

Richard Levin, one of the most meticulous students of double and triple plots in early modern English drama, classifies *Troilus and Cressida* as a play of "equivalence plots" (1971, 160). The two matching or "equivalent" plots of the play are, of course, that of love and war: in the love plot Troilus and Diomedes fight for Cressida in the same way that in the war plot Hector and Achilles fight for honour and distinction (161). However, more germane to our discussion of the early modern dramatic reception of Homeric similes is the general description Levin gives to such plots: in them he detects a "universal impulse . . . to construct or discover satisfying connections among the disparate aspects of our experience by the sort of analogical reasoning", an impulse which is likewise present in "primitive myth and ritual", "folk and proverbial lore", and "the metaphorical language of everyday life and poetry" (149).

What Levin calls "universal", I would like to redescribe as epic. Put simply, it is hard to imagine an *Iliad* or an *Aeneid* without numerous instances of "analogical reasoning"; the likening of disparate people or phenomena, including, but not limited to, the specific Homeric case of the "mightiest" and the "meanest" on which this article has focused, is widely recognised as an important element of epic expression. While one can, perhaps, suggest that the very plot structure of *Troilus and Cressida* is, in a sense, a simile which likens the quest for love to the quest for honour – something Troilus partially does when he proclaims "As much as I do Cressid love, / So much by weight hate I her Diomed" (5.2.174-5) – it would not advance our understanding of the play or of the period's response to this epic figure.

Rather, what I find significant is the fact that the play openly mocks the simile and, moreover, does this via a tongue-in-cheek reflection of an outsider to the nobility – Cressida's man Alexander:

> This man, lady, hath robbed many beasts of their particular additions; he is as valiant as the lion, churlish as the bear, slow as the elephant . . .
> (1.2.19-21)

Alexander starts his description of Ajax, "the very man per se" (1.2.15), by piling together comparisons between the hero's traits and the conventional characteristics of various animals. The result, reminiscent of the picture with which Horace opens his *Ars Poetica* – "Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas undique collatis membris, . . . spectatum admissi risum teniasis, amici?" ("If a painter chose to join a human head to the neck of a horse, and to spread feathers of many a hue over limbs picked up now here now there . . . could you, my friends, if favoured with a private view, refrain from laughing?"; Hor. *Ars.* 1. 1-3, 5) – is deliberately absurd. So, registering our as well as her own amusement, Cressida wonders: "But how should this man, that makes me smile, make Hector angry?" (Shakespeare 2015, 1.2.31-2). At least when amassed, the play seems to suggest, similes do not enhance one's understanding but, by contrast, turn men into comic monsters.

In addition to creating this incoherent image which clearly debases the epic hero, Alexander's overabundant usage of animal analogies brings to the surface the play's awareness of the place comparative thinking occupies in the Trojan story. As scholars have shown in various ways, *Troilus and Cressida* revolves around emulation. For instance, Joel Fineman notes that the term itself not only recurs "some eight times", but, moreover, always appears "as the explanatory center of the play's images of sullied violence" (1980, 94): it is there in Ulysses' diagnostic speech on how Achilles' behaviour is influencing the other Greeks in the camp; in Hector's refusal to meet Ajax in a single-combat; in Diomedes' aggrandising description of his upcoming fight with Aeneas. Perhaps echoing factionalism, an emulative court policy orchestrated by Elizabeth which encouraged rivalry between courtiers to ensure that they did not unite against the monarch (see Mallin 1990), Ulysses' stratagem to pit Ajax and Achilles against each other further reinforces the idea that it is such juxtapositions of supposedly heroic behaviour that make up the Trojan myth.

Emulation is likewise central to the play's second plot: Pandarus repeatedly draws comparisons between the lovers-to-be and the renowned Greeks and Trojans to kindle the former's feelings. For example, speaking of Cressida to Troilus, he remarks that "Because

she [i.e. Cressida]'s kin to me, therefore she's not so fair as Helen: an she were not kin to me, she would be as fair on Friday as Helen is on Sunday" (1.1.71-3), while to his niece Pandarus tells that "Hector is not a better man than Troilus", that "Paris is dirt to him [Troilus]; and, I warrant, Helen, to change, would give an eye to boot" and that he "had rather be such a man as Troilus than Agamemnon and all Greece", (1.2.77, 230-1, 36-7). Comparative thinking, according to Pandarus' logic, incites desire; by learning that Helen would prefer Troilus to Paris, Cressida will become more enamoured with Troilus, similarly, by hearing Cressida valued above Greece's most beautiful woman for whom two countries are now at war, Troilus will fall more for Cressida. And while this does indeed happen, in the light of the description Cressida's servant gives to Ajax, Troilus' own amorous rhetoric of similitude – "As true as steel, as plantage to the moon, / As sun to day, . . . / As true as Troilus" (3.2.172-3, 77) – falls short. Overwhelmed, the listener might be persuaded through amplification but not through a revelation of hidden meaning, of the object's or the idea's – in this case truth's – essence.

Ultimately, Linda Charnes seems right to call the Trojan war an "institutionalised official "difference"", with Helen used by the Greeks and Trojans as a "touchstone against which value is judged", as a means towards self-identification (Charnes 1989, 425). This however, as Charnes further explains, deprives Helen of "any inherent value, of any value that is not itself *produced by the comparison* [emphasis original]" (ibid). Shakespeare's Ulysses, I believe, is covertly making the same point when he retells to Achilles what he has just read the "strange fellow" put forth:

> That man . . .
> Cannot make boast to have that which he hath,
> Nor feels not what he owes, but by reflection;
> As when his virtues shining upon others
> Heat them and they retort that heat again
> To the first giver.
> (Shakespeare 2015, 3.3.97, 99-103)

Value is endowed in a circular manner; one can only know oneself by juxtaposing one's own qualities with others, by becoming one of the two sides of a simile. Ulysses, relying once again on analogies

with the natural world as he has already done in the "degree" speech, drills in the idea that "no man is the lord of any thing" unless he engages in comparative thinking, unless he "like a gate of steel / fronting the sun, receives and renders back / his figure and his heat" (3.3.116, 122-4).

As I have argued throughout the article, early modern playwrights, like Homer before them, exploit parallelism to demystify the lofty and defamiliarise the well-known: they turn to the epic simile as a means of interrogating both the Trojan myth itself and the preconceptions that audiences might bring to it. In the extant corpus, five plays on the Trojan War physically stage, embody, the Homeric simile of "meanest" and the "mightiest". By introducing low-born characters who copy and mirror or, conversely, markedly differ from the myth's canonical high-born ones, Peele, Heywood, Shirley, and Settle, all challenge the very idea of heroic distinction as well as the subconscious desire, expressed by some of their contemporaries, to read the period's own understanding of social differentiation – the notions of rank and degree – into the myth. This, of course, is also true of *Troilus and Cressida*. In addition, Shakespeare also examines the figure of the simile itself, ultimately showing that comparative thinking might not only mask the absence of meaning, but, even more alarmingly, erase the meaning and knowledge of the self that already exist.

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Part 2
Receiving, Adapting, Resisiting Models

6

"An Empire equall with thy mind": the 'Persian Plays' and the Reception of Herodotus in Renaissance England*

Francesco Dall'Olio

Abstract

The article explores the connection between the critical and literary reception of Herodotus in the Renaissance and the so-called 'Persian plays', a group of Elizabethan dramas staging classical subjects regarding ancient Persia. Through the analysis of three plays – Thomas Preston's tragedy *Cambises* (printed 1569), Richard Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus* (printed 1594) and William Alexander's closet drama *Croesus* (1604) – the article considers how the authors revisited stories about the Persian empire derived from Herodotus or inspired by him, reflecting the changes in the knowledge and interpretation of his *Histories* from the 1560s to the first decade of the 17th century. It also explores how contemporary political issues were modelled on patterns derived from the *Histories*.

Keywords: Herodotus; Persian plays; *Cambises*; *The Warres of Cyrus*; *Croesus*

Introduction

With the term 'Persian plays' Jane Grogan identified a group of plays from Renaissance England, written between the early 1560s and the first decade of the 17th century, that stages subjects regarding the history of that part of Asia then known as 'Persia'. These plays are mainly about the great ancient empire of the Achaemenids, which, in the political and literary culture of the time, was considered a model of an 'ideal' empire in both its construction and organisation (see Grogan 2014, 7-11). This image was based on classical texts such as Herodotus' *Histories* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, from which the 'Persian plays' take much of their subject matter, and with which they entertain a relationship of "knowing . . . intertextual[ity]"

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(Grogan 2014, 116).[1] The authors extensively reprise scenes, characters and sentences from classical authors, appropriating and rearticulating their ethical and political messages. Interestingly, this rearticulation appears to be connected with the changes in the history of their reception in terms of both their spread and their critical interpretation. This is the topic of this essay, which engages with the relationship between the reception of Herodotus in Elizabethan and Jacobean England and three of the most prominent examples of 'Persian plays': Thomas Preston's *Cambises* (1560-1561, printed 1569), Richard Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus* (1587-1590, printed 1594)[2] and William Alexander's *Croesus* (1604). As will be seen, their varying presentation of the Persian material parallels the growing knowledge of the *Histories* in Renaissance England as well as their partial critical re-evaluation during the last part of the 16th and the first decade of the 17th century. At the same time, I will discuss Herodotus' deep influence on them with regard to both the choice of subjects and how they were adapted for the stage with in mind political questions relevant at the time, such as the distinction between good and bad kingship and the construction of an empire.

Cambises: Hidden Herodotus

Nowadays, Thomas Preston's tragedy is hardly considered an adaptation of Herodotus. Following Armstrong's seminal 1955 paper, the direct source of *Cambises* has generally been traced to the second book of Richard Taverner's *Garden of Wysedome* (1547), which in turn takes up the *Chronica* of the German historian Johannes Carion (first published in German in Basel in 1532, and then appearing in Latin translation in 1537). Cambyses appeared as a typical tyrant figure in a long literary tradition which included authors such as Seneca, Valerius Maximus, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Lydgate,[3] but also in Protestant readings that considered him

1 This also happens because, for the most part, those are plays written for performance in front of the cultured audience of either the court or the universities, who could appreciate the references to classical texts.

2 I refer to the chronology provided by EMED 2023.

3 For a discussion of these see Dall'Olio 2020, 113-14.

as the ungodly king who stopped the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem (cf. Hill 1992, 419-22). In Preston's time, no English edition of Herodotus had yet been published, nor did the English readership of the 1560s show any interest in him although manuscripts of the *Histories* and copies of both the *editio princeps* of the Greek text (Venice 1502) and Lorenzo Valla's Latin translation were available (see Dall'Olio 2020, 112). In fact, in a letter by Roger Ascham to his former classmate John Brandesby, dated 1542, Ascham claimed that in Cambridge "Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon . . . in ore et manibus omnium teruntur" ("Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon are often to be found . . . in the mouth and hands of all"; Ascham 1865, xxxvii; translation mine). However, it is significant that, of the three authors here named, the only one not to appear in any printed edition in England between the date of the letter and the composition of Preston's play is Herodotus.[4] This seeming lack of interest was firmly rooted in Herodotus' bad reputation in the early Renaissance. Following renowned ancient authors such as Plutarch, Herodotus was considered as a bad example of how to write history. He was held a liar who told tall tales of marvellous and impossible events. This reputation made Herodotus unsuitable for educational purposes, in contrast to both Thucydides, considered a master of rhetoric (see Pade 2006), and Xenophon, reputed an authority for the education of princes (see Humble 2017). By the 1560s, there were influential attempts to overturn this received view. Henri Estienne, in particular, prefaced his new 1566 edition of the Greek text of Herodotus with an *Apologia* where he strove to refute the traditional accusations of mendacity (see Earley 2016, 133-6). Preston's tragedy, however, predates this reassessment, and the debate did not penetrate England until much later.

And yet, as I have argued elsewhere,[5] the story of Cambyses

4 Thucydides appeared in an English translation by Thomas Nicholls in 1550, albeit in an edition based on Pierre Saliat's French version rather than the Greek original. As for Xenophon, the *Oeconomicus* had already been translated by Gentian Hervet in 1532, and shortly afterwards William Barker would undertake the first English translation of the *Cyropaedia*, published in two separate printings in 1552 and 1567 (see Grogan 2014, 50-6).

5 Some of the following references may be found in Dall'Olio 2020, esp. 116-17, 122-3, 125.

contained in Preston's sources includes some elements from Herodotus' narrative, from minor details to the recovery of a story (Cambyses' incestuous marriage with his sister/cousin) unknown to Middle Age literary tradition. While this may come as a surprise, it bears quite a simple explanation. On the one hand, as we will see in greater detail shortly, the *Histories* were highly admired as a literary text in spite of Herodotus' discredit as an historian. On the other, Carion's *Chronica* advertised itself as a universal history reconstructed from the most authoritative sources on the subject, and, for Persian history, these included Herodotus. Thus, Carion drew from him in order to present a fully-fledged version of the life and acts of the Persian tyrant. Carion's version was then faithfully reproduced by Taverner, and Preston followed him closely. As a result, what the Elizabethans read was a story as close as possible to Herodotus.[6]

It was not just a matter of narrative choices. The recovery of Herodotus affected the way Carion, Taverner and eventually Preston interpreted the character's tyranny, in particular how they moved away from a purely ethical interpretation towards a more political one. This change is most evident in the three texts' retelling of an already well-known episode involving Cambyses and one of his satraps, Praxaspes. All medieval versions derived from Seneca's dialogue *De ira* (3.14.1-2):[7] Praxaspes invites the king to moderate himself with wine because "turpem esse . . . ebrietatem in rege" ("drunkenness is unbecoming of a king"), but Cambyses' only response is to pierce Praxaspes' son through his heart with an arrow to prove that drunkenness had not affected him. Seneca changed Herodotus' tale so as to turn it into a moral exemplum on the negative effects of wrath, focusing his attention on the private confrontation between the king and the advisor, as well as on the cruel and provocative gesture of the king as proof of the effects of fury. This moralistic dimension would be expanded in the Middle Ages, when Cambyses and Praxaspes sometimes even

6 Although it has been suggested that *Cambises* may have been staged possibly at court under the patronage of Robert Dudley (Bevington 1968, 158), there is no actual evidence of any performance.

7 The following quotations from the Latin text come from Seneca 1977, the translation is mine. For a more detailed comparison between Seneca's dialogue and Herodotus, see Giacchero 1980.

lose their names and nationality to become examples of universal character types, as in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, 3.2043-55. What was omitted in these texts was the political subtext of Herodotus' original scene. There, Cambyses asks Praxaspes what the Persians think of him, and the latter replies: ὦ δέσποτα, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα μεγάλως ἐπαινέαι, τῇ δὲ φιλοινίῃ σε φασὶ πλεόνως προσκεῖσθαι (Hdt. 3.34.2; "Lord, for everything else you receive great praise; they say, however, that you are too devoted to the love of wine").[8] Praxaspes' answer here is not the well-meaning but uncalled for intervention of a subordinate, and therefore it does not cause the king's anger. Rather, Cambyses is enraged because what Praxaspes says to him is in contrast with another answer his subjects gave him to the same question on a previous occasion: πρότερον γὰρ δὴ ἄρα . . . εἴρετο Καμβύσης κοῖός τις δοκέοι ἀνὴρ εἶναι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα τελέσαι Κῦρον- οἳ δὲ ἀμείβοντο ὡς εἴη ἀμείνων τοῦ πατρός (3.34.4; "Previously . . . Cambyses had asked what man he looked like in comparison with his father Cyrus. They replied that he was better than his father"). It is to punish this alleged disloyalty that Cambyses kills Praxaspes' son: an act of lucid political strategy aimed at intimidating the people.

This political subtext reappears in Carion's *Chronica*, where, as in Seneca, Praxaspes addresses Cambyses without being asked first, but using the same words as in Herodotus: "laudari eum a Persis plurimum, caeterum hoc ipsis displicere, quod ebrietatis vicio obnoxius esset" ("for many things he is praised by the Persians, but for the rest they are sorry, that he is too given to the vice of drunkenness", Carion 1537, 65*v*). The king then summons the Persians and asks them "num aliqua in re merito reprehendurus esset" ("if he was worthy of reproach in anything"). As in Herodotus, the Persians reply that he "virtutem etiam antecellere patrem Cyrum" ("surpassed in valour his father Cyrus"). This triggers Cambyses' decision to 'punish' Praxaspes. The contrast that Carion establishes between Praxaspes and the Persians brings to mind a scenario well known to Renaissance political culture: the honest advisor courageously gives truthful advice to his sovereign at the risk of

8 I quote the Greek text from Herodotus 2005; translation mine.

displeasing him, only to be rebuked and sometimes punished.[9] In turn, Cambyses' vindictive behaviour qualifies him as a tyrant in the way Renaissance culture understood tyrants: the ruler who refuses to listen to advice and rules in an autocratic manner, tolerating only the presence of people willing to please him.[10] The recovery of Herodotus' text thus proves instrumental in adapting the story to the Renaissance political scenario. Preston's reworking of the tale in Scene 5 of *Cambises*[11] emphasises this reading. At first, Praxaspes reprimands the king in private, telling him that drunkenness does not befit a king, as in Seneca (5.479-82). Touched to the core, the king asks two Persian dignitaries whether there are reasons why he should be reprimanded; at this point, Praxaspes criticises him publicly with Herodotus' words: "the Persians much doo praise your grace, but one thing discommend: / In that to Wine subject you be, wherein you doo offend" (5.493-4). The sequence of actions

9 The most famous examples in Renaissance English literature probably are the stories of Solon and Croesus (of whom I shall talk later in greater detail) and of Plato being sold into slavery by Dionysius the Elder, tyrant of Syracuse, because he dared to say that Dionysius' behaviour recalled that of a tyrant. This story, whose main source is Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Plato* (Laert. 3.18-21), was included in some of the most important works of early English Humanism such as Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Thomas Elyot's *The Governor* (1531); it also provided the subject matter for a subsequent dialogue by Elyot, *Of the Knowlage Which Maketh a Wise Man* (1533). In *Utopia*, the character of Raphael Hyhtlodaeus or Hythloday also makes an explicit comparison between what happened to Plato and something that happened to him once: while a guest at Cardinal John Morton's table, his criticism of the British custom of hanging thieves was severely attacked by the rest of the party, until the Cardinal himself approved it. Ironically, More would end up experiencing first-hand what it meant to be an honest councillor punished by a sovereign for speaking against him. This, in turn, made him another topical *exemplum* in later literature of honest counselling being rejected by a tyrant: in his first biography, written by More's son-in-law, William Roper (1556), the Emperor Charles V laments More's death and points out that More deserved a very different fate.

10 This aspect is made particularly evident in Taverner's text, where the courtiers do not reproach Cambyses "espyenge how thankefull and plausible a thinge flattery is" (Taverner 1547, xviiiv).

11 Reference is to the scene division in Preston 1975; the original text has no such division.

combines the 'Senecan' private rebuke with the 'Herodotean' public one when Praxaspes seeks the assent of his peers in an attempt to show the king the political need to correct his behaviour. It is an unsuccessful attempt. Not only do the Persians prefer to flatter the sovereign, but one of them goes as far as to reproach Praxaspes before his son's body for not keeping silent: "this had not been, but your tung must be walking: / To the King of correction, you must needs be talking" (5.559-60). Praxaspes' reply is curt and honest: "No correction . . . but councel for the best" (561).

This episode is the first instance of the main characteristic of Preston's play: his turning his subjects to silence (see Dall'Olio 2019, 59-61). Every subsequent scene focuses on various reactions to the tyrant's behaviour: Smirdis, the king's brother, leaves the court aware of the futility of advising him; Cambyses' sister/cousin insists on having the advice of her counsellors about the tyrant's obdurate decision of marrying her;[12] two peasants, Hob and Lob, condemn the ruler's behaviour publicly and Ambidexter the Vice threatens them with treason charges, an episode showing how Cambyses' nefarious rule influences the whole kingdom. While Carion and Taverner underline the Herodotean portrayal of Cambises as a bad ruler who refuses to take counsel and reduces his subjects into servitude, Preston expands it into an articulate description of the effects of tyranny on the political life of the country, with critical innuendos about Mary Tudor's recently ended reign and her persecution of Protestants.[13] Cambyses' refusal of advice and violation of the laws contradicts contemporary Humanist ideals of good rule and the just monarch as the guardian and protector of the laws established by the authority of the people.[14] Accordingly,

12 In Herodotus, Cambyses asks a council of Magi whether his union with his cousin can be considered legitimate; they, fearing for their lives, reply that the king can do whatever he wants (Hdt. 3.31.2-5). It may be that in this case the queen's request and Cambises' refusal of advice denote a partial inspiration from Herodotus.

13 For a more detailed description of *Cambises*' political subtext, see Hill 1992; Dall'Olio 2019.

14 See McDiarmid 2007 on the birth and development of those ideals in the circle of Protestant intellectuals in Cambridge. Thomas Preston studied in Cambridge and Thomas Smith, the author of the treatise *De Republica*

the tyrant was the ruler who "breaketh lawes alreadie made at his pleasure" and "maketh others without the aduise and consent of the people" (Smith 1583, 6). The revival, via Carion and Taverner, of the Herodotean description of Cambyses' tyranny, unjust towards and careless of the people, allowed Preston to adapt traditional stories about the Persian tyrant to his contemporary context. Thus, he prefigured the fortune of Herodotus as one of the main sources for the later Persian plays, showing the direction in which those plays would go in using characters, stories and concepts from the *Histories* to tackle contemporary political issues.

The Warres of Cyrus: Herodotean Xenophon

"Zenophon from whence we borrow write [*sic*], . . . / what we record of Panthea / . . . in sad and tragick tearmes", says the author of *The Warres of Cyrus* (traditionally identified as Richard Farrant, Master of the Children of the Royal Chapel) in the short 'choral' piece in the middle of the play (Farrant 1594, C3*r*).[15] The play thus officially declares its derivation from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, the educational text par excellence and the main source of Persia-related literary imagery for much of the sixteenth century. In terms of plot, the claim is accurate. Not only is the story of Panthea, Araspas and Abradates (recounted by Xenophon in books 4 to 7) dramatised in its entirety, but the context is the same war of Cyrus against Assyria recounted by Xenophon. Also, other characters are drawn from Xenophon, for instance Gobrias, the Persian satrap who offers his allegiance to Cyrus to be revenged upon the new Assyrian king for his own son's death (*Cyr.*4.6.1-11). The Xenophontean origin is thus hardly questionable. At the same time, the Persia staged in *The Warres* is not a perfect country ruled by a wise, well-educated ruler, as in the *Cyropaedia*, but rather a fabulous and distant kingdom famous for passionate and terrible tragedies. This has less to do

Anglorum quoted above (printed posthumously in 1583, but written around 1562-1565), was a member of that circle.

15 'Choral' is here used in the early modern sense of a prologic voice "explaining the dramatic action" (Bigliazzi 2015, 116). On the chorus in this play, see Bigliazzi's chapter in this volume.

with Xenophon, and more with the description of the exotic and adventurous Eastern world that could be found in English romances such as Anthony Munday's *Zelauto* (1580) and William Warner's *Pan his Syrinx* (1584), as well as in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1590-1596).[16] The Herodotean derivation of this imagery goes back to the first Italian translation of the *Histories* by Matteo Maria Boiardo (1474-1491), where, as Dennis Looney (2016, 247-51) pointed out, Boiardo's handling of the text tended to emphasise the most fantastical and exotic aspects of Herodotus' description of Persia and Egypt. Not coincidentally, a similar presentation of the Eastern world would be found in Boiardo's later poem *Orlando Innamorato* (1495), and, subsequently, in Ludovico Ariosto's continuation, the celebrated *Orlando Furioso* (1532).[17] The following fortune of these two poems (especially the latter) in Renaissance Europe would cement Herodotus' status as a point of reference for the description of Persia and, in general, the East in Renaissance romances (Grogan 2014, 73-6). For a long time in the sixteenth century it turned out to be a sort of a lifeline for the reputation of the author. While the credit of Herodotus as an historian was widely questioned, nobody ever denied the literary quality of the *Histories* (Plutarch himself acknowledged it) and even the most ardent critic had no objection to reading him as a treasure-house of many pleasant tales. Herodotus thus came to be recognised across Europe as 'the' historian of the rise and fall of the fabulous Persian empire, and it is not surprising that his first English translation by a mysterious B.R. (usually identified with Barnabe Riche), printed in London in 1584, not only comprised just the first two books,[18] but was deeply influenced by Boiardo's 'romance-like' rendering of the

16 For a more detailed analysis, see Grogan 2014, 92-97 (on Spenser), 98-111 (on Munday and Warner). This combination is already recognised by Grogan: "*The Warres of Cyrus* manages to combine the didactic and political weight of Xenophon's text with the . . . tones and timbres of the Herodotean discourse" (2014, 122).

17 Dates refer to the definitive version of the texts.

18 However, judging from a passage in the prefatory letter to the readers, Riche seems to have planned a complete translation: "We have brought out of Greece into England two of the Muses, Clio and Euterpe . . . As these speede so the rest will follow" (Herodotus 1584, Aiii*v*).

text (cf. Looney 1996, 65-70).

This translation constitutes one of several proofs of Herodotus' rapid growth in popularity in Renaissance England between the 1570s and the 1590s. Stories derived from Herodotus were frequently staged in private, cultured venues such as the court or universities.[19] In c. 1568, a tragedy about Astiages, king of the Medes,[20] was performed at St John's College, Cambridge, and on 6th January 1575 the Children of Windsor performed before the Queen at Hampton Court a tragedy entitled *King Xerxes*. Farrant's play, also staged by a company of children connected to the court ("Played by the children of her Maiesties Chappell", according to the titlepage), fits into this tradition. At the same time, stories derived from Herodotus were included into anthologies of tales in prose such as William Painter's *Pallace of Pleasure* (whose first volume was printed in 1566). Amongst his tales are comprised, together with the aforementioned tale of Cyrus and Panthea derived from Xenophon, the Herodotean stories about Gyges and Candaules and Croesus and Solon. On the other hand, seven years later, the Greek text of the first book of the *Histories* would be printed in Oxford as part of a first 'wave' of printed Greek texts in England, along with other authors such as Homer, Demosthenes, Aristophanes and Hesiod.[21] According to Jane Grogan, this renewed interest was directly linked to the 'imperial' ambitions of the political elites of the time. Herodotus' more complex description of the rise of the Persian reign to the rank of empire reflected both the English aspirations to become an acknowledged international power and the risks involved in such

19 The following information on the lost plays is based on LPD 2023.

20 In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus' grandfather, Astiages, is a positive mentor figure, and his story has nothing tragic about it. It is therefore more likely that the play was based on Herodotus' text, where Astiages first tries to have Cyrus killed at his birth because he fears that he will dethrone him, and then punishes Arpagus, the satrap who fails to carry out the order, by feeding his son to him. This leads Arpagus to ally himself with Cyrus and help him dethrone Astiages. Such a plot would indeed be suited to become the subject of a tragedy.

21 The table provided by Kirsty Milne (Milne 2007, 686-7) shows a dramatic increase in the printing of Greek texts in England between 1590 and 1593.

an enterprise. Renaissance readers were aware that the *Histories* are organised according to a cycle of rises and falls that sees a 'barbarian' people rise to the height of power, become corrupted by a new luxurious lifestyle, and eventually fall as another people arises to take its place (cf. Corcella 1984, 113-49). Moreover, Herodotus' *Histories* are permeated by archaic Greek wisdom at whose core is the condemnation of *koros*, the desire for further riches never to be satisfied, leading men inevitably to their downfall, as shown by the very episode of Cyrus' death in Herodotus by the hand of Tomiris, Queen the Massagetae.[22] The revival of Herodotus' *Histories* was thus a double-edged sword for Renaissance England. On the one hand, they nurtured English imperial ambitions with their description of rich lands to be conquered; on the other, they provided a narrative highlighting how morally risky it was to adventure in that direction.

Herodotus' fortune also exerted a strong influence on the contemporary perceptions of other ancient texts on the subject, and above of all on the *Cyropaedia*, which underwent a sort of critical 'devaluation' (Grogan 2007, 70-1). The more nuanced Herodotean portrayal of Persia gave relevance to already-existing 'sceptical' readings of Xenophon's work by authors such as Machiavelli (Newell 1988, 118-21; Grogan 2014, 60-4), and led some readers to implicitly propose that Herodotus could be a better choice than Xenophon for teaching purposes. Such a tendency can be found in Riche's preface to his translation, where he quotes a well-known example (derived from Cicero: see Humble 2020, 38-44) of the educational utility of history: "Scipio Africanus . . . seeking to ensue the example of Cyrus which was fayned by Xenophon, he atchieued . . . fame of wisedome and valure" (Herodotus 1584, A2*v*). The lesson itself would be nothing exceptional, but it is interesting how Riche exploits it to further the reading of the *Histories*, which presents in fact a description of Cyrus as a cunning, unscrupulous, manipulative politician, very different from Xenophon's moderate and pious king. It could be argued that Riche is subtly suggesting a greater 'usefulness' of Herodotus over Xenophon, a higher capacity of the *Histories* to provide its readers

22 This episode in the Middle Ages had become a classic example of tyranny punished, and in the new cultural temperament of this decade it achieved a new fortune also in English culture (see Grogan 2007, 71n26).

with an exemplary tale on how to be a king and rise in power. It is also significant that, seven years later, Xenophon was not included amongst the authors whose texts were for the first time printed in the original Greek in England, unlike Herodotus' first book containing Cyrus' life and deeds. Herodotus' Cyrus had seemingly replaced Xenophon's as a better portrayal of the 'ideal' king in Renaissance England, to the point that a play such as *The Warres of Cyrus*, whose narrative is officially derived from Xenophon, in fact would be more aptly defined as a rewriting of the same in Herodotus' light.

The way Farrant handles the afore-mentioned character of Gobrias is already indicative of this. His decision to side with Cyrus against the Assyrian king Antiochus[23] and his motivation for doing so may derive from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, but what follows does not. In the original text, Cyrus peacefully accepts Gobrias' help and refuses the rich reception prepared for him, thus giving further proof of his moderation. In the play, this sequence of events is replaced by an original plot about the rescue of Alexandria, Gobrias' daughter (a character invented by Farrant), from the Assyrian camp thanks to the sacrifice of Libanio, Alexandria's page, who cross-dresses and takes his mistress' place. The spectacle and tragic pathos of a story of fidelity replaces the Xenophontean 'educational' material. In addition, Farrant adds other subplots absent in Xenophon, whose narrative patterns recall the exotic description of Persia in the Herodotean-like romance tradition and further distance his play from the *Cyropaedia*. Such is the case with the turncoat Ctesiphon, an Assyrian soldier who first offers Antiochus to win Cyrus' trust and then kill him before switching sides, revealing the plot to Cyrus and offering him to kill Antiochus instead. Such is also the case with Antiochus' vassal and friend, Dinon, who falls in love with the page Libanio he believes to be a woman. The latter episode deserves particular attention insofar as it is conceived of as a mirror story of the Panthea and Araspas one derived from Xenophon: as the Persian vassal, the Assyrian one also falls in love with a woman whom he must guard as a hostage. The resemblance is even emphasised by

23 An absent character in Farrant's classic sources: in both Xenophon and Herodotus, the name of the Assyrian king against whom Cyrus fights for the conquest of Babylon is not specified.

Farrant's choice of having Dinon's attempt to seduce Libanio follow Araspas' attempt to have Panthea enchanted by a Magician. In both cases, the episodes have violent endings: Panthea denounces Araspas to Cyrus and Libanio kills Dinon in his sleep. This sequence of events emphasises the equivalence between Araspas and Dinon as examples of the terrifying force of erotic passion, and more generally demonstrates the equivalence between Persians and Assyrians, which is one of the most distinctly 'Herodotean' features of the play. The vassals of Cyrus and Antiochus are shown by Farrant to be interchangeable, afflicted with the same vices and endowed with the same virtues, with no trace of the moral and civil superiority of the Persians. Antiochus himself, although repeatedly described as a lustful tyrant, never behaves as such when on stage. On the contrary, in everything he does he seems faithfully to mirror the 'good king' Cyrus. If Cyrus decides to entrust Panthea to Araspas instead of guarding her himself (B2*r*-B3*r*), Antiochus chooses to entrust the pseudo-Alexandria (in fact the cross-dressed Libanio) to his faithful Dinon (C4*r*). As Cyrus welcomes the treacherous Ctesiphon in his camp (C2*r*-*v*), Antiochus too gladly receives Araspas into his own camp, believing his claims to be a fugitive from the Persians (F3*r*; in fact Araspas has been sent to spy on him). Finally, like Cyrus, Antiochus also enjoys a sincere friendship with his vassals and bitterly mourns Dinon's death (E1*r*). The repetition of these scenic patterns highlights the equivalence of the two monarchs, with no clear evidence of a moral superiority of Cyrus over Antiochus. As a result, the war between Persians and Assyrians is emptied of any moral dimension.[24] Such an interpretation of Persia is perfectly understandable in the light of Herodotus' *Histories*, where neither people is truly morally superior, and in this respect, it should be noted that the play has an interesting opening. Entering the scene, Cyrus proudly congratulates his followers on their victory over "the banded power of Asia, / Whose number ouerspread the Assyrian fields / And in their passage dranke maine rivers drie" (Farrant 1594,

24 In this, *The Warres* reveals an unsuspected similarity to Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*. In that play, too, there is no instance of the moral 'superiority' or 'inferiority' of the titular 'tyrant' over his adversaries: cf. Dall'Olio 2022, 233-4, 249-50.

A1*r*). In these lines, two different references, one from Xenophon and one from Herodotus, are merged together. In Xenophon Cyrus fights against a coalition of armies from various parts of Asia, but that this army drains a river is a detail taken from Book 7 of Herodotus, where it constitutes a leitmotif to describe the size of Xerxes' army about to invade Greece (Hdt. 7.21, 43, 58, 109, 127, 187, 196). This particular confluence makes the war undertaken by Cyrus ambivalent. On the one hand, the reference to Xerxes identifies Assyria as a declining empire: an impression further increased by the description of the spoils of war taken from the Assyrians, consisting of enormous riches. On the other hand, this casts a shadow over Cyrus and the Persians, which the story of Araspas and his love for Panthea (herself a spoil of war) will confirm. The victors, it is suggested, who are now in possession of the riches of the vanquished, risk in turn being corrupted by them, possibly ending up taking over the role of the Assyrians as the people eventually to be defeated and substituted by a new power. Significantly, therefore, Farrant omits another important narrative detail from Xenophon, where Cyrus, while waging the war, is still a vassal of his uncle Cyaxares, king of the Medes. Farrant's play suggests instead that, at the time of the expedition, Cyrus is king of the Persians, as in the story of his expedition against Babylon in Hdt.1.188-91, where, however, such an enterprise represents the apex of his power prior to his war against the Massagetes. Thus, Herodotus' view of history as a succession of empires destined to fall after achieving greatness transpires through Xenophon's idealised portrait, changing it from within.

Cyrus himself, despite being 'officially' represented as a model ruler, is an ambiguous character in the play. While he appears as a well-balanced man, in full control of his passions and aware of his limitations (as shown by his refusal to see Panthea for fear of the dangers of erotic passion, as in Xenophon), every move he makes looks like a cynical attempt to exploit every advantage the situation offers him. Perhaps the highest demonstration of his cynicism occurs in the episode involving the 'convert' Ctesiphon. When the latter offers Cyrus to kill Antiochus, Cyrus' approval in fact hides his intent to have him killed: Ctesiphon is sent back to the Assyrian camp with a letter to the king denouncing his own treachery, because "a villain shall not triumph in the murder of him whom I

account an honourable conquest of my self" (Farrant 1594, E4*r*). If it is perhaps an exaggeration to say that Cyrus here shows himself to be "self-serving, uncaring and hypocritical" (Grogan 2014, 123), since Ctesiphon is technically twice a traitor, nevertheless it cannot go unnoticed that the reason Cyrus 'sells' him to Antiochus is not nobility of spirit, but a desire for glory. Cyrus' true virtue, in the play, seems to reside in his ability to 'govern' men by rising above their faults and exploiting them, in a manner not unlike that of 'Machiavellian'[25] characters such as Tamburlaine or Richard III, as well as Cyrus himself in Herodotus. Behind the apparent exaltation of Cyrus and Persia as proper 'imperial' models, *The Warres of Cyrus* thus offers a highly ambiguous description of this very ideal, rewriting Xenophon's narrative in the light of Herodotus to pinpoint how the pursuit of an imperial power undermines the moral integrity of those who pursue it. In doing so, Farrant not only shows how far Renaissance England had progressed in the knowledge of Herodotus, but also that, thirty years after Preston's *Cambises*, playwrights still used concepts and ideas from the *Histories* to discuss political and moral issues pertinent to their times: a tendency that will reach its peak ten years later with William Alexander's *Croesus*.

Croesus: Herodotean Monarchy

In the first decade of the seventeenth century, the process of critical reappraisal of Herodotus begun in the 1560s, reached a first important result. In 1598, Lancelot Voisin de La Popelinière, in his treatise *L'histoire des histoires*, for the first time officially recognised Herodotus as "a foundational figure" (Earley 2016, 141) in the development of historiography, as the first author to try to condense human history within a single universal narrative showing recognisable patterns. Contextually, he also reprised and developed the interpretation of Herodotus as a "secular continuator of the writings of the Old Testament" (138) proposed years earlier by Protestant writers such as David Chythraeus, whose religious

25 It is no coincidence that Ctesifon goes so far as to define Cyrus "politique" (C4*v*): an ambiguous term, usually associated with Machiavelli's ideology in Elizabethan literature (cf. Bawcutt 1971).

perspective La Popelinière replaced with a more secular evaluation of historiography as a literary genre. Herodotus' scandalous 'otherness' from the canons of Western historiography was then justified from a historical and cultural perspective as the result of his connection with a non-European literary tradition. A few years later, in 1601-1602, Isaac Casaubon, Henri Estienne's son-in-law, during a course of private lessons in his home, further developed this interpretation of the historian by highlighting his proximity in style and in the topics he dealt with to ancient Near Eastern literary and cultural traditions (see Earley 2016, 139-40).

It is likely that the status of Herodotus' description of the Eastern world as the model for romances played no small part in this process. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the interpretation of Herodotus as an Oriental author represents a consequence of his popular perception as the narrator of the wondrous kingdoms of the East. Nevertheless, it is also indicative of a changed critical consideration of the *Histories*, which would have important consequences for Herodotus' perception in Western culture. Firstly, it marked the definitive end of charges of mendacity. While Herodotus would continue to be regarded as an unreliable author, the accusation of having deliberately lied would turn into one of naivety and 'primitivism'. Secondly, as the first author of a universal history, and thus the first to investigate how the various states and empires of the world came into being, developed and declined according to set patterns, Herodotus would in turn become a model for those who, from the seventeenth century onwards, would attempt to write a universal history. Finally, this justified the use of his text for educational purposes, giving official sanction to a trend that was already underway in some literary quarters, as in the 'Persian plays', but now it received a new impetus from Herodotus' 'consecration' as a continuer of the Bible and the writer of a history of rises and falls of empires readable in moralistic terms.

In the same decade in which this new interpretation of Herodotus became established on the continent, on the English stage the Herodotean story of Croesus (already the subject of a long literary tradition)[26] became the topic of the first of the four closet dramas

26 For an interpretation of Croesus' story "as a key articulation of the

of William Alexander's *Monarchicke Tragedies* (printed in 1607, but preceded in 1603-1604 by the single publication of the first two plays, *Darius* and *Croesus*).[27] This ambitious literary project by one of the most eminent courtiers and poets of the time had the intention of providing a general view of universal history and its dynamics for educational reasons. To this end, Alexander built into the tetralogy the traditional religious-historical pattern of *translatio imperii*, which interpreted ancient history as a succession of four great ancient empires (Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome).[28] The four dramas stage a pivotal moment in the course of such empires through the vicissitudes of four tyrant figures, i.e. rulers who mismanaged power,[29] whose behaviour announces the decay and eventual fall of the four empires. They provided Alexander with negative examples through which he could admonish the current ruler, James I. The position of *Croesus* as the first play of the cycle gives a particular prominence to Alexander's reworking of the events described in Book 1 of the *Histories*, as the expression of the political, ethical and poetic principles underlining the entire cycle.[30] Alexander thus repeats what Preston did sixty years earlier with *Cambises*: he turns the tale of the rise and fall of a bad Herodotean king into an exemplary story about the relationship between the sovereign and

principle of imperial self-sufficiency", see Grogan 2014, 6-8. Croesus also appeared as a recurrent figure of punished pride in anthological volumes such as the aforementioned *Pallace of Pleasure* as well as in poetical works such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. He is also mentioned at the beginning of *The Warres of Cyrus* as an example of a rich but coward king, unworthy of his role as commander: see Farrant 1594, A14*r-v*.

27 In terms of composition, *Croesus* is the second play, but in the 1607 edition it is presented as the first one following a chronological order.

28 The inspiration was provided by Nebuchadnezzar's dream in the biblical Book of Daniel (Dan 2.36-45), which ended with the promise of a universal kingdom that would never fall: cf. Hill 1992, 419-23.

29 For a more in-depth analysis of the political theme of tyranny in the tetralogy, see Chapters 3 and 4 of Cadman 2016; for a definition of what constitutes 'tyranny' in the plays, see Lovascio 2016.

30 What I offer in the following pages is only a brief survey of the relationship of Alexander's tragedy with its source; see Janice Valls-Russell's chapter in this same volume, for a more detailed analysis of Alexander's adaptation of Herodotus.

his subjects, as well as a potent illustration of sovereign power. This time, however, the historian's narrative is well known by Alexander, and this allows him to fully recapture and manipulate that narrative so as to make it conversant with his own time. Alexander's drama also represents possibly the highest example of a Persian play using Herodotean Persia as a landscape against which stories of the fall of powerful rulers are set to allow reflection on relevant political issues of the time. In a way, we could consider *Croesus* as the most productive moment of Herodotus' reception in English Renaissance literature.

The first two acts of the play focus on the confrontation between Solon and Croesus, whose moral message on the fickleness of Fortune is transformed by Alexander into an opportunity for a political discussion on the relationship between ruler and state. This theme is already at the heart of Solon's soliloquy, which constitutes the entire Act 1, at whose core stands the character's proud assertion of having renounced absolute power: "I might (a tyrant) still have rul'd in state, / But my cleare minde could no such clouds conceive" (Alexander 1870, 206). This renouncement substantiates the philosopher's confident affirmation that he is able to control his own desires and remain steady in his choice of wisdom instead of pursuing personal gain.[31] This makes him quite different from both Croesus – obsessed with a sense of possession of riches – and the court, which is mainly composed of flatterers. This point is demonstrated by Solon's later confrontation with the courtier Aesope, who, in reprimanding the philosopher for speaking out of turn to the king,[32] states that it is not the business of the courtier, or of the subjects, to criticise a ruler for his actions. As divinely chosen to rule the state, kings enjoy a perfect divine nature, which cannot be questioned: "I think they should excelle . . . / All men in wit, who unto men give lawes; . . . / No doubt great Iove . . . / Doth give to them supernaturall grace" (220-1). Solon retorts that, instead, "Of all men else great monarchs have

31 Solon's philosophy recalls the contemporary Neo-stoicism of authors such as Justus Lipsius: see Cadman 2016, 133.

32 Reference is to the previous scene (2.1), when Solon, as in Herodotus, refused Croesus' claim to be the happiest man on Earth, remarking that "none can be througly blest before the end" (215). The answer irritates Croesus, who affirms that Solon "knowes not what belongs to kings" (217).

most need / To square their actions, and to weigh their words, / And with advice in all things to proceed" (222). The traditional moral of Herodotus' account is thus accompanied by a new affirmation of the Renaissance political principle of the "necessity for unpopular but reasonable advice" (Cadman 2016, 131), as Preston had shown with the story of Cambyses and Praxaspes. It also carries the shadow of a contemporary political debate. Solon's reaffirmation of the need for the king to ask his subjects for advice recalls what George Buchanan (the sovereign's tutor) had written years earlier in the dialogue *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos* (printed 1577) about the need for the people not to grant absolute power to the king: "communicato cum rege consilio communiter statuendum arbitror quod ad omnium salutem communiter faciat" ("I believe that, after consultation with the king in council, a decision should be taken in common in matters which affect the common good of all", *De Iure* 32).[33] By contrast, Aesope's assertion of the divinely ordained superiority of sovereigns recalls the absolutist conception of the king's power presented by James himself in *The Trew Lawes of Free Monarchy* (1598): "the kings were the authors and makers of the Lawes . . . it lies in the power of no Parliament, to make any kinde of Lawe, without his Scepter" (James I 1616, 201-2). The contrast between Solon and Croesus thus becomes that between two different political philosophies: the Athenian sage as the good king capable of moderating his personal instincts and putting himself at the service of the law (of the state as well as of the universe), and the ruler of Lydia, with his greed for riches, his inability to listen to good advisors[34] and his obstinacy in wanting to control his own fortune as a tyrant.

This difference becomes apparent in 4.2, when Croesus ignores Sandanis' urge not to go to war against the Persians. In the first part of the scene, the courtier exhorts Croesus not to indulge in his grief over the death of his son Atys because he thus risks clouding his own judgement: "Where passions domineere, they [kings] govern blindly" (Alexander 1870, 259) – a line that recalls Solon's praise

33 Text and translation from Buchanan 2004.

34 This was another serious political problem in the early days of James' reign, when he was often accused of overspending in favour of his favourites: see Cadman 2016, 132-3.

of his own ability not to be carried away by passions. Eventually the ruler recovers from his grief only to decide to tempt fate and embark on a war whose futility Sandanis emphasises in ways that echo exactly what the character says in Hdt.1.71.2-4: the Persians are a barbaric, warlike people, who know neither luxury nor wealth, and over whom, therefore, there is no merit in winning, while the Lydians would lose everything in the event of defeat. Here as before, Croesus proves himself incapable of listening to correct advice because he is unable to control his own emotions. Only in his final soliloquy (5.2), will he admit the foolishness of his actions and wish he had understood earlier the Solonian wisdom to accept one's fate and restrict one's desires: "O! had this precious with enrich'd my minde . . . / I had disdain'd new dangers to embrace / . . . Had liv'd with pleasure, and had dy'd in peace" (298). Here as in Preston's play forty years earlier, the tyrant is identified with the immoderate, wilful sovereign who elects his own desire as the supreme law, shutting himself off from any dialogue, and eventually condemning himself to human and political failure. At the same time, Alexander also shows that such a behaviour is only conducive to the enslavement of his subjects, as the drama's ending makes it clear through the Chorus' lament about the Lydians' fate of subjugation. The two different political perspectives of *Cambises* and *The Warres* are thus combined: if Preston criticised the tyrant, and Farrant described the risks of pursuing an empire, *Croesus* ends with an explicit condemnation of unrestricted human ambition, which transforms a king into a tyrant and jeopardises any imperial policies.

The message is reiterated in Alexander's ambiguous presentation of Cyrus in 5.1, in many respects similar to Farrant's. On the one hand, the Persian king shows good qualities: veneration towards the gods, recognition of the power of fortune, a very good relationship with his advisor Harpagus. On the other, Cyrus decides to burn Croesus at the stake so that his "name give terror to all those, / Who give against his soveraignty repine" (287). Significantly, Alexander does not stage what follows, which constitutes the core of the Herodotean tale and the reason for its literary fortune. When Croesus, tied to the pyre, calls out to Solon, Cyrus asks him the meaning of his words. Croesus repeats what once Solon told him about man's happiness. Impressed by the story, Cyrus forgives

Croesus, orders his release from the pyre and takes him as his advisor. In Alexander's play, all this is recounted by a messenger who glosses over the sovereign's virtue and focuses on the suffering of the Lydian people, who have been defeated and submitted by the Persians. In this way, Alexander, like Farrant in *The Warres*, denies the ethical superiority of Cyrus over Croesus or of the Persians over the Lydians, while evoking the Herodotean pattern of a barbarian people's rise to become an empire and their subsequent fall. It is worth noting that, on Alexander's part, this constituted yet another criticism of James. In those same years, the sovereign, a great reader of Xenophon, was trying to restore the fortunes of the *Cyropaedia* as an educational text, ordering a new translation and using it as a model for his own *Basilikon Doron* (1599; cf. Grogan 2014, 43-6). The rejection of this 'official' perspective and the choice to stick to Herodotus further demonstrate how political the reworking of the story of Croesus is, as well as another form of advice: even a seemingly ideal king, Alexander suggests, cannot hope to rule the state well if he rules it for himself only. Only by trying to follow Solon's wisdom, by stifling one's own desires and submitting to the laws of nature as well as those of the state, can a ruler truly hope to enjoy his fortune to the end.

Conclusion

The 'Persian plays' as we know them could not exist without Herodotus. Even before the *Histories* arrived in England, their influence was traceable in the literary tradition of the story of Cambyses on which Thomas Preston based his tragedy, paving the way for a more clearly Herodotean approach to Persia shown by plays written after the first two books were translated in the mid-1580s. From Herodotus the authors of the Persian plays derived not only the stories and the imagery, but also concepts and ideas that influenced the way they looked at contemporary political issues. It is through Herodotus that the tyranny of Cambyses and Croesus is identified as a form of government where the will of the king prevails over established laws. It is also through Herodotus that the imperial rise of Persia is shown to respond to a cycle of rises and

falls of empires with the drawback, for those involved, of falling into moral decay. In that sense, the three plays, despite their formal and stylistic differences, display an extraordinary thematic unity that testifies to the deep influence of Herodotus.

This process reflects both the increasing knowledge of Herodotus in Elizabethan England and his gradual revaluation. In the 1560s, with *Cambises*, Thomas Preston relied on a literary tradition also based on the *Histories*. However, at that point Herodotus was relatively unknown in England, while being a heavily criticised author. Forty years later, William Alexander would stage the Herodotean tale about Croesus through precise references to Herodotus' narrative. He used the story of the Lydian king to present the thematic principles which would then be incorporated into his historical tetralogy, trusting in his audience's knowledge of the *Histories*. He also relied upon a more appreciative view of Herodotus' different way of understanding history. Between Preston and Alexander, Richard Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus* revisits Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* in the wake of the new afterlife of Herodotus on English soil during the 1580s. Farrant conveys a Herodotean-like sense of Persia in order to highlight the ethical ambiguities and political risks of the Xenophontean imperial model. He relied on his audience's familiarity, if not with Herodotus himself, at least with the literary descriptions of Persia inspired by his work. Together, the three plays witness that the recovery of the historian's work both influenced English Renaissance playwriting about Persia and helped furthering political discussion about of compelling political topics at the time, suggesting that there is more to say about Herodotus' place in England than had until then met the scholar's eyes.

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7

Aristophanes in *The Staple of News*: Ideology and Drama*

Francesco Morosi

Abstract

This essay aims at reassessing Aristophanic presence in Ben Jonson's *The Staple of News* (first performed in 1626). Although single verbal references to Aristophanic drama are scant in the play, it will be contended that both the ideological posture and the dramatic technique of the English play are strongly influenced by Jonson's in-depth reading of Aristophanes. This will also lead us to re-evaluate at least partially Jonson's intertextual strategies.

Keywords: Ben Jonson; *The Staple of News*; Aristophanes' *Wealth*; Aristophanes' *Wasps*; Aristophanes' *Clouds*; Generation Gap; Dramatic Technique; Early Modern English Drama

1.

Humiliated by the servile state into which Pennyboy Sr has got her, Lady Pecunia, the personification of money in Ben Jonson's *Staple of News*, needs to be reassured of her own reputation. Thus, the old miser embarks on a long tirade on the powers of money:

Pennyboy Sr You are a noble, young, free, gracious lady,
And would be everybody's in your bounty,
But you must not be so. They are a few
That know your merit, lady, and can value't.
Yourself scarce understands your proper powers.
They are almighty, and that we your servants,
That have the honour here to stand so near you,
Know, and can use too. All this nether world
Is yours; you command it and do sway it;
The honour of it and the honesty,

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The reputation, ay, and the religion
(I was about to say, and had not erred)
Is Queen Pecunia's – for that style is yours,
If mortals knew Your Grace, or their own good.
(2.1.31-44)[1]

Although more than one source can be provided for this passage[2] and for the personification itself of money,[3] these lines are evidently indebted to a famous scene from Aristophanes' *Wealth* (388 BCE), where Chremylus, the protagonist, and Cario, his slave, try to convince a fearful Wealth that he is by far the most powerful among the gods.[4] The scene (Aristoph. *Pl.* 124-97) is a prolonged parody of ancient hymns,[5] which often asked the gods for favours by first reminding them about their own ἀρεταί, powers. As was rightly observed (Medda 2013², 2005, 20), the aretalogy in *Wealth* is somewhat paradoxical, since until the very end of the scene, Wealth, a god, is not at all convinced to have all the powers that the two mortals are conferring on him. Like Pennyboy Sr in *The Staple of*

1 For the purposes of this paper, I will take into consideration the 1626 edition of the play (printed in 1631). Henceforth, the text will be quoted from Loewenstein's edition, in Jonson 2012, vol. 6.

2 See especially the opening scene of *Volpone*, where Volpone worships his money as if it were a saint.

3 In antiquity, see for instance Hor. *Ep.* 1.6.37, where *regina Pecunia* is mentioned along with other deities such as Venus or deified personifications such as *Suadela*, Persuasion; Πλοῦτος, the personification of wealth in Lucian's *Timon* (as was recently shown, Lucian exerted a considerable influence over Jonson's works: Miola 2019). In the early modern age, the allegorical personification of money was also quite widespread: see e.g. Richard Barnfield's *Encomium of Lady Pecunia: or the Praise of Money* (1598); Lady Munera in Book V of Edmund Spencer's *Faerie Queen* (1596); Money in *The Contention between Liberality and Prodigality* (1602).

4 Curiously enough, one of the most influential studies on the relationship between Aristophanes and Jonson (Gum 1969) does not include this passage from *The Staple of News* among those showing Jonson's reading of Aristophanic plays. But see Loewenstein's note *ad* 35-6 in Jonson 2012, vol. 6. Steggle 2007, 62 also describes this scene as dependent on *Wealth*, although he considers the verbal parallels "not entirely clear and decisive".

5 This was already noticed by Kleinknecht 1937, 211-2, who labelled this passage from *Wealth* as an instance of *Gebetsparodie*.

News, Chremylus and Cario explain to Wealth that he presides over the whole world, since money is the universal currency: even Zeus owes his own power to the fact that he is rich. Chremylus thus reaches the easy conclusion (*Pl.* 146) that ἅπαντα τῷ πλουτεῖν γάρ ἐσθ' ὑπήκοα[6] ("everything is subordinate to wealth"), a statement that is echoed by Jonson's "All this nether world / is yours" (38-9). Even more interestingly, Jonson's praise of the omnipotence of wealth includes religion among the many fields which Lady Pecunia dominates (41-3). This seems to me a clear enough parallel with a significant part of Aristophanes' paradoxical demonstration of the power of money – Wealth's influence over religion and rites (Aristoph. *Pl.* 133-43):

Χρ. θύουσι δ' αὐτῷ διὰ τίν'; οὐ διὰ τουτονί;
Κα. καὶ νὴ Δί' εὔχονταί γε πλουτεῖν ἄντικρυς.
Χρ. οὔκουν ὅδ' ἐστὶν αἴτιος καὶ ῥᾳδίως
παύσει' ἄν, εἰ βούλοιτο, ταῦθ';
Πλ. ὁτιὴ τί δή;
Χρ. ὅτι οὐδ' ἂν εἷς θύσειεν ἀνθρώπων ἔτι
οὐ βοῦν ἄν, οὐχὶ ψαιστόν, οὐκ ἄλλ' οὐδὲ ἕν,
μὴ βουλομένου σοῦ.
Πλ. πῶς;
Χρ. ὅπως; οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅπως
ὠνήσεται δήπουθεν, ἢν σὺ μὴ παρὼν
αὐτὸς διδῷς τἀργύριον· ὥστε τοῦ Διὸς
τὴν δύναμιν, ἢν λυπῇ τι, καταλύσεις μόνος.
Πλ. τί λέγεις; δι' ἐμὲ θύουσιν αὐτῷ;
Χρ. φήμ' ἐγώ.
(133-44)

[Ch. And who's the cause of people sacrificing to Zeus? Isn't it him? Ca. Yes, and indeed they pray in so many words to become rich. Ch. So isn't he the cause of it all, and couldn't he easily stop it if he wanted to? WE. Why do you say that? Ch. Because not a single person could offer sacrifices anymore – not an ox, not a ground-cake, not anything at all – if you didn't want them to. We. How

6 Unless otherwise specified, Aristophanes' texts will be quoted from N.G. Wilson's edition (Aristophanes 2007). Translations are by A.H. Sommerstein (Aristophanes 1982, 1983, 1998, 2001), slightly modified.

come? Ch. How come? There's no way they can buy the things, of course, unless you yourself are with them and give them the money. So, if you're aggrieved at all with Zeus, you can overthrow his power all by yourself. We. What are you saying? That I make them sacrifice to him? Ch. That's right.]

Another instance of Aristophanes' widespread criticism against popular religion and its form as a cynical *do ut des*, this passage also contains an indication on the finale of the comedy: by showing that worshipping Wealth is far more advantageous than worshipping Zeus, Chremylus will actually stop everybody sacrificing to Zeus, and by so doing will eventually defeat him. It seems to me that, although a rather scant reference, Jonson's mention of religion as dependent on money is yet another touch that derives from the reading of *Wealth*. To be sure, Jonson is not offering a translation – not even an adaptation – of the scene from *Wealth*. However, it is also quite clear that he is considering that scene, and is freely reshaping it – by choosing, summarising, and rewriting some of its contents. From this passage we can be fairly sure, then, that at this moment in his life, Jonson had read and knew at least some of Aristophanes' plays, and used them, among many other texts, as a source of inspiration, and adaptation, for single passages and more general elements of plot and characterization.

This passage from act 2 goes hand in hand with a scene in act 5, where another Aristophanic cameo can be spotted: among the many oddities ascribed to Pennyboy Sr, gone mad for having been deprived of Lady Pecunia, we hear that he is taking his two dogs to trial (5.3.32ff.), an evident reference to Philocleon's hilarious trial of two dogs in Aristophanes' *Wasps* (Aristoph. *Vesp.* 891-1002). In this case, no textual hint may be found that points to specific knowledge of Aristophanes' text (the only, very scant, hint may be the charge against the dogs: the "plot to cozen", at 5.3.36, may recall the charge in *Wasps*, where the dog Labes is accused of having eaten up all the Sicilian cheese). In fact, differences look more substantial than similarities: whereas in *Wasps* the dogs interpret the two opposing parties, the plaintiff and the defendant, in *The Staple* both dogs interpret the role of the defendant, with Pennyboy Sr playing the part of judge and prosecutor. Although Aristophanic in its tone,

then, the dogs' trial is not really comparable to the aretalogy of Lady Pecunia in act 2, since it does not prove a direct reading of *Wasps*, but just general knowledge of its plot.[7] To sum up, then Aristophanes' verbal presence in the *Staple* looks quite scant.

The extent to which Aristophanic comedy impacted on early modern English drama is a topic that still invites critical contributions. This is particularly the case with Ben Jonson's works, whose dependence on Aristophanes and ancient comedy has long been a scholarly *cliché*.[8] As Alessandro Grilli and I have tried to show elsewhere (2023), however, the terms of this dependence are open for discussion. At least after 1607, Jonson had certainly read Aristophanes, as his library shows.[9] But such reading looks hardly comparable to that of other Greek or Latin poets: Jonson's own markings on these editions are scant, and his knowledge of Greek, although certainly deeper than that of most contemporaries, does

7 The dogs' trial in *The Staple* gives us a surprising scholarly clue about Aristophanic reception, though. As first noticed by Parr in Jonson 1988, Jonson seems here to conflate two famously mad old characters: Philocleon and Lear. In *King Lear* 4.5.155, Lear, already in his madness, speaks of the usurer as hanging the cozener, a remarkably similar situation to that of Pennyboy Sr, a usurer judging two cozeners. To the best of my knowledge, Jonson is by far the first ever reader of Aristophanes to relate Philocleon and Lear – a very productive line of interpretation, which was taken, in recent years, by Fabbro 2013.

8 A *cliché* deriving directly from Jonson, who stressed the ties between his works and ancient comedy more than once: see e.g. the induction to *Every Man Out of His Humour*, where Cordatus describes the play as "something like *Vetus Comoedia*" (227; ed. R. Martin, in Jonson 2012, vol. 1). Such idea then spread throughout the scholarship, and dominated last century's studies on the subject: see e.g. Gum 1969; Lafkidou Dick 1974. For an updated, and more balanced, perspective, see Steggle 2007, esp. 59-64, and 2019.

9 McPherson 1974. According to McPherson, Jonson owned two editions of Aristophanes' works, one (Édouard Biset de Charlais's *Aristophanis comoediae undecim, cum scholiis antiquis*) published in 1607, and the other (a general collection of Greek poets: *Poetae Graeci Veteres Tragici, Comici, Lyrici, Epigrammatarii Additis Fragmentis ex probatis authoribus collectis, nunc primum Graece & Latine in unum redacti corpus*) in 1614. The former contained the Greek text of the eleven extant comedies with a Latin translation and a collection of ancient and modern commentaries; the latter had a complete Greek text with Latin translation but no notes.

not seem deep enough to read the original text of Aristophanic comedies in full.[10] It comes as no surprise, then, that explicit and direct references to Aristophanes are altogether quite rare and episodic in the Jonsonian *corpus*. This reduces the critical value of an integrally intertextual reading of Aristophanes' and Jonson's works.[11] The reshaping of the aretalogy scene from *Wealth* which we have just analysed – one of the most explicit references to Aristophanes throughout the play – is an excellent example, showing us that the relationship between Ben Jonson and Aristophanes has not so much to do with overt verbal parallels and adaptations of entire textual sequences. This observation, however, does not close the subject at all. As a matter of fact, intertextuality – understood as a specific, explicit, and close textual elaboration of a given hypotext –[12] is most certainly not the only productive way to look at the literary, and dramatic, interactions between two *corpora*, and two authors. In fact, the relationship between Aristophanes and Ben Jonson looks like a useful testing ground for a broader literary perspective, taking us beyond the understanding of any literary echo in terms of 'quotation'. This perspective would also allow us to acquire a systemic point of view, taking into account the fact that textual relationships are hardly ever isolated and exclusive relationships between one text and one single source.

This essay aims to show the potentialities of such an approach by offering an 'Aristophanic' reading of Ben Jonson's *Staple of News*: it will contend that, although verbal parallels are rare, Aristophanes exerted a deeper influence on the dramatic, thematic, characterological, and ideological structure of the play, or of some

10 Victoria Moul's studies on Jonson's Pindaric receptions (2007, 2010, ch. 1, and 2012) have shown a quite intense relationship with his Greek model. However, as in case of Aristophanes, that relationship has a fundamental Latin mediator, Horace.

11 Under this respect, I cannot agree with Matthew Steggle when he concludes that with Jonson we are seeing one of those authors "who know the works of Aristophanes, writing for an audience who also know Aristophanes, and who are making specific intertextual allusions to those plays" (Steggle 2007, 64).

12 See especially the interpretive approach adopted by some of the most influential works on the subject: Gum 1969; Lafkidou Dick 1974; Steggle 2007.

parts of it. This observation will give us an interesting insight into Jonson's 'intertextual' strategies, and will contribute to our reappraisal of the Jonson-Aristophanes relationship.

2.

In 1969, Coburn Gum already noticed one prominent feature of *The Staple of News* that Ben Jonson must have derived from Aristophanes.[13] The basis upon which most of *The Staple* rests is the brilliant idea that an abstract commodity such as news can be treated as if it were a material one. In fact, news is not even a commodity: logically speaking, as a non-exclusive good – that is, a good whose possession by an individual does not inevitably exclude its possession by any other subject –[14] news and knowledge couldn't be either accumulated or sold. On the contrary, the comic process by which the Staple works in Jonson's play consists in a form of accumulation and brokering of news – the office receives news from informants, then buys the news, and while buying it, it also 'certifies' it:

> FITTON And if a man will assure his news, he may:
> Twopence a sheet he shall be warranted,
> And have a policy for't.
> (1.5.64-6)

By constituting itself as the only viable hub for news, the Staple invites its informants to entrust their news to the Staple alone. By so doing, the market comically makes a non-exclusive good exclusive: thus, it makes it a material, purchasable commodity. Once bought from the informants, any piece of news can then be sold again:

> [*Enter*] *FIRST COSTUMER:* [*DOPPER,*] *a she-Anabaptist.*
> DOPPER Ha' you, in your profane shop, any news
> O'the saints at Amsterdam?

13 See esp. Gum 1969, 176-7. More recently, see Steggle 2007, 62 and Miola 2014, 499.

14 This definition is taken from Luigi Lombardi Vallauri's codification of goods (2012²).

REGISTER Yes. How much would you?
DOPPER Six pennyworth.
REGISTER Lay your money down. [*Dopper pays.*] Read, Thomas.
. . .
DOPPER Have you no other of that species?
REGISTER Yes,
But dearer; it will cost you a shilling.
DOPPER [*Offering money*] Verily,
There is a ninepence; I will shed no more.
REGISTER Not to the good o'the saints?
DOPPER I am not sure
That man is good.
REGISTER [*To Tom*] Read, from Constantinople,
Nine penny'orth.
(*SN* 3.2.123-41)

Like actual commodities, any piece of news can be priced based on its worth (its worth being determined, as per the economic model of price determination, by the clients' demand). Of course, the fact that Register can produce different pieces of news on the same subject based on what his clients are willing to offer (then, are willing to hear) shows the real value of news sold at the Staple: one gains the distinct impression that Register's news is tampered with or directly counterfeit, and that the work at the Staple is nothing more than a con operation.

Gum rightly observed that such features are parallelled by Aristophanes' *Clouds*, where another institution, Socrates' φροντιστήριον (or Thinkery), is based on a very similar process of commodification of knowledge. Socrates and their pupils have an exclusive monopoly of knowledge, which they have stored within the Thinkery, an almost impenetrable house. Upon payment, they are available to reveal parts of their precious and esoteric knowledge (Aristoph. *Nub.* 98-9):

οὗτοι διδάσκουσ', ἀργύριον ἤν τις διδῷ,
λέγοντα νικᾶν καὶ δίκαια κἄδικα.

[These people teach you, if you pay them, how to carry the day in argument, whether your case is just or unjust.]

The reason why knowledge can be traded is that it is indissolubly linked with money. From Strepsiades' perspective, being able to prevail in speaking means being able to win in any lawsuit – then not to be obliged to pay any debts (*Nub.* 112-8):

> εἶναι παρ' αὐτοῖς φασιν ἄμφω τὼ λόγω,
> τὸν κρείττον', ὅστις ἐστί, καὶ τὸν ἥττονα.
> τούτοιν τὸν ἕτερον τοῖν λόγοιν, τὸν ἥττονα,
> νικᾶν λέγοντά φασι τἀδικώτερα.
> ἢν οὖν μάθῃς μοι τὸν ἄδικον τοῦτον λόγον,
> ἃ νῦν ὀφείλω διὰ σέ, τούτων τῶν χρεῶν
> οὐκ ἂν ἀποδοίην οὐδ' ἂν ὀβολὸν οὐδενί.
> (112-18)

> [It's said that they have in their house both the Arguments, the Better, whatever that may be, and the Worse; and that one of this pair of Arguments, the Worse, can plead an unjust cause and prevail. Well, if you learn this Wrongful Argument for me, then of these debts that I owe now because of you, I wouldn't have to pay an obol to anyone.]

Thus, both Aristophanes and Jonson present us with a paradoxical commodification of knowledge. I believe, however, that the comparison between the Staple and the Thinkery can be pushed beyond a broad formal similarity. Interestingly, such correspondence in plot produces extremely similar results, from both a dramaturgical and an ideological point of view – which in my opinion demonstrates clearly enough that this parallel is not fortuitous, or superficial, at all.

Firstly, ideology. As we have seen, the trading of news in the Staple is clearly represented by Jonson as a fraud, a dishonest strategy aimed at making money out of deceiving gullible clients. Not surprisingly, the Staple and its staff are inextricably linked with Pennyboy Jr and his club of Jeerers, that is, wicked imposters who make a living out of deceiving their neighbour: once the Staple blows up (on which more later), Cymbal, the master of the Staple, is said to be back as "grand captain of the Jeerers" (*SN* 5.1.48); and at least two of the Jeerers, Fitton and Picklock, also serve as informants for the Staple. In Jonson's view, those young Jeerers represent the

product of a spineless and immoral new generation, a *jeunesse dorée* that was made frivolous by the "common follies" (The Prologue for the Court, 11) of the era. Among those "follies" Jonson identifies a new, degenerate idea of education and culture (of which printed corantos and the news agency business themselves are an evident phenomenon)[15] as mostly responsible for the deterioration of mores. Not surprisingly, once he is convinced he has finally secured Lady Pecunia for himself, Pennyboy Jr plans on founding a new college – one whose faculty only consists in vagabonds (as its own name denounces), rascals and jeerers:[16]

PENNYBOY JR . . . Now I think of it,
A noble whimsy's come into my brain:
Canters' College begun to be erected.
I'll build a college, I and my Pecunia,
And call it Canters' College. Sounds it well?
ALMANAC Excellent!
PENNYBOY JR And here stands my father rector,
And you professors – you shall all profess
Something, and live there with Her Grace and me,
Your founders. I'll endow't with lands and means,
And Lickfinger shall be my master cook.
(*SN* 4.4.79-87)

As Joseph Loewenstein summed up, throughout *The Staple* Jonson's posture appears as "both serenely and hysterically conservative", "gloomily and hilariously nostalgic for the ethos of a military aristocracy now felt to be so fully degraded that the disguised father of *The Staple of News* might with mocking gaiety describe his son, surrounded by spurrier and barber, linener, haberdasher, and shoemaker, as 'an heir in the midst of his forces'" (Loewenstein in Jonson 2012, vol. 6). *The Staple*, then, ends up as a war between

15 Although of course the commerce in information (in manuscript and, later, in print) was already well established some forty years before the production of *The Staple of News*: see e.g. Love 1993, esp. 9-20.

16 It is just possible that Jonson had a specific case in mind when describing the whimsical new institution founded by Pennyboy Jr (as McKenzie suggests: 1973, 120-1). However, it does not seem necessary to presume the parody of an exact historical fact.

the generations, fought around a changing conception of culture, manners, and values.

Just as vividly as Jonson, Aristophanes, too, stages a war between generations in some of his comedies.[17] Both *Clouds* and *Wasps* – two plays that must have been chronologically close[18] – deal with the fallout of the break in a father-son relationship. In *Clouds*, Strepsiades struggles to convince his son, Pheidippides, to attend Socrates' school, and when he does convince him, he ends up being beaten by his own son; in *Wasps*, Philocleon, an old Athenian, is detained by his son Bdelicleon in his own house, so that he cannot go and perform his jury duty, but in the end, he manages to be freed and rejuvenated. In both plays, the problematic relationship between father and son is thematised, and is depicted as exemplary of a rift between two generations, and two different epochs in Athenian society. For Aristophanes', however, this is not a neutral observation on the change of τρόποι, of morals. On the contrary, the depiction of a problematic father-son relationship brings about a ferocious political discussion on the degeneration of Athens. The older generation – which Aristophanes describes, with a slight and significant anachronism, as the one that fought against the Persians in Marathon – is given all positive political values: it is the generation that effectively built the glory of Athens. Faced with a momentous crisis in Athens, Aristophanes offers his audience a quite simple way out: the only way to obtain the σωτηρία, the salvation, of the city is to go back to the good old times when everything worked. The present, and the present generation of Athenians, are consistently represented as the byproduct of an almost unstoppable decline, to which the only solution appears an impracticable – although comically effective –

17 The label "war of generations" was first used for *Clouds* and *Wasps* by Whitman 1964, 119-66. Later, the generation gap in Aristophanic drama was analysed by Handley 1993; Strauss 1993, 153-166; Sutton 1993; Fabbro 2013; Telò 2010 and 2016; Morosi 2018 and 2020. On the historical context, see Forrest 1975 and Ostwald 1986, 229-50.

18 As is well known, we do not possess the first version of *Clouds*, staged in 423 BCE. The play was a complete failure, and was rewritten, and possibly re-performed, some years later (Rosen 1997; Sonnino 2005; Revermann 2006, 326-32; Biles 2011, 167-210; Marshall 2001[2], Wright 2012, 63-4). *Wasps* was first staged one year after *Clouds*, in 422 BCE.

return to Athens' glorious past.[19] Comic nostalgia, then, is a serious political accusation against those who run the city in the present day. This new generation of Athenians is depicted as lazy, fatuous, corrupt, and ultimately unfit. And this has much to do with culture: a decline in culture has produced a moral decline, which in turn has proved fatal for the πόλις as a whole. In Aristophanic drama, the war of generations is also, and mostly, a war between different conceptions of education and culture. Both *Clouds* and *Wasps* represent two opposite forms of education fighting against each other: an ἀρχαία παιδεία (*Nub.* 961), the traditional education that brought up the older Athenians and ensured political, military, and social steadfastness, as opposed to a degenerate new παιδεία, brokered by sophists and based upon the immoral and intellectualistic premise that everything is licit for those able to get away with unjust actions. In Aristophanes' view, thus, culture is the ultimate cause for the political decline of the city.

That between fathers and sons, then, is a cultural as well as a social rift. Just like Pennyboy Jr and his friends, Pheidippides and Bdelycleon adhere to a new, sophistic education, based upon the witty ability to use language as an instrument for deceit.[20] Thus, Pheidippides can prove to Strepsiades that beating one's father is an act of generosity, and Bdelycleon can (try to) teach Philocleon how to look hypocritically smart in refined social contexts. In this latter case, Philocleon fiercely opposes Bdelycleon's training by openly boasting of his own ignorance (*Vesp.* 989: κιθαρίζειν γὰρ οὐκ ἐπίσταμαι, "I cannot play the lyre"), a proud claim to be unsophisticated – that is, incompatible with Bdelycleon's new culture.[21] Since any form of intellectual sophistication is depicted as a form of fraud and hypocrisy, the only way to be morally impeccable is to prove deliberately coarse, and for this reason decent and trustworthy. Within this ideological framework, the comic hero's unwillingness to conform to up-to-date cultural standards, and his overt pride in his own illiteracy must be seen as

19 This is the reason why time in Aristophanic drama is circular, and not linear: see Paduano 2007 and Grilli 2020-2021.

20 Bdelycleon's culture must be read as sophistic just as much as Philocleon's: see Morosi 2018, 18-20.

21 On this joke, see Kloss 2001, 224-6; Grilli and Morosi 2023, ch. 2.

completely positive traits: they denounce the hero's belonging to an older, less refined but more morally solid generation. If culture is what Socrates and sophists are teaching, then being ignorant is the only possible revolt. Herein lies, of course, a difference between Jonson and Aristophanes that is not irrelevant: for the latter, the sole possible alternative to false sophistic culture appears to be sheer ignorance; for the former, the alternative to the new trends in the academic and cultural life is a more rigorous form thereof. Unlike Strepsiades and Philocleon, Pennyboy Canter, the father in *The Staple*, is a highly respectable and well-read character. He still fights against an equally dangerous degeneration of culture, but he does so from a remarkably different standpoint. As I intend to argue in a future work, this is certainly due to Jonson's overall social context and cultural position: Jonson was writing for an audience mostly made up of erudites or educated people; he would therefore never challenge culture as a whole (and the social system based thereupon) but limited himself to warning against degenerate forms of that culture.

Differences in culture, of course, correspond with differences in lifestyles, too. Just like Jonson's Pennyboy Jr, whom we meet surrounded by barbers, shoemakers, fashioners, haberdashers, lineners, and hatters in act 1, Pheidippides and Bdelycleon are prone to fatuous and expensive fashions: the former adores horse racing (the reason for the dissipation of Strepsiades' family fortune), while the latter is proficient in frivolous conversation at symposia, and likes lavish clothes. In both *The Staple* and Aristophanes' two plays, such giddy appearance is a clear sign of the characters' adhering to a whole new, and corrupt, idea of culture, as opposed to their fathers' austere and morally incorruptible lifestyle. Before taking him to a symposium, one of his social occasions, Bdelycleon offers his father a new, expensive tunic produced in Persia. Philocleon's reaction is telling (*Vesp.* 1131-49):

Bd. τὸν τρίβων' ἄφες,
τηνδὶ δὲ χλαῖναν ἀναβαλοῦ τριβωνικῶς.
Φι. ἔπειτα παῖδας χρὴ φυτεύειν καὶ τρέφειν,
ὅθ' οὑτοσί με νῦν ἀποπνῖξαι βούλεται;
Bd. ἔχ', ἀναβαλοῦ τηνδὶ λαβών, καὶ μὴ λάλει.

Φι. τουτὶ τὸ κακὸν τί ἐστι, πρὸς πάντων θεῶν;
Βd. οἱ μὲν καλοῦσι Περσίδ', οἱ δὲ καυνάκην.
Φι. ἐγὼ δὲ σισύραν ᾠόμην Θυμαιτίδα.
Βd. κοὐ θαῦμά γ'· εἰς Σάρδεις γὰρ οὐκ ἐλήλυθας.
ἔγνως γὰρ ἄν· νῦν δ' οὐχὶ γιγνώσκεις.
Φι. ἐγώ;
μὰ τὸν Δί' οὔτοι νῦν γ'· ἀτὰρ δοκεῖ γέ μοι
ἐοικέναι μάλιστα Μορύχου σάγματι.
Βd. οὔκ, ἀλλ' ἐν Ἐκβατάνοισι ταῦθ' ὑφαίνεται.
Φι. ἐν Ἐκβατάνοισι γίγνεται κρόκης χόλιξ;
Βd. πόθεν, ὦγάθ'; ἀλλὰ τοῦτο τοῖσι βαρβάροις
ὑφαίνεται πολλαῖς δαπάναις. αὕτη γέ τοι
ἐρίων τάλαντον καταπέπωκε ῥᾳδίως.
Φι. οὔκουν ἐριώλην δῆτ' ἐχρῆν αὐτὴν καλεῖν
δικαιότερον ἢ καυνάκην;
(1131-49)

[Bd. Let go of your daft old cloak, and deftly put this warm one on. Ph. Really, why should one produce and rear children, when now this one wants to strangle me? Bd. Here, take this and put it on, and stop chattering. PH. In the name of all the gods, what is this awful thing? Bd. Some people call it a Persian cloak, and others a kaunakes. Ph. I thought it was a sheepskin mantle made at Thymaetadae. Bd. No wonder, you've never been to Sardis. If you had you'd have recognised it; as it is, you don't. Ph. What, me? Well, I certainly don't; but it seems to me to be most like a pot-warmer from Morychus. BD. No no, these are woven in Ecbatana. Ph. In Ecbatana they have woolen sausages? Bd. Really, my good man! No, this is woven by the natives; it's very expensive to make. Why, this garment has swallowed up a talent of wool easily. Ph. In this case shouldn't it properly be called a wool-waster rather than a kaunakes?]

Philocleon is used to much cheaper and more austere cloaks, and is in no way impressed by the costly and exclusive nature of the tunic. On the contrary, he is concerned about the great waste of wool needed to produce it. What is more, the tunic is a Persian manufact, in direct contradiction to Athens' longstanding anti-Persian posture, the same posture that led to Marathon, Salamis, and to some of the highest moments in Athenian recent history. In

other words, Bdelycleon's degenerate culture leads to a degenerate lifestyle which results in an act of political treason.[22]

A cloak is also mentioned in Jonson's *Staple of News*, again as a symbol of the striking difference between fathers and sons. It is Pennyboy Canter's cloak – the lousy, ugly cloak of a beggar, markedly different from Pennyboy Jr's costly and refined attire. Once Canter has revealed his identity and stripped his son of his newly acquired wealth, the cloak can be passed to Pennyboy Jr:

> CANTER Farewell, my beggar in velvet, for today;
> (*He points him to his patched cloak thrown off.)*
> Tomorrow you may put on that grave robe
> And enter your great work of Canters' College,
> Your work, and worthy of a chronicle.
> (*SN* 4.4.176-9)

Once again, different cloths symbolise different conditions, and Pennyboy Jr's humiliation is shown as a healthy return to a poorer yet more solid and honest condition.

Interestingly, then, both Aristophanes and Jonson depict a war of generations through the conflictual relationship between a father and a son. Yet more interestingly, the conflict relates specifically to the possession of the family fortune. Since both Jonson's *Staple* and Aristophanes' 'family plays' share a decidedly nostalgic attitude, we are to empathise with the father rather than with the son: the latter's attempt at replacing the former as head of the household is consistently shown as a violent abuse rather than as a natural succession. More precisely, Pheidippides' and Bdelycleon's competition with their respective fathers is clearly depicted as a death impulse – a parricide. This emerges with striking clarity from Pheidippides' assault on his father in *Clouds* (1321 ff.) and is implicit in Bdelycleon's relationship with Philocleon (*Vesp.* 1364-5):

> ὦ οὗτος οὗτος, τυφεδανὲ καὶ χοιρόθλιψ,
> ποθεῖν ἐρᾶν τ' ἔοικας ὡραίας σοροῦ.

22 Mario Telò (2016) has offered a meta-literary reading of this scene, relating Aristophanic comedy here to the meta-literary relationship with Cratinus.

> [Hey, you, you – you demented old twat-rubber! You seem to be lovingly yearning for an attractive young coffin!]

Bdelycleon is accusing his father of being prone to desire in a way that is obviously unnatural for his age: to this aim, he introduces, παρὰ προσδοκίαν, a joke with σορός, coffin – as if to say, 'the only thing you should be longing for at your age is dying'. Bdelycleon's death impulse against his father is clearly perceived by Philocleon, too, who interprets his relationship with his son as eventually lethal to himself. As we have seen, when asked to wear the precious Persian tunic, he fears that his son may want to strangle him *(Vesp.* 1133-4, see above). It should be noted that strangling was also Pheidippides' strategy for killing his own father Strepsiades in *Clouds (*πνίγειν: *Nub.* 1376, 1389; ἀπάγχειν: *Nub.* 1385).

Of course, the desire for one's father's death is intimately related to the eventual possession of the family's fortune, which, according to the order of succession in fifth-century Athens, was due to all male heirs.[23] In Aristophanes' plays, it is clear that the death of one's father was the *conditio sine qua non* to manage the estate and the capital in complete freedom. In other words, it is the desire for the estate that makes succession a death impulse. In *Clouds*, Strepsiades summarises his son's attitude as follows (*Nub.* 837-8): σὺ δὲ / ὥσπερ τεθνεῶτος καταλόει μου τὸν βίον ("you squander my livelihood by washing yourself as if I were dead"). Herein lies, of course, a harsh moral judgement: to prefer money over one's parent's life is described as cynical, cruel, and brutal, the ultimate byproduct of the new, degenerate education. In yet other terms, we may say that linear succession is the social surrogate of, and prelude to, death: resisting linear succession means resisting death, as much as seeking urgently linear succession is a surrogate of, and prelude to, wanting one's predecessor dead.

The possession of the family estate is obviously crucial to *The Staple of News*, as well. As in Aristophanes, Pennyboy Jr's desperate need for his father's fortune is what ultimately defines the whole play's characterology as well as its plot. When we first meet father and son in act 1, Pennyboy Jr's father has allegedly been dead for

23 See e.g. Harrison 1971, vol. 1, esp. 130ff.

just one week. Pennyboy Jr, however, is far from mourning him – he is celebrating his taking over his father's fortunes. He introduces Pennyboy Canter (his father in disguise) as follows:

> This is my founder, this same learnèd canter!
> He brought me the first news of my father's death;
> I thank him, and ever since I call him founder.
> Worship him, boys.
> (*SN* 1.1.18-21)

His father's death is by no means a source of sorrow for Pennyboy Jr – it is the reason why he has finally become rich. Both Aristophanes' family plays and Jonson's *Staple*, then, feature a war between generations as a sign of an epochal cultural change that is seen as dangerous and damaging. Such generational gap is represented by means of a fierce – even violent – competition between father and son for taking control over the family estate.

The similarity is even more significant since it is marked, that is, salient. To be sure, European drama has staged the relationship between fathers and sons, and between elder and younger characters, countless times. However, the most widespread ideological framework in this field is exactly opposite to that of Aristophanes. As has been extensively shown, this has to do with the historical success of a different comic model, the one stemming from Menander's New Comedy and spreading through early modern and modern drama through the fundamental filter of Latin comedy.[24] Frequently, Menandrean and post-Menandrean drama depict succession between an older character and a younger one, as well. However, instead of looking like an act of violence against the older character, succession is shown as a natural process, which confirms and enforces the stability of society, seen as a system that needs to perpetuate itself, and therefore needs its younger members to eventually take over. From a reader-response perspective,[25] while

24 See e.g. Konstan 1995; Lape 2001; Lape, Moreno 2014; Grilli 2020-2021. Of course, Latin (and particularly Plautine) comedy was pivotal to spread plots and ideas from New Comedy through early modern and modern Europe: see e.g. Hardin 2018.

25 By 'reader-response' I mean here the critical theory first developed

Aristophanic comedy urges its audience to empathise completely with the older generation (whom we see as victims of a brutal aggression against their own prerogatives, and against their own life), Menandrean comedy urges us to empathise with the younger characters. In this latter case, the older generation's resistance to succession is not depicted as a necessary fight to preserve their dignity anymore, but rather as an unnatural and ultimately fruitless opposition to the normal dynamics implied by linear time. This unambiguously positive interpretation of succession not only orients our sympathy towards one of the two characters involved in the conflict, but shapes the whole ideology developed around the theme of the war between generations.[26] Our undivided sympathy must be given to the new generation and its members, now shown as the victims of a deviant repression against their legitimate desire for succession. Such general desire impacts on two fundamental fields – love and money. Not surprisingly, the older character, depicted as grotesquely prone to desires that should be suppressed at his age, is also frequently depicted as greedy and avaricious: his resistance against linear succession is effectively represented as an opposition to the younger characters' wedding and as a form of avarice (see, for instance, Euclio in Plautus's *Aulularia*).[27] The comic

by Iser 1972 and 1978, who suggested that the literary analysis of any text should also take the pragmatic effects of that given text on its audience or readership in due consideration.

26 The ideological consequences of Menandrean and post-Menandrean war of generations are far-reaching. As Alessandro Grilli summarises (2020-2021, 187), *gamos* in Menander and in New Comedy emphasises the 'natural' development of a young man along the prescriptions of social norms. In reader-response terms, we may say that while the aesthetic effect of Aristophanic comedy is to push the spectators to desire the overthrow of the *status quo* in the name of the individual's irrepressible needs, the effect of the *nea* is to push the spectators to conform to the very forms of repression of individual desires.

27 One may also think of Aristotle's observations on avidity in *Politics* 1 (1257b40-1258a1): the desire for unlimited wealth depends on men's anxiety (σπουδάζειν) over living. In other words, boundless greed is an implicit desire for an unlimited life. Thus, there is an intimate connection between accumulation of wealth and resistance against death and its surrogate, succession. Interestingly enough, the only relevant case in Aristophanic

mechanism of *The Staple* (on which more below) matches exactly those two features – avarice and sexual desire – by means of the allegory of Lady Pecunia: being greedy for money, as Pennyboy Sr is, means coveting the young personification of wealth.[28] Both being greedy and coveting a young woman are comic representations of the old character's resistance against succession.

Against this background, Jonson's decision to problematise Pennyboy Jr's position in *The Staple of News* to such an extent as to direct our empathy towards Pennyboy Canter looks peculiar to say the least. This seems to me the dramatic consequence of an altogether Aristophanic stance – not so much a 'reading', or an adaptation, of a precise text or pericope, but rather a more general, and at the same time much deeper, understanding of the basic dynamics of Aristophanic comedy, and specifically Aristophanic plays on family.

The picture, however, is even more complex – which also shows us the relevance of a systemic approach to intertextuality, one that could allow for the interaction of competing, sometimes even opposed, models. As a matter of fact, while accepting Aristophanes' peculiar interpretation of the father-son relationship, *The Staple of News* does not renounce a feature which, as we have seen, is derived from Menandrean drama – the romantic plot. In other words, whereas we are to follow the (Aristophanic) conflict between Pennyboy Jr and his father, we are *also* to follow Pennyboy Jr's (Menandrean) hard-won courtship of young and beautiful Lady Pecunia. This second comic line is by all accounts consistent with Menandrean drama: two young characters love each other, and want to get married; their righteous desire, however, is opposed by an old, greedy character, who makes every effort to obstruct the happy ending. As it should now be evident, these two plot lines – the father's blameless fight

drama where we sympathise with a younger character who is due to inherit his father's estate and thus marry a beautiful girl is an old character rejuvenated: in a memorable scene towards the finale of *Wasps* (esp. *Vesp.* 1351-9), Philocleon acts as if he were Bdeycleon's son instead of his father.

28 This, of course, may also be related to cases, quite frequent indeed in modern comedy, of characters who try to marry into property: see e.g. the fight between Subtle and Face to have Dame Pliant, Kastrill's rich, widowed sister in Jonson's *Volpone* (esp. 4.3).

against his debauched son, and the son's equally blameless fight against the old antagonist for his beloved's hand – are antipodes, and logically incompatible. Yet Jonson finds a brilliant way to make those lines compatible: he reduplicates the older character. While the new generation is represented by Pennyboy Jr alone, the older generation is represented by two characters – actually, two brothers, Pennyboy Canter (Pennyboy Jr's father) and Pennyboy Sr (Pennyboy Jr's uncle). Each of the two brothers is linked with one of the two plot lines: the father is related to the 'Aristophanic' plot line and is therefore designed to arouse the audience's sympathy at the expense of his son; the uncle, instead, is related to the 'Menandrean' plot line, and is thus depicted as a greedy and violent old man (a usurer) and must arouse the audience's repulsion to the advantage of his nephew. Pennyboy Sr, then, will usefully play the part of the antagonist in the romantic plot derived from New Comedy: his avarice is decidedly morally negative, and, as we have seen, the allegory of wealth as a young Princess transforms greed for money in sexual desire. Thus, Pennyboy Jr's fight for linear succession is both positive – insofar as it targets the greedy old kidnapper of Lady Pecunia – and negative – insofar as it targets the respectable Canter. This twofold representation of Pennyboy Jr depends on the antithetical reduplication of his older counterparts, which in turn shows a double ideologic and dramatic origin: from Old *and* New Comedy.

Again, this does not at all imply any explicit or implicit intertextual reference to specific passages from Aristophanes or from Plautus and Terence, although of course we can say that Jonson knew, with different degrees of precision, those *corpora*. What we are observing here is rather the influx of a deeper literary relationship, one that goes well beyond single textual tiles, and could even be inadvertent. This may certainly be the case with post-Menandrean plots and ideology: the romantic plot and its implicit ideology were already so widespread in early modern drama that their presence here is certainly unmarked – which also makes it impossible to say whether Jonson was using a romantic plot to draw purposedly attention on the connection between *The Staple* and its ancient model.[29] On the

29 Loewenstein, for instance, suggests a reference to Plautus' *Aulularia*, a play from which Jonson drew heavily while composing *The Case Is Altered*.

other hand, the case with Aristophanes looks to me significantly different: since the conflict between father and son as it is staged in Aristophanic plays is far less frequent in subsequent drama (in fact it was supplanted by the Menandrean version), it seems to me that we can be a little bolder and reach the conclusion that in staging that particular form of the generational conflict Jonson was somehow influenced by his reading of Aristophanes. We do not need to think of any specific hypotext; rather, we may speak of an 'interpretative model', that is, the mental image that Jonson had formed of Aristophanic drama, in terms of broad dynamics and comic strategies. From this model Jonson was drawing.

My hypothesis, then, is that Jonson designed a play structured as a common romantic comedy, and that, under the influence of his Aristophanic mental model, he expanded that structure to include another, comparatively far more uncommon, plot line. Of course, this Aristophanic feature was reshaped according to early modern aesthetic canons: the clash between father and son is narrated through an exchange of identities, a comical device that was by no means common in Aristophanic drama but was extremely pervasive in subsequent ancient comic drama (Menander, and Latin comedy), from which it would spread through early modern and modern comedy. Such is Jonson's use of ancient models in *The Staple of News*: not so much a textual relationship, confined to single passages, but rather a structural appropriation of mental models of ancient texts, which were then intertwined with other ancient models, and with modern and more common dramatic techniques.

3.

Ideology is not the only field where we can observe striking similarities between Jonson's *Staple* and Aristophanic comedies. As mentioned above, the commodification of knowledge produces interesting correspondences also in terms of how the dramatic action is structured.

However, the references in *The Staple* are altogether too scant to lead us to believe that the whole structure of the romantic plot was derived from that specific comedy.

Frequently, Aristophanic plots are based on the exclusive possession of goods: in *Acharnians*, for instance, Dicaeopolis opens a new market and becomes outrageously, even infinitely, rich – a fortune which he won't share with anybody else in Athens. This general condition (the exclusive possession of wealth, and the refusal to share it) has a clear dramatic realisation: Dicaeopolis barricades his own house to prevent external visitors to enter. In a sequence of similar scenes, a visitor asks to be let into Dicaeopolis' house (that is, to have a share of his wealth), and is almost invariably shooed away by the comic hero (that is, the hero refuses to share his wealth). In other terms, Aristophanes structures a significant part of the dramatic action as a clear-cut opposition between two spaces (inside *vs* outside), which represent inclusion and exclusion respectively. This dramatic metaphor is described by Aristophanes himself in *Ecclesiazusae* (*Ecc.* 418-21):

> ὅσοις δὲ κλίνη μή 'στι μηδὲ στρώματα,
> ἰέναι καθευδήσοντας ἀπονενιμμένους
> εἰς τῶν σκυλοδεψῶν· ἢν δ' ἀποκλῄῃ τῇ θύρᾳ
> χειμῶνος ὄντος, τρεῖς σισύρας ὀφειλέτω.
>
> [And all those who don't have a bed or bedding should be allowed, after washing their hands, to go to the tanners' houses to sleep; and if the tanner shuts the door against them in winter, let him be fined three fleecy blankets.]

Likewise, in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates' exclusive possession of knowledge is shown by means of a distinction between inside and outside. This is what prompts the creation of the φροντιστήριον, Socrates' and the sophists' house, where knowledge is kept secret, instead of being shared with everybody. The commodification of knowledge allows for its exclusive possession, and its exclusive possession allows for a kind of dramatic action that entails the creation of an exclusive space where knowledge – now made an exclusive, and tradable, commodity – can be kept. The Thinkery is thus pivotal to the whole action: without it, no exclusive possession of knowledge would be possible, and most of the play would not exist.

Of course, Socrates' Thinkery is clearly paralleled by the Staple of news founded by Cymbal in Jonson's play.[30] Just like the *Clouds*, in *The Staple of News* the commodification of knowledge entails the existence of a specific place where knowledge (in the form of news) can be kept and traded. And just like the *Clouds*, the physical nature of the staple is fundamental to the whole functioning of the drama. The brokering function of the Staple, which collects and redistributes news, requires a centralised market, that is, a physical space where the trading takes place. Since information is described as the result of the activity of informants, pieces of news are depicted as physical entities, which need to be physically brought into the same place, and sold from there.

Thus, although the play is meant as a parody of emerging historical trends, the Staple is not a historically existing place: obviously, in 1626 there was no such thing as a market for news. Rather, we may call the Staple a symbolic space – that is, a space created within the drama to serve as a powerful symbol for the basic dynamics of the drama itself. In other words, the Staple is the result of how the action develops: since Jonson's aim is to parody the immoral commodification of information, he depicts an actual trade thereof: to this aim, he invents a space, the Staple, to represent that whole action. This peculiar nature of the Staple finds a striking parallel in Aristophanes' Thinkery. Just like the Staple, the φροντιστήριον was no historically existing building, or institution – in fact, it was not even a parody of anything remotely comparable. Philosophical schools such as Antisthenes' and Isocrates' – the closest, although not identical, parallels to the Thinkery – would be founded at the earliest at the beginning of fourth century BCE, that is, some twenty or thirty years *after* Aristophanes' *Clouds*.[31] The φροντιστήριον in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, then, is nothing but a symbolic space, designed to represent dramatically and visually Socrates' exclusive possession of knowledge.

30 The parallel was already observed by Steggle 2007, 62. However, Steggle's observation looks somewhat formalistic: "Both [plays] present scenes in which a novice enters the lair of a trickster and conjurer, whose particular specialty lies in offering a whole raft of new and strange ideas". On the contrary, I would contend that the parallel shows a much deeper similarity in the dramatic structure of both plays.

31 See e.g. Lynch 1972, pp. 32-67; Ostwald, Lynch 1994; Vegetti 2016.

Moreover, this symbolic space is described as an actual institution, that is, as an established organisation such as a school or an office. That is not historically true, either. Neither the Thinkery nor the Staple were existing institutions: there was no such thing as Socrates' 'school' in fifth-century Athens[32] or a market where to sell and buy information in early modern England. Both Aristophanes' *Clouds* and Jonson's *Staple*, then, present us with a slight but significant misrepresentation. This depends on a first-level misrepresentation, that is, on the dramatic creation of a symbolic space: the drama being structured around a fictional place meant to be instantly recognisable for its peculiar traits, those who live or work in that place will look just as peculiar. Of course, the institutionalisation of intellectual activities (activities which are clearly to be thought as deceitful) gives voice to Aristophanes' and Jonson's most pressing theme in *Clouds* and *The Staple* – the dangerous modernisation of culture and morals. Such historical and social transformation is not shown as the result of a long-term process by the two dramatists. Rather, it is paranoically depicted as the specific product of the wicked actions carried out by a specific group of people – an institution made of rascals: Socrates and his acolytes in *Clouds*, Nathaniel Butter and the first publishers working at corantos in *The Staple*.[33] By so doing, of course, both dramas overrate the role played by the single κωμῳδούμενοι in complex socio-cultural phenomena. Yet, they offer an easier verdict, which is both psychologically and dramatically more effective. On the one hand, pointing at one specific culprit

32 As is well known from our sources, Socrates liked having random talks with anyone interested, and he usually did so in the open, in crowded places. This was a substantial feature of Socratism, and Socrates' most prominent choice.

33 Whereas in *Clouds* the Thinkery is the only representation of knavery institutionalised, in Jonson's play the Staple is just one realization thereof: Pennyboy Jr's Canters' College (act 4) is another instance, and just like the Staple it can have physical entity: ". . . A seat / Is built already, furnished too, worth twenty / Of your imagined structures, Canters' College" (4.4.124-6). Moreover, at the beginning of act 5, Pennyboy Jr. speaks of canters and rascals as if they were an affiliated club: "the *comitia* of the canters" (5.1.4). Of course, this is both a metaphor and a paradox, but one that proves Jonson's tendency to think of fraudulent intellectuals in terms of an organisation.

or better still at an obnoxious and often mysterious organisation is a typical reaction to profound transformations that we view with concern. On the other hand, drama requires clear and unambiguous actions, carried out by distinct characters: century-long social transformations do not make good drama; specific, definite, and unique actions, performed by easily recognisable characters, do.

In light of this, it is not surprising that the liberating finale of both plays consists in the disbanding of the nefarious organisations staged in each comedy. In dramatic terms, this amounts to the physical elimination of the places hosting those organisations: both Socrates' Thinkery and Jonson's Staple end up being violently dissolved. Famously, Socrates' φροντιστήριον is burnt down by Strepsiades; likewise, the Staple and its workers are "blown up":

> THOMAS Our Staple is all to pieces, quite dissolved!
> PENNYBOY JR Ha?
> THOMAS Shivered as in an earthquake! Heard you not
> The crack and ruins? We are all blown up!
> Soon as they heard th'Infanta was got from them,
> Whom they had so devoured i'their hopes
> To be their patroness and sojourn with 'em,
> Our emissaries, register, examiner
> Flew into vapour; our grave governor
> Into a subtler air, and is returned,
> As we do hear, grand captain of the Jeerers.
> I and my fellow melted into butter
> And spoiled our ink, and so the office vanished.
> (*SN* 5.1.39-50)

Again, this feature does not just show formal similarities between the two texts, but points to a more significant dramatic coincidence. In fact, in strictly formal terms the two scenes look rather different, although superficially comparable. Strepsiades' setting fire to the Thinkery in *Clouds* is a deliberate and violent act, which entails the actual burning down of the whole place and the death of those living within. The dissolving of the Staple, instead, is described by means of a simile ("*as* in an earthquake", 40), and amounts to a great metaphor. Even when Jonson makes use of apparently literal imagery ("flew into vapour", 46; "melted into butter", 49), this is clearly unrealistic,

and suggests an altogether figurative understanding of the whole passage. While formally divergent, however, the two scenes share a coincident dramatic value: since both plays stage obnoxious organisations attacking morals and culture, the only possible happy ending consists not just in the protagonist's redemption, but also in the dissolution of those organisations. Moreover, since those organisations have been consistently represented through the place that hosts them, their dissolution will be represented as the destruction of that place.[34]

On this subject, one more observation may be added about the substantial difference between how the *Clouds* and *The Staple* show the dissolution of the respective buildings. As is well known, the finale of *Clouds* is most peculiar. In fact, the scene is unique: although violence is certainly tolerated by ancient comedy, death and killing are extremely rare. Strepsiades' fire in the Thinkery, then, is highly problematic, both in relation to the extant Aristophanic *corpus* and from a moral perspective. I would suggest that the difference between how Aristophanes and Jonson handle this subject testifies to their differing ideological approaches to culture.[35] As we have seen above, in Aristophanes' view the only alternative to Socrates' deceiving culture is sheer ignorance, that is, no culture at all. In this respect, Jonson's perspective is radically different: he drew a line between two forms of culture – official culture, vouched for by actual academic institutions and peers, and fake culture, produced by rascals (as in the case of *The Staple*, or *The Alchemist*) or by incompetents (as in the case of *Poetaster*). The fight against this latter, degenerate form of culture does not entail at all the indiscriminate destruction of culture

34 Another such case is the destruction of Subtle's alchemical laboratory in *The Alchemist* (4.5). The (deceiving) worth of Subtle's work has been represented as the physical place where he is producing his fake philosopher's stone: the liberating failure of his con operation is thus represented by the wrecking of that very place.

35 Of course, Jonson's choice will have also depended upon the harsh judgement expressed on the fire in the Thinkery through the ages (the treatment of Socrates in *Clouds* is by far the most problematic point in Aristophanic reception in early modern Europe: see Miola 2014, esp. 489-92). In this respect, Jonson's lighter version of the dissolution of the Staple is certainly much more compliant with the spirit of comedy.

as a whole. On the contrary, it is meant exactly to preserve true, unadulterated, and authorised versions of culture. It is for this reason, I believe, that Aristophanes can conceive an utter destruction of the Thinkery, as a violent, angry reaction against all kinds of culture, whereas Jonson cannot.[36]

Although it is perhaps the most relevant, the physical nature of the Thinkery and the Staple is not the only remarkable correspondence between Aristophanes' and Jonson's dramatic techniques. There is yet another field where, I would contend, Jonson seems clearly to have learnt a significant lesson from his Greek predecessor. When they finally get to the hero's house, Chremylus and Wealth engage in the following dialogue (Aristoph. *Pl.* 230-44):

Χρ. σὺ δ', ὦ κράτιστε Πλοῦτε πάντων δαιμόνων,
εἴσω μετ' ἐμοῦ δεῦρ' εἴσιθ'· ἡ γὰρ οἰκία
αὕτη 'στὶν ἣν δεῖ χρημάτων σε τήμερον
μεστὴν ποιῆσαι καὶ δικαίως κἀδίκως.
Πλ. ἀλλ' ἄχθομαι μὲν εἰσιὼν νὴ τοὺς θεοὺς
εἰς οἰκίαν ἑκάστοτ' ἀλλοτρίαν πάνυ·
ἀγαθὸν γὰρ ἀπέλαυσ' οὐδὲν αὐτοῦ πώποτε.
ἢν μὲν γὰρ ὡς φειδωλὸν εἰσελθὼν τύχω,
εὐθὺς κατώρυξέν με κατὰ τῆς γῆς κάτω·
κἄν τις προσέλθῃ χρηστὸς ἄνθρωπος φίλος
αἰτῶν λαβεῖν τι μικρὸν ἀργυρίδιον,
ἔξαρνός ἐστι μηδ' ἰδεῖν με πώποτε.
ἢν δ' ὡς παραπλῆγ' ἄνθρωπον εἰσελθὼν τύχω,
πόρναισι καὶ κύβοισι παραβεβλημένος
γυμνὸς θύραζ' ἐξέπεσον ἐν ἀκαρεῖ χρόνῳ.
(230-44)

36 As regards the dissolution of the deceitful organisations in the two plays, we can observe yet another relevant difference between Strepsiades and Pennyboy Canter. In Jonson's comedy, the dissolution of the Staple is subsequent to Canter's punishing of his son; on the other hand, in *Clouds* Strepsiades sets fire to the Thinkery out of frustration for having been deceived by the Clouds and beaten by his own son. In other terms, whereas in *Clouds* Strepsiades' failure as a father consists in the complete loss of his authority, in Jonson's play the father, however temporarily divested of his authority, still has the strength to repress, and is able to use it before it gets too late.

[CH. And now, Wealth, most powerful of all divinities, come inside here with me; because this is the house which today, by fair means or foul, you've got to fill full of good things. WE. Well, I'm always very reluctant, by the gods, to go into anyone else's house, because I've never yet had any good come to me from doing so. If I happen to have entered the home of a miserly man, he straight away buries me down under ground; and then if a decent person, a friend of his, comes to him asking to borrow some small little sum of money, he denies ever having seen me in his life. Or if I happen to have entered the home of a mad profligate, I get thrown around on whoring and dicing till in next to no time I'm cast naked out of the door.]

Having portrayed wealth by means of an allegorical personification, Aristophanes can describe the possession of money in terms of the physical detention of Wealth. In so doing, he appears to be in keeping with ancient Greek thought and poetry, which frequently represented wealth and poverty as gods who literally visited one's house.[37] In the Homeric hymn to Demetra, for instance, among the several benefits offered by the two goddesses, the poet lists the sending of Wealth to their worshippers' houses (*h. Hom.* 2.488-9):

αἶψα δέ οἱ πέμπουσιν ἐφέστιον ἐς μέγα δῶμα
Πλοῦτον, ὃς ἀνθρώποις ἄφενος θνητοῖσι δίδωσιν.

[They soon send Wealth to lodge in his mansion, the god who bestows affluence on mortals.][38]

Since Wealth is thought of as a god – that is, as an entity with a physical stance – being rich means being visited by Wealth. Of course, this general trait has an interesting result in Aristophanes: thinking of Wealth as an individual inevitably entails thinking of wealth as exclusive. Although a god, Wealth cannot be in two places at one time: that is why the physical detention of Wealth is a powerful symbol for the exclusive possession of riches. This symbolic mechanism is pivotal to the whole structure of *Wealth*:

37 See West in Hesiod 1966, *ad Th.* 593; Richardson in Homeric Hymns 1979², *ad h. Hom.* 2.488f.

38 The text and translation of Homeric hymns are those by M.L. West (Homeric Hymns 2003).

although he intends to share wealth with whoever will prove to be just, Chremylus holds Wealth in his own house; therefore, those who want a share in the hero's fortune, must come to Chremylus' door. This is highly convenient from a dramatic point of view: the sharing of wealth is staged as an actual visit to Wealth, in Chremylus' house. This replicates the typical plot of Aristophanic comedy (for which see above): a long sequence of people asking to be let into the hero's house.

This whole mechanism involving the physical nature of wealth and its allegorical personification is perfectly clear to Ben Jonson, who uses it with great frequency and absolute consistency in *The Staple of News*. In several *loci*, the exclusive possession of wealth is represented as the physical detention of Lady Pecunia. Just as in Aristophanes, becoming rich depends upon Lady Pecunia taking up residence at one's house: "Lickfinger How much 'twere better that My Lady's Grace / Would here take up, sir, and keep house with you (*SN* 4.2.163-4)".

Before residing at Pennyboy Jr's, Lady Pecunia was obliged to dwell at the house of Pennyboy Sr:

> Pennyboy Jr How now, old uncle? I am come to see thee
> And the brave lady here, the daughter of Ophir,
> They say thou keep'st.
> (*SN* 2.5.1-3)

However, Lady Pecunia does not seem particularly satisfied with her accommodation:

> Pennyboy Jr The truth is, uncle, that Her Grace dislikes
> Her entertainment, specially her lodging.
> Pecunia Nay, say her jail. Never unfortunate princess
> Was used so by a jailer.
> (*SN* 4.3.28-31)

Lodging, of course, is a metaphor: to say that the personification of wealth is badly lodged amounts to saying that money is used badly. In particular, the imprisonment of Lady Pecunia is a spatial metaphor for avarice. Not spending any money is equivalent to keeping money (and its incarnation) in custody:

Pecunia Band, you can tell, and Statute, how he has used me,
Kept me close prisoner, under twenty bolts –
Statute And forty padlocks –
Band All malicious engines
A wicked smith could forge out of his iron,
As locks and keys, shackles and manacles,
To torture a great lady.
(*SN* 4.3.32-7)

Coherently, prodigality is shown as freedom to move granted to Pecunia:

Madrigal Who'd lie in a room, with a close-stool and garlic,
And kennel with his dogs, that had a prince
Like this young Pennyboy to sojourn with?
Shunfield He'll let you ha' your liberty –
Almanac Go forth
Whither you please, and to what company –
Madrigal Scatter yourself amongst us . . .
(*SN* 4.2.174-9)

The Jeerers' interest in Lady Pecunia's freedom, of course, is self-serving: letting her move freely – so that she can visit them – means sharing Pennyboy Jr's fortune. This much was clear to Cymbal, as well. When asking Pennyboy Sr for funding he uses the familiar metaphor of Pecunia's residence:

Cymbal Or, if it please you, sir, to let her sojourn
In part with me, I have a moiety
We will divide, half of the profits.
(*SN* 3.4.26-8)

I contend that this metaphorical and dramatic representation clearly derives from Aristophanes, too. This emerges even more plainly from a key scene in act 2, set at the door of Pennyboy Sr's house. In scene 4, we finally meet the Jeerers, who are paying a visit to the old miser. Of course, their visit has evident egoistic aims:

Fitton How now, old money-bawd? We're come –
Pennyboy Jr To jeer me,
As you were wont. I know you.

ALMANAC No, to give thee
Some good security, and see Pecunia.
PENNYBOY JR What is't?
FITTON Ourselves.
ALMANCA We'll be one bound for another.
FITTON [*Indicating Almanac*] This noble doctor here.
ALMANAC [*Indicating Fitton*] This worthy courtier.
FITTON [*Indicating Shunfield*] This man o'war, he was our muster-master.
ALMANAC But a sea-captain now, brave Captain Shunfield.
(*SN* 2.4.1-7)

The scene is conceived exactly like any of the scenes featuring ἀλαζόνες (pests) visiting the comic hero's house in the last part of almost all extant Aristophanic plays. As we have seen above, according to the usual symbolic structure of Aristophanic drama, the hero's house represents the hero's newly acquired privilege: thus, trying to enter his house is equivalent to wanting a share of that privilege. Often, each visitor offers a service in exchange: in *Birds*, for instance, after founding his new city, Peisetairos is visited by a priest, who offers to perform the initial sacrifices (Aristoph. *Av.* 860-94); by a poet, who offers to compose a poem in honour of the new city (*Av.* 904-52); by an oracle monger, who offers to sell oracles on the future of Cloudcuckooland (*Av.* 959-91); by a geometer, who offers to measure the land (*Av.* 992-1019); and by a decree-seller, who offers to write the city's constitution (*Av.* 1035-57). The result never changes: each visitor is shooed away by Peisetairos, a dramatic symbol for the hero's refusal to share his privilege. This is due, of course, to the evident deceiving nature of each of those offers: obviously, the ἀλαζόνες do not mean to provide the hero with valuable services but are hypocritically covering their only motive – getting a share of the hero's fortune. For this reason, visitors are sometimes depicted as offering fake services, that is, services that are only an excuse to be let into the hero's house. One clear example is provided by Hermes in *Wealth* (esp. 1151-70): in a hilarious dialogue with Cario, the god offers a number of services under five of his several cult-titles, eventually prompting Cario's comment (*Pl.* 1164) ὡς ἀγαθόν ἐστ' ἐπωνυμίας πολλὰς ἔχειν

("What a good thing it is to have lots of titles!"). Evidently, then, those services were just a pretext to be admitted to a wealthy house.

This is exactly what happens in act 2 of *The Staple of News*. To start with, the Jeerers are comparable to Aristophanes' ἀλαζόνες in all respects: they are uninvited, egoistic, and fraudulent visitors, imposters whose only aim is to make money by circumventing a rich character ("see Pecunia", 2.4.3). Just like Aristophanes' ἀλαζόνες, Jonson's Jeerers are highly insincere, offering Pennyboy Sr a service – each of them makes himself useful based on his respective 'competence'. However, that 'competence' is clearly jury-rigged, as Pennyboy Canter will extensively show at 4.4.150ff. The introduction of Shunfield (2.4.6-7) shows plainly that the offering of services is a silly makeshift: although being a "man o'war", he has now remade himself as a sea captain – just like Hermes in *Wealth*, it is sufficient to be conferred a new title to prove able to carry out a specific duty.

This depiction produces a strikingly similar dramatic situation: a scene at the door, with a clear-cut symbolic distinction between an inside and an outside space, representing wealth *vs* poverty, inclusion *vs* exclusion.[39] Such clear-cut distinction involves characterology, as well. Like Aristophanes, Jonson creates an evident, and brutal, difference between a privileged character – who has everything – and his wretched visitors – who have nothing:

> PENNYBOY JR You all have happy memories, gentlemen,
> In rocking my poor cradle. I remember, too,
> When you had lands, and credit, worship, friends,
> Ay, and could give security. Now you have none,
> Or will have none right shortly. This can time,
> And the vicissitude of things. I have
> All these, and money too, and do possess 'em,
> And am right heartily glad of all our memories,
> And both the changes.
> (*SN* 2.4.182-90)

39 On such symbolic use of space in Aristophanic drama, see Morosi 2021. On the vital role of the door in Aristophanic drama, see also Poe 1999 and Giovannelli 2011.

In light of this situation, the Jeerers-ἀλαζόνες want to be let into the rich character's house – which both in Aristophanes and in Jonson represents, by means of the physical presence of the allegory of wealth, the character's fortune –, and to this aim fake competences that they do not have. Standing on their houses' thresholds, however, the Aristophanic hero and Jonson's miser are not easily impressed. Just like Peisetairos in *Birds*, Pennyboy Sr does not fall into the Jeerers' trap:

> PENNYBOY SR I do not love pickled security.[40]
> Would I had one good fresh-man in for all,
> For truth is, you three stink.
> SHUNFIELD You are a rogue.
> PENNYBOY SR I think I am, but I will lend no money
> On that security, captain.
> (*SN* 2.4.11-5)

Like any Aristophanic hero, Pennyboy Sr debunks the imposters' pretexts, and goes straight to the point: "I will lend no money". The refusal to lend money, of course, is represented as an expulsion from Pennyboy's house – another evident Aristophanic trait: "PENNYBOY SR Are not these flies gone yet? – Pray, quit my house. / I'll smoke you out else (*SN* 2.4.165-6)".

Then, the long scene (running for more than 200 lines) presents us with typical Aristophanic dynamics: the αλαζόνες laying siege to the comic hero's house, and this latter's stubborn resistance against any attempt at entry. The only difference between Jonson's scene and his model is that instead of bringing the imposters in one by one, Jonson has them come onstage all together. In dramatic terms, however, the effect is the same: a prolonged, incessant sequence of pests, and their likewise relentless expulsion.

This much is sufficient to reach some conclusions on Jonson's 'intertextual' strategy regarding Aristophanes. Thus far, we have still not met any specific reference to single passages quoted, translated, or adapted from Aristophanic plays. However, I hope to have shown beyond reasonable doubt that *The Staple of News*

40 Pennyboy Sr is answering Almanac's remark on Shunfield credit as a sailor (*SN* 2.4.10: "And seasoned, too, since he took salt at sea").

contains unmistakable signs of Jonson's in-depth reading of Aristophanes. Such signs point towards a structural interaction between the two *corpora*, concerning both ideology and drama. I call it 'structural' to account for its ability to influence the structure itself of Jonson's play (or better some parts of Jonson's play), its themes, and its dramatic technique. This goes well beyond episodic quotations, and seems to show a fascinating process of definition of a common language, both in terms of themes and in terms of their dramatic representation through the comic action. Some of the salient aspects of the thematic and dramatic shape of *The Staple of News* seem to derive from a peculiar reading of Aristophanes – not just of one single play, but of more plays. Instead of referring to single texts or scenes, Jonson forms a more general picture of Aristophanic comedy, its main strategies, its dramatic dynamics, and its general ideology. In other words, Jonson deduces from single Aristophanic plays a general, theoretical model on how Aristophanic drama works. It is that model, and not specific *loci*, that Jonson remembers and reframes. This is the work of both a playwright and an interpreter.

I believe, however, that we can add one more observation on act 2, scene 4, that may help us clarify further this picture. When asked to at least lend some money, Pennyboy Sr – who detains Lady Pecunia in his house – insists that he is utterly poor: "I ha' no money, gentlemen; / An he go to't in rhyme once, not a penny." (2.4.22-3); "I have no money, gentlemen" (2.4.58). This is an outright lie, which Pennyboy Sr himself will contradict in a matter of few lines (see e.g. 68-70). However, this detail reminds us of the passage from *Wealth* quoted above (*supra*, 249-50), where Wealth complains about the treatment that he receives from miserly men (esp. Aristoph. *Pl.* 237-41). The situation described by Wealth is strikingly similar to that which we see enacted in *SN* 2.4: after having carefully hidden the personification of wealth inside his own house, a miserly man receives the visit of a friend asking to borrow some money; the miser, then, states falsely to have never in his life seen Wealth and shoos the friend away from his house. This is exactly what happens in *SN* 2.4, where a miser (Pennyboy Sr) is visited by some people asking for money, denies being wealthy, and eventually shoos his visitors away. How are we to explain this

coincidence? To be sure, in *Pl.* 237-41 Aristophanes is describing in words a situation that he has frequently shown as an action in several plays. Thus, Jonson's reshaping of that situation may well derive simply from his observation of the typical Aristophanic dramatic pattern, and not from his reading of the specific passage from *Wealth*. However, a couple of elements seem to suggest that a closer relationship may exist, after all. First, Aristophanes mentions explicitly the miser – a kind of character notoriously destined to a long-lasting fortune in European drama, but conspicuously absent from Aristophanic extant plays. Second, both the miser in Wealth's account and Pennyboy Sr in Jonson's play do lie about their not having seen money at all, a small touch that is obviously in character but is somehow not necessary, especially in *The Staple*, where, as we have seen, it is surprisingly contradicted by the miser himself. It is just possible, then, that in addition to his structural reception of Aristophanic themes and techniques Jonson may have gone here one step further: having read this passage from *Wealth* (a passage that we know virtually for sure he must have read, since it is next to the aretalogy of Wealth to which Jonson refers at 2.1.31-44), Jonson may have decided to transform this little sketch told by Wealth into an actual scene, expanding its comic potential through the introduction of the Jeerers. Interestingly, we have at least one parallel for Jonson's dramatising an anecdote that he had found in an ancient source: in *Poetaster* 3.1, he dramatises Horace's well-known satire on the incompetent would-be poet (*Serm.* 1.9), by creating a whole new scene clearly based on Horace's account.[41]

Be that as it may, Aristophanes' presence in *The Staple of News* looks to me both more pervasive and more structurally decisive than Aristophanic and Jonsonian scholarship have yet noticed. Scholars have instead focussed on intertextual parallels and elaborations, that are far less widespread and conclusive. As important as they may be as evidence of contact between hypertext and hypotext, *verbatim* loans or textual allusions fall short when it comes to the more general theme of literary modelling, a theme that has proved decisive to the understanding of the relationships between

41 On this remarkable scene and on Jonson's intertextual strategy, see e.g. Moul 2006 and 2010.

ancient and early modern literatures. Jonson's literary modelling of Aristophanes in *The Staple* testifies to the strong influence exerted by Aristophanic comedy on Jonson's late production, perhaps suggesting that we should date an extensive, close reading of ancient comedy around the last two or three decades of Jonson's life. We should at least observe a remarkable difference between Jonson's use of Aristophanic drama in earlier plays and his literary exploitation of Aristophanic material in *The Staple*, which involves a wide-ranging, in-depth reshaping of whole structures and themes.

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8

Questions of Mediation of the *Deus ex Machina* in Elizabethan Drama*

Emanuel Stelzer

Abstract

Whereas the *OED* dates the earliest occurrence of the phrase *deus ex machina* in the English language to 1697, the concept was quite familiar to the Elizabethans. This essay wishes to investigate how the *deus ex machina* device of Greek and Roman drama was received and mediated in the Elizabethan theatres. It will be seen that neither issues of technology required for the descent of a god on stage nor questions of genre can fully explain the paucity of examples. It will be argued that, since the Reformed context associated the *deus ex machina* with Catholicism, and the device maintained connections with medieval miracle plays, seeing pagan gods perform the *deus ex machina* function could contribute to articulating critical reflections on the Christian God's providential interventionism in human life.

Keywords: *deus ex machina*; early modern drama; Elizabethan theatre; classical reception; gods

> The *Elizabethans forced the gods into a secondary place, either as atmosphere or as simple participants on the same footing as mortals.* The gods were no longer the divine rulers of dramatic action and the secret agents of the author.
> (Hyde 1949, 87)

> Providence Stay, stay thy stroke, thou wofull Dame:
> what wilt thou thus despaire?
> (An. 1599, F4*v*)

Looking Up to the Heavens

This essay originates from the realisation that there are very few classical deities acting as a *deus ex machina* at the end of Elizabethan

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plays, appearing to resolve otherwise insolvable problems or settling knotty situations. A list of such plays may include: in 1582, the anonymous *Love and Fortune*; Gager's *Dido* (1583); Lyly's *Galatea* (1584);[1] the lechery episode with Mercury's intervention in the no longer extant *2 The Seven Deadly Sins* (1597); Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1600), and John Marston's *Histriomastix* (c.1600-1603).[2] This rarity becomes clearer when one considers that there are more than 150 plays from 1533 to 1603 featuring the presence of a classical god in Wiggins and Richardson's *Catalogue of British Drama*, and yet, in most cases, the deities are used as prologues or choric presenters; they are present but do not interfere apart from when they are the protagonists of their plays. With the proviso that only some of the texts catalogued by Wiggins and Richardson are actually plays (many are entertainments) and that many of them are no longer extant (and the information about them often inconclusive), nevertheless, the paucity of *dei ex machina* is undeniable. This essay wishes to investigate the reasons for their scarceness and explore the possible cultural ramifications of the mediations of this feature of classical dramaturgy in Elizabethan drama. Most studies devoted to theophanies on the early modern stage[3] focus on Jacobean plays and especially Shakespeare's romances, but, since the Stuart masques intensified and changed the use of the device for, as Fiona Macintosh and Justine McConnell put it, "the hyper-real – the world of wonder and revelation . . . is the true preserve of the masque" (2020, 90), this essay will examine the *deus ex machina* both as a concept and as a dramaturgic feature in the previous decades.

1 Although here it is much more a *deus ex machina* function, since Venus is an important character in the play; on the suggestions of the *deus ex machina* in Lyly's plays, see Saccio 1969, 214-18.

2 I have omitted from this list the two following translations of classical plays produced in the Elizabethan period featuring a *deus ex machina*: John Studley's 1566 translation of *Hercules Oetaeus* (not conceived for performance, and the no longer extant *Iphigenia* by George Peele, 1582 (possibly a translation of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* with Minerva as *dea ex machina*, but more likely to be the *Iphigenia in Aulis*).

3 On theophanies on the early modern stage, see Mason Vaughan 2019, Eager 2020, and Dixon and Garrison 2021.

One may start by considering the singular infrequency of the occurrences of the phrase *deus ex machina* in early modern texts. When searching for it on the *EEBO* database (which collects English texts printed between 1473 and 1700), a user may be surprised to find only two occurrences. Both appear in passages of quite late, devotional tracts, which comment on David's unhoped-for[4] escape from Saul's army in 1 Sam. 23:27-8. The first occurs in the 1680 work of an Irish clergyman, James Wood, *Sheperdy Spiritualiz'd*: "This was *Deus ex Machinâ,* God appearing seasonably" (34).[5] The other is an excerpt from Christopher Ness's 1696 *A Complete History and Mystery of the Old and New Testament*: "There was [*Deus ex Machinâ*] *God* coming to the relief of his Servant (as it were) out of an Engine" (186). The *OED* dates the earliest occurrence of the phrase also quite late, to 1697,[6] a passage in John Sergeant's *Solid Philosophy Asserted*, responding to Locke's empiricism: "it is an odd kind of Argument, to alledge, that it is not impossible to conceive that God may do this [i.e. annexing certain ideas to certain motions] . . . Nor is it at all allowable in Philosophy, to bring in a *Deus è Machinâ* at every turn, when our selves are at a loss to give a Reason for our Thesis" (136). It may be no coincidence that all these three examples tread potentially dangerous ground, mixing the language of theology with that of drama.

Does the lateness of these occurrences mean that the Elizabethans did not know what a *deus ex machina* is? No, as shall be seen

4 The marginal gloss of the Geneva Bible to the passage reads: "Thus the Lord can pull back the bridle of the tyrants and deliver his out of the lion's mouth".

5 Contrast Wood's certainty with Erasmus' tentative wish that God may put an end to the wars of religion, expressed many decades earlier in a letter to the Archbishop of Cologne, sent on 18 March 1528: "For nothing can be really prosperous or truly happy in human affairs unless that which Christ worked in us . . . unless some divine intervention, like a *deus ex machina*, suddenly appearing on the scene, bring about some unexpected exit to this stormy tragedy" (qtd in Murray 1920, 293). Interestingly, Erasmus' wished-for providential *deus ex machina* would perform a miracle by converting hearts, from the inside, not by performing prodigies in the outer world.

6 The *OED* records the first uses of the phrase "god from" or "out of the machine" (*s.v.* "god", n.) also quite late, dating them to the second half of the seventeenth century.

shortly, but such late dates *are* strange,[7] considering that anyone interested in early modern drama knows (or thinks they know – see next section) that it was possible to have someone descend on the stage from the ceiling of the playhouses, aptly called 'the heavens':

> 1611 Randle Cotgrave *Dictionary of the French and English Tongues*: *s.v. Volerie*: a place ouer a stage which we call the Heauen.
>
> 1612 Thomas Heywood *An Apology for Actors*: . . . the couerings of the stage, which wee call the heauens (where vpon any occasion their Gods descended) were Geometrically supported by a Giant-like Atlas. (D2*v*)

In this passage, Heywood is describing the roof of an "Amphitheatre" built by Caesar in Campus Martius (probably confusing the Amphitheatre of Statilius Taurus – about which we, like the early moderns, know very little – with the Theatre of Marcellus, planned by Caesar and built under Augustus). Heywood's words have been interpreted to suggest that "he thought the Roman and English roofs were identical, or at least fulfilled identical functions" (Graves 2009, 38). Heywood goes on and refers to the planets and signs of the zodiac ideally depicted there (which graced the ceilings of Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses): "in that little compasse were comprehended the perfect modell of the firmament, the whole frames of the heauens" (D3*r*). We are not sure where Heywood got this information: Vitruvius devoted a whole book of his *De Architectura* (first printed at the end of the fifteenth century) to the applications of astronomy to architecture, but never states that the roofs of Roman theatres were painted with stars and planets, nor do we have any detailed description of the *theologeion*, the raised platform from which the gods spoke in Greek theatres (Julius Pollux simply writes: ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ θεολογείου ὄντος ὑπὲρ τὴν σκηνὴν ἐν ὕψει ἐπιφαίνονται θεοί, 4.130; "From the *theologeion*, which is higher than the stage, the gods appear", Jouanna 2018, 236). The *theologeion* was a part of the theatre structure which did

7 A word of caution must be added: *EEBO* does not recognise Greek characters; if *ex machina* is spelt in Greek alphabet, the database does not identify those occurrences – see Barlow's 1601 text below.

not coincide with the tier from which the *mēkhanē* would operate, that is the crane which would allow the actors playing gods and goddesses to descend on the stage and re-ascend.[8] What Heywood knew is that "the *Romanes* had their first patterne" (D2*v*) from the Greek theatres, and he insisted that the antiquity of his profession could help vindicating it against the Puritans' attacks.

Heywood wrote his *Apology for Actors* in the 1610s, so he may have had the chance to see the theophanies of the court masques as well as the versions offered by his colleagues (like Jupiter's descent on an eagle in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*). He was also "the longest serving professional dramatist of the time" (Amelang 2023, n.n.) and a couple of his plays made important use of the flying equipment provided by the theatres in which he worked (see next section). Thus, his use of the past tense (the gods "descended") should not be interpreted as meaning that the *deus ex machina* was just something that happened in antiquity. His comment is telling also in that he writes that actors playing the role of gods descended from the top of the stage "vpon any occasion" – which seems to imply that they would descend at their pleasure and discretion, not performing a precise dramaturgical function in specific dramatic situations. This detail invites us to reflect on the history of criticism on the purpose and value of the *deus ex machina*[9] and how such critical ideas were developed in the Renaissance.

How can we account for the rarity of the phrase in early modern English, considering that it is well attested in books published on the Continent? One explanation is that the phrase, while proverbial, was not at all the only way to express the concept. The phrase is a Latin calque of the Greek ἀπὸ μηχανῆς θεός, although Aristotle never employs that exact phrase. In a seminal passage for the critical history of the device, he uses it in reference to Medea's escape in Euripides' play and to the incident of the embarkation Book 2 of *The Iliad*: φανερὸν οὖν ὅτι καὶ τὰς λύσεις τῶν μύθων

8 It has been argued that the Roman theatres had a configuration of wings "less conducive to *deus ex machina* and other conventions of the Greek stage" (Harrison 2000, 141), but it is highly unlikely that this difference was known in the early modern period. On the uses of the crane in Attic comedy and tragedy, see Mastronarde 1990.

9 See the still fundamental study by Andreas Spira 1960.

ἐξ αὐτοῦ δεῖ τοῦ μύθου συμβαίνειν, ἐν τῇ Μηδείᾳ ἀπὸ μηχανῆς καὶ ἐν τῇ Ἰλιάδι τὰ περὶ τὸν ἀπόπλουν (*Poetics* 1454a-b; "Clearly, the explication of a story should issue from the story itself, and not *ex machina* as in the *Medea*, or in the departure scene in the *Iliad*", Kenny 2013, 35 [adapted]).[10] This is how Theodore Goulston translated into Latin Aristotle's allusion to Medea's means of escape in 1623: "Solaris vehiculo auxilio" (35), literally, by the aid of the sun vehicle. Moreover, whereas one of Erasmus's *Adagia* was consistently indexed as "*deus ex machina*", the header of the adage is "Deus ex improuiso apparens" (1550, 58-9), a god appearing all of a sudden, out of the blue. This adage became very influential. In the quotations from Plato,[11] Lucian, Euripides, and Athenaeus which Erasmus comments on, ἀπὸ or ἐκ μηχανῆς is occasionally rendered literally ("ad machinas confugiunt deos sustollentes", they resort to the machines to lift the gods; "Quemadmodum in tragoedia machinam tollens", as operating a machine in a tragedy; "e machina ritu deum", from a machine in the manner of the gods), but in most cases it is the suddenness of the apparition that is emphasised: "deus ex improviso ostensus" (a god shown all of a sudden), "deum de repente exortum" (a god who has come forth suddenly), "deum repente apparentem" (a god appearing unexpectedly). Thus, the *deus ex machina* phrase was not the only way to express the notion both in Latin and in English (for some examples of the latter, see below), while it was Horace's dictum that arguably had the most impact, given the Roman poet's prestige in the early modern period:

10 See Castelvetro's clarification: "Aristotele per queste parole ἀπὸ μηχανῆς non si ristringe all'apparitione della persona di dio solamente, ma intende generalmente dell'apparitioni di tutte quelle cose che miracolosamente per ordigno sono fatte di subito contra natura comparere in palco" (1570, 186*v*; "Aristotle with these words, ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, does not limit the apparition to be merely that of the god's person; he means, more in general, the apparitions of all those things which are miraculously, by means of a device, suddenly and against nature, made visible on the stage"). Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

11 This is the relevant passage in Plato's *Cratylus*: εἰ μὴ ἄρα βούλει, ὥσπερ οἱ τραγῳδοποιοὶ ἐπειδάν τι ἀπορῶσιν ἐπὶ τὰς μηχανὰς καταφεύγουσι θεοὺς αἴροντες (425d; "unless you think we had better follow the example of the tragic poets, who, when they are in a dilemma, have recourse to the introduction of gods on machines", Fowler 1921, 143).

"Nec deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus inciderit" (*Ars Poetica*, 190-1), rendered by Thomas Drant in 1567 as "God must be none brought on the stage, but in such case and tyme, / When mortall man, cannot reforme nor dignely plage the cryme" (A6*v*) and by Ben Jonson as "nor [must the fable be] lay'd / To have a god come in; except a knot / Worth his untying happen there" (1640, 12).[12]

We will return to the use of such phrases in religious discourse which, I shall argue, had an impact on the theatre of the age. Although the present essay is interested more in the *deus ex machina* function performed by gods in Elizabethan drama than in the physical conditions of staging the device, a technological premise is necessary, because some scholars have argued that there were few *dei ex machina* purely due to the difficulty in managing the actual descent or ascent of divine characters in the playhouses. For instance, T. J. King observes that only five plays of the period call for actors and/or large properties to ascend or descend, suggesting that "machinery was not *required* in the vast majority of plays, which suggests that it was also not available in the vast majority of playhouses" (1971, 148).

The Technology Required

Continental Renaissance plays, pageants and entertainments made much of divine manifestations through machinery. One can feel Sebastiano Serlio's pride when he writes that "con l'artificio a qualche buon proposito si vedera descẽdere alcun'Dio dal Cielo: correre qualche Pianeta per l'aria" (1545, 71*v*; "With like skill gods are made to descend from the skies and planets to pass through the air", Hewitt 1958, 24-5). The *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, the first permanent theatre in Paris, built in 1548, had a higher stage purposefully designed for special effects and angelic descents (see Wiley 1973, 85-6). In England, the quality of the technology required for divine ascents and descents must have presented some limitations at least until the 1590s, as is suggested by a stage direction at the

12 Jonson completed the first version of his translation in 1604 but revised it sometimes after 1610; it was first published posthumously (see Brock and Palacas 2016, 24-5).

end of Robert Greene's *Alphonsus of Aragon*, performed probably by the Queen Elizabeth's Men c.1587: "*Exit Venus. Or if you can conueniently, let a chaire come downe from the top of the stage, and draw her vp*" (1599, I3*r*). However, one can contrast the hesitancy conveyed by this stage direction with the words of the Presenter in George Peele's virtually contemporary *The Battle of Alcazar* (c.1588-1589) who matter-of-factly describes Fame's appearance in a dumb show: "At last descendeth Fame as Iris . . . Fame from her stately bower doth descend" (1594, E4*v*-F1*r*). Recently, views such as John Astington's statement that "The *deus ex machina* was popular enough and the essential machinery that drove it cheap enough for it to have been standard equipment in any permanent playhouse" (1985, 130), and Cyril Walter Hodges' observation that the *deus ex machina* constituted "a constant pleasure to Elizabethan audiences" (1973, 84) have been severely questioned by David Mann's reassessment. As he puts it: "Where there's a canopy, so most popular academic studies suppose, there must be a winch; its absence offends a sense of the Globe as cosmos" (2013, 189), but "until 1613 evidence of outdoor flying is extremely rare" (184). Mann concedes that flying was "relatively commonplace" in "street pageants . . . in indoor drama . . . and, perhaps, in academic drama and in professional drama at the English court", but he lists three criteria that made the use of flying equipment rare in the Elizabethan playhouses: the cost of installing and managing it; playacting conventions dictating "fast-moving dramas . . . largely indifferent to mechanical means" (190), and the theatre configuration: unlike in the private theatres, "in outdoor theaters flying was an altogether more hazardous operation" (ibid.).

Until 1595, when Henslowe noted on 4 June the money spent for "mackinge the throne In the heuenes" (2002, 7) at the Rose, "a simple hoist from the highest part of the tiring house" may have been used in various performing spaces (Orrell 1988, 65) – perhaps the solution used for "*Cupide com*[*ing*] *downe from heauen*", as the stage direction in the manuscript reads (qtd in Mann 2013, 203n69) at the beginning of *Gismund of Salerne* (probably performed in 1568 at Greenwich). This descent was a deliberate choice of the dramatist and/or of the acting company, since the source, the prologue of

Lodovico Dolce's *Didone* (channelling here Book 1 of *The Aeneid*),[13] does not necessarily call for Cupid to descend: the stage direction of the Italian text simply reads "CVPIDO IN FORMA DI ASCANIO" (Dolce 1560, Aiii*r*; "Cupid disguised as Ascanius"). Mann argues that Heywood's *Silver Age* (published in 1613 but, according to him, identifiable with the *1&2 Hercules* performed in 1595 at the Rose), a play which has several deities ascending and descending (by way of a combination of flying equipment, movements from the galleries to the stage, and perhaps the use of an external staircase) was an "isolated experiment" (2013, 196) which "discouraged the Chamberlain's Men from installing a throne at the Globe" because of the sheer "logistical" problems descents presented (197).[14] Elizabeth E. Tavares concurs in her article on the development of the heavens in Elizabethan playhouses: "The evolution of the Heavens – comprised of a roof over the stage, attendant pillars, and a pulley system to suspend props, scenery, and actors – indicates that it was not a feature in the initial construction of these first-generation playhouses" (2016, 195). More drastically, it has been stated that "it is a serious question whether the Globe that Shakespeare used had descent machinery at all" (Dutton 2018, n. p.); as far as the Chamberlain/King's Men are concerned, since "[t]here are few 'heavenly' entrances, and all in late plays . . . [this] may suggest that only Shakespeare's last theatre, Blackfriars, had a mechanism for a descending 'heavenly' chair" (Stern 2013, 19). By then, of course, many of the Stuart masques ended with the spectacular descent of mythological or mythologised characters from painted clouds, and it has been established that Jacobean plays offered a "populuxe"[15] version of such courtly conventions in the public and private playhouses. Roy Booth notices the irony of Ben Jonson's indictment of the flying equipment at the professional theatres used to make spectators gape in admiration, proudly asserting that in his

13 On Dolce's *Didone* as a source of *Gismund*, see Cunliffe 1912, lxxxvi-xc.

14 Of course, the stagecraft involved in productions of *1&2 Hercules*/*The Silver Age* may have changed over the years. For a critique of Mann's assessment regarding the equipment of the heavens with winching machinery at the Red Bull, where Heywood's *Ages* were performed in the Jacobean period, see Griffith 2013, 103 and Preedy 2022, 253-5.

15 On this concept, see Dawson and Yachnin 2001, 40 and 56.

comedy "N[o] creaking throne comes down, the boyes to please" (*Every Man in His Humour*, Prologue of the 1616 folio, 16):[16] "this from the man who wrote more words to accompany masques with their aerial machines than any other poet of the period" (2007, n.n.).

The present essay does not aim at arguing that the technical quality of machinery was better than supposed by these scholars, although there is, as Matthew Steggle argues, "copious evidence which suggests that roped flying technology was available to early modern theatres" before the Jacobean period (2022, 15), the early modern version of the Greek *aorai*, ropes "hung down to raise up heroes and gods into the air" mentioned by Pollux (Beacham 1991, 182). The *deus ex machina* function (unlike the device *per se*) can be enacted with the sudden appearance of the deity no matter how it is staged from a proxemic point of view although, for instance, vertical and horizontal movements are essential to convey different hierarchical configurations (not to forget music, costumes, special lighting effects, etc.). We can think of Venus' intervention in the final act of John Lyly's *Galatea* (1587-1588) when she promises to alter the sex of either Galatea or Phillida, or Hymen mysteriously officiating the weddings in *As You Like It* (1599). On the other hand, it can be argued that the experience of seeing a *dramatis persona* vertically descend or ascend must not have been rare: although "great wondering" (qtd in Steggle 2007, 54) greeted the Scarabeus flying up to Jupiter's palace thanks to John Dee's artistry in the 1547 Trinity College, Cambridge production of Aristophanes' *Pax*, which earned Dee the suspicion of resorting to some devilish magic, we have to remember that miracle plays had often regaled their audiences with such feats (see e.g. the stage direction "Hic descendunt nubes, Pater in nube" for the Transfiguration episode of the York Cycle, qtd in Young 1959, 98; "here clouds descend, with God the Father in the cloud"), and, in general, God, his angels and the saints would often appear from above in medieval theatre.[17]

16 William Cartwright in his eulogy extolled Jonson also because of his refusal to employ a *deus ex machina*: "*Thou* alwayes dost *unty*, not *cut* the *knot* / . . . / No *power* comes down with learned *hat* and *rod*, / *Wit* onely, and *contrivance* is *thy god*" (Craig 1990, 195).

17 On the technical requirements as well as shortcomings of these medieval performances of flying, see Young 1959, 93-116.

Tudor street pageants would also present characters ascending and descending: see, for instance, the Holy Virgin "commyng from hevin" (Raine 1890, 57) saluting Henry VII on his first visit to York in 1486 and "ascend ayane" amidst a staged snowfall made of crushed "waffrons" (i.e. wafers). More rarely, university plays would also include *dei ex machina*: among the spectacular effects of Gager's *Dido* (performed in Christ Church, Oxford, in June 1583) which were remembered by the audience, there were "Mercurie and Iris descending and ascending from and to an high place" (Holinshed 1587, 1355).[18] Iris, in particular, arrives at the end of the play (5.4) to fulfil Juno's command and let Dido die rapidly. Her words (a paraphrase of *Aeneid* 4.693-705) have a divine performativity:

> Thaumante genita principis venio deae
> Ministra. Fatum implere mandatur tuum,
> Moramque mortis tollere urgentis prope.
> En hos capillos iussa Plutoni sacros
> Dicabo, teque corpore exolvam tuo.
> (Sutton 2005, 1170-4)

> [I, daughter of Thaumas, am come, as servant to the Queen of the Gods. The command is given to fulfil your fate, and halt the delay to your impending death. Behold, as instructed, I consecrate this lock of hair, now sacred to Pluto, and free you from your body.
> (Sandis 2023, n.n.)]

Reception and Cultural Connotations of the *Deus ex Machina*

What did the early modern English actually know about the *deus ex machina* of Greek and Roman theatre? The most influential classical tragedian was Seneca, read in Latin and/or in the Tudor translations collected in the *Tenne Tragedies* published in 1581, not conceived for performance (although *Oedipus* was probably staged at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1559-1560); and Seneca never employs the

18 On the *dei ex machina* in this play, Glynne Wickham comments: "Mercury and Iris may have been comparatively new inhabitants of cloud-machines, but the machine itself had been in use on the English stage for over two hundred years" (1959, 264).

deus ex machina. The only partial exception is the conclusion of *Hercules Oetaeus* (now believed to be spurious) where, after his death on the pyre, Hercules appears in divine form to reassure his mother and friends that he is off to take his seat among the other gods in compensation of his virtue – but Hercules here can be called a *deus ex machina* only in the broadest sense, since he is the protagonist of the tragedy. The lack of a *deus ex machina* in Seneca[19] has often been interpreted as perfectly in line with his tragic vision which "admits no escape from evil, no defense against the mindless brutality of fate" (Slavitt 1995, xlii). He goes so far as to get rid of Artemis at the end of Euripides' *Hippolytus Stephanophoros*: "He gave a revision of the goddess' role to Phaedra . . . who, by delaying her suicide, reveals to Theseus what only Artemis could after her death" (Calder 1983, 191). But even if Seneca chose not to employ the *deus ex machina*, early modern readers could encounter this device in other classical plays. They could read the plays of Euripides (the Greek dramatist who made most use of the device) in the numerous Greek editions and Latin translations circulating across Europe; they would be familiar with Jupiter's final appearance from above in Plautus' *Amphitruo*, and they would find references to the *deus ex machina* in passages such as those above-mentioned in Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Erasmus' *Adagia*.

Continental critics theorised about it: for example, Scaliger compared Athena's speech at the end of the *Odyssey* to a *deus ex machina* – "interuenit *θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς*: quod Tragœdiæ proprium est" (1586, 26, "a *deus ex machina* intervenes, which pertains to tragedy"). This judgment is not neutral: it means that, for Scaliger, a *deus ex machina* is not necessarily something a tragedian should be ashamed of. Instead, André de Rivaudeau, in the preface to his *Aman, tragédie sainte* (1561) justifies himself for not employing a *deus ex machina* on the grounds of what Aristotle had written on its implausibility:

19 It has even been suggested that the enraged Juno in the prologue of *Hercules Furens* does not need to descend on the stage: banished from heaven due to Jupiter's affairs with other women, she "may stand on the same stage level as the human characters, in order to represent [her] residence on earth" (Bernstein 2017, 97).

> Un moindre vice est de ce qu'ils appellent les Machines, c'est à dire, les moyens extraordinaires et surnaturelz pour deslier le nœud de la Tragedie, un Dieu fableux en campagne, un chariot porté par Dragons en l'air, et mille autres grossieres subtilitez, sans lesquelles les poëtes mal fournis d'inventions, ou d'art ou meprisans ce dernier, ne peuvent venir à bout de leur fusée, ni depestrer le nœud Gordien, sinon de la façon du grand Alexandre, à coupz de baston. Aristote marque ceste faute en la Medée, et je l'ay cottée en Electre avec d'autres. Or il ne faut imiter leur licencieuse façon que nous pouvons blasmer comme Horace tenaille franchement celle de Plaute en son *Art Poëtique* . . . (1969, 54)

> [A less serious fault is the use of what are called 'machines', that is to say, extraordinary and supernatural means of bring about the dénouement of a tragedy – a fabulous deity who intervenes, a chariot transported through the sky by a dragon and innumerable other crude devices without which poets with few ideas and scant familiarity with their art, or even despising it, cannot unravel their plots or untie the Gordian knot except, like Alexander the Great, by using brute force. Aristotle notes this weakness in *Medea*, and I, like others, have found it in *Electra*. Now, we must not imitate their departures from what is correct. Rather we should condemn them, just like Horace who excoriates the deficiencies of Plautus in his *Art of Poetry*. (Howarth 1997, 33-4)]

The view of the *deus ex machina* as a shibboleth to recognise unskilled dramatists (which does not correspond with what is argued by Aristotle and Horace) was voiced by various early modern scholars. Giraldi Cinzio, in his discourse *Intorno al Comporre delle Comedie, et delle Tragedie* (1554), examines what Horatian "knots" may necessitate the intervention of a god for their solution. Following Aristotle, Cinzio contrasts the role of Athena in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* and in the *Ion*, and reflects:

> *Ma nella sconueneuolezza non incorrera* il Poeta , se egli non si appigliera a fauola (sia ella o Comica, o Tragica) che non possa esser menata al fine dal suo giudicio, & dalla uirtu dello ingegno suo, *& non da interuenimento d'Iddio, da pouertà*, o d'ingegno, o di giudicio introdottoui per inueuitable necessita . . . Et tra quelle, che sono di marauigliosa testura, & di lodeuolissima solutione, quelle

> sono eccellenti, che dall'ingegno del Poeta sono menate al giusto fine, senza mutatione di persone, & senza intervento di diuin'opra. (Giraldi Cinzio 1554, 113)
>
> [But the poet will not be inappropriate, if he does not rely on a plot (be it either comic, or tragic) which cannot be brought to the end by his judgment, and by the virtue of his wit, and not by God's intervention, by poverty, or wit, or judgment introduced by inevitable necessity . . . And among those which are of marvellous texture, and of very commendable solution, those are excellent, which by the wit of the poet are brought to the right end, without mutation of persons, and without any divine intervention.]

It is probable that Daniel Heinsius had this passage of Cinzio in mind when, in his 1611 *De Tragoediae Constitutione* (parts of which were borrowed by Jonson in the *Discoveries*), while discussing the ending of Plautus' *Amphitruo*, he states that the *deus ex machina* "est ultimum refugium Poetae, cum τὴν δέσιν, hoc est, nodum, quem ligavit ipse, solvere potest, & rem parum provide tractavit" (Hardin 2007, 51n67; "is always the Poet's last refuge, since he cannot untie the knot he has tied, a matter he has handled with too little foresight", 42).

Thus, scholars on the Continent recognised the *deus ex machina* as a dramaturgical device used by the Greeks and Romans in both tragedies and comedies, and reflected, largely negatively, on its appropriateness on the grounds of its place in the organisation of the plot. Moreover, the *deus ex machina* was discussed in the context of the debate over the genre of tragicomedy in the second half of the sixteenth century. Guarini believed that the most important part of a tragicomedy was the fifth act, when all the "knots" should be untied under the principle of verisimilitude: being able to conclude the play properly constitutes "il maggior neruo dell'artifizio dramatico" (Guarini 1601, 59; "the chiefest nerve of the dramatic artifice") – a proper tragicomic ending is paramount "come nel capo risiede lo intelletto dell'uomo" (ibid., as it is in the head where man's intellect resides).[20] Hence the interest of the period in Euripides' tragedies

20 It has been suggested that the untying of the knots in a Guarinian tragicomedy is carefully planned according to the tenets of Counter-

with a happy ending: "Euripides offered an authoritative classical model for legitimising the controversial genre of tragicomedy" (Pollard 2017, 180).

It is evident that such critical views on the *deus ex machina* were generally of the kind that would be overturned only in the twentieth century, with the reappraisal of Euripides' use of the device, discovering its integral function in the play in order to solve an otherwise insolvable human *Grenzsituation* (limit-situation, Spira 1960, 27),[21] and its definition as "a very rare beauty", allowing "mortal emotion" to "brea[k] against the cliffs of immortal calm" (Murray 1913, 225, 223).

One wonders whether some of the Elizabethan professional dramatists came into contact with this body of continental criticism concerning the device. As often happens with classical reception in early modern England, we do not have any equivalent theorisation on the *deus ex machina*, and it is well known that the reception of Aristotle's *Poetics*, in particular, was a very complex and nuanced phenomenon (see Orgel 2002, 129-42, and Dewar-Watson 2018). It seems likely that some Elizabethan playwrights, besides reading Plautus and/or Euripides, encountered discussions of the *deus ex machina* in other types of texts, such as compendia referring to Horace's famous "Nec deus intersit", Erasmus's adage, or the following, influential excerpt from the first book of Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*. Here, the Epicurean Velleius compares beliefs in divine providence to the incompetence of dramatists resorting to a *deus ex machina*: "Quod quia quem ad modum natura efficere sine aliqua mente possit non videtis, ut tragici poetae cum explicare argumenti exitum non potestis confugitis ad deum" ("You on the contrary cannot see how nature can achieve all this without the aid

Reformation which aimed at unifying reason and God's mercy (following God's "generous and very rational project of salvation in which the very design of the dramatist can be seen with clearer transparency", D'Angelo 2000, 110, translation mine).

21 Consider also the epistemological function of the Euripidean *deus ex machina*: "The words of the god allow human beings to see as scales fall from their eyes. They come to realise – but not via discursive thinking or the information of a fact, via instead a sudden transposition onto the level of the god" (Spira 1960, 156, translation mine).

of some intelligence, and so, like the tragic poets, being unable to bring the plot of your drama to a *dénouement*, you have recourse to a god", Rackham 1933, 52-3).

A question that should not be underestimated is precisely the identity of the agents of the original *deus ex machina*: the gods. The device "demands the audience's perceptual investment in the possibility that a human actor can transcend mortality and become a god" (Dixon and Garrison 2021, 20). Interestingly, Cicero's passage was translated and used by John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, in a tract written as a reply to a Catholic controversialist, Thomas Harding. Jewel attacks the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation and writes that even schoolboys learn that accidents have no being without a substance and thus it follows that Harding is wrong to say that, since God is omnipotent, "Accidentes in the Sacrament stande without Subiecte" (1565, 438). "[For] Cicero saith: *A simple Poete, when he cannot tel, howe to shifte his maters, imagineth some God suddainely to come in place a litle to astonne the people: and there an ende*' (437). Gone is the explicit reference to theatre (in favour of poetry, in general), but, more importantly, also gone is the semi-atheism of the Epicurean speaker in Cicero's text. What Jewel achieves is a daring transposition of the artificiality of a dramaturgic device onto the sphere of metaphysics to negate Catholic belief. This is one of the earliest texts which associate the *deus ex machina* with popery – an association which would become significantly widespread over the next years. Among Protestants, it had become common to consider Catholics as idolaters worse than the heathens who did not know Christ, and it can be argued that the *deus ex machina* became a shorthand to censure popish idolatry.

It is well known that among the effects of the gradual and state-imposed secularisation of Reformed English drama there was the replacement of the miracle plays with stories from classical mythology: "the divine presence most often incarnate on the early modern English stage was not Protestant or Catholic, but pagan" (Taylor 2001, 14). Both plays featuring saints and those featuring the pagan gods disgusted Puritan antitheatricalists who saw drama as the ideal vehicle of idolatry and its manifestation as popery. Just invoking the gods' names was considered idolatry by Stephen Gosson: "Setting out the stage plays of the Gentiles, so we worship

that we stoop to the names of heathen idols" (Pollard 2004, 98). And yet, as well discussed by Alison Shell:

> Even at their most paranoid, antitheatricalists do not seem to be implying that such an auditor [i.e. an unlettered apprentice] would actually go away from the theatre believing in pagan gods. What they fear is, rather, the temporary imaginative collusion of auditor with actor . . . In essence, this is a suspicion of – to use an anachronistic term – performativity. (2010, 51)

If this was the feared effect of the names of the gods pronounced in the playhouse, it may be argued that seeing gods perform the *deus ex machina* function risked paving the way to general as well as potentially sceptical reflections on the Christian God's interventionism or non-interventionism in this earthly life. On the surface, a *deus ex machina* is a rebuttal of Epicurean views of deities uninterested in us: a god untying the knots at the end of a play is the opposite of a "Pagan Idol, void of power and pietie, / A sleeping Dormouse (rather) a dead Deitie" (Du Bartas 2012, 297). But the artificiality of the intervention of a *deus ex machina* in the theatre could feel particularly offensive in a Reformed context, especially from a Calvinist perspective, where "providence is described generally as 'concealed' (*occulta*), and the movement of God's hand as 'secret' (*secreta*). Calvin expressly distinguished between the 'mysteries' of revelation from the 'abyss' of God's hidden will at work in the government of the universe" (Gerrish 1973, 282). Significantly, in the aforementioned *De Tragoediae Constitutione*, Heinsius (who was "embedded within the system of Dutch Calvinism", van Miert 2018, n.n.) would attempt "a detailed treatment of causality and agency in which poetics . . . emerges as a privileged site for thinking about probability and necessity, nature, and the terms and limits of human knowledge, directly relevant to contemporary theological debates" (Leo 2019, 167). The *deus ex machina* troubled Heinsius because, as Russ Leo suggests:

> a tragedy is an object lesson in immanent causality. The *deus ex machina* . . . violates this principle insofar as it introduces an element that is otherwise foreign to the unity or totality of action in the tragedy, and thus introduces a miraculous end that does

> not follow necessarily from the totality of events and affects that otherwise constitute the work. (248)

The Elizabethan texts which refer, more or less obliquely, to the *deus ex machina* can help explain why the phrase first came to occur in English in those devotional texts where God's Providence is articulated as an artificial *deus ex machina*, which riskily mixes what is believed to be true (the Christian faith) with the sphere of dramatic mimesis.[22]

Let us contrast the complexities which arise from Heinsius' philosophical interpretation of tragedy with the portrayal of Providence personified in the popular romance *Clyomon and Clamydes* (An. 1599), which has been aptly called "a *deus ex machina* in plain sight" (Knapp 2000, 124). She descends "from seate of mightie Ioue" (F4*v*) in the nick of time to prevent Princess Neronis' suicide. She reveals that Neronis' beloved knight is still alive, which prompts the princess to exalt the gods' bounty: "And for their prouidence diuine, the Gods aboue ile praise, / And shew their works so wonderfull, vnto their laud alwaies" (ibid.). In this type of English plays, which were written "in the manner of the miracles" (Salingar 1974, 59), divine providence has definitely a far more simplistic aspect to it. Heinsius would have excoriated Providence's function as well as most features of *Clyomon and Clamydes*,[23] nor would he have appreciated, perhaps, the "highe mistery" (Warwick Bond and Greg 1911, 3) promised by the Prologus Laureatus of *The Birth of Hercules* (possible dates: c.1600-1610) (see Smith 1988, 164-

22 See also Abraham Hartwell's wish that God operated like a *deus ex machina* and intervene against the Turks: "we see . . . the power of the Turkes growe so huge and infinite . . . that vnlesse God come downe as it were out an Engine . . . I feare greatly that the halfe Moone . . . will grow to the full" (1595, A3*v*).

23 A very similar play is *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, the last act of which "though only about 300 lines in duration, stages three gods and two separate interventions into human action within about 120 lines of each other" (Seagar 2020, 52), In their competition in *The Rare Triumphs*, Venus and Fortune interfere with the humans to finally reveal hidden truths, quite literally stopping the action ("*Phizantius* stay, and vnto vs giue eare, / What thou determinest perfourmed cannot be" (An. 1589, G3*r*), and make peace between the characters possible.

8), modelled on *Amphitruo*. At the end of the play, Jupiter's voice thunders in the midst of a heavenly choir, announcing that the child born from Alcmena will be Hercules, with borrowings from Luke 1:30-3, tracing a not altogether original, but here a quite heavy-handed allegorical parallelism between Hercules and Christ. The atmosphere evoked in both plays feels more medieval than the product of a humanist, Reformed episteme.

Over and over again, Protestants associated Catholic beliefs with the *deus ex machina*. In 1601, William Barlow, who in few years would become Bishop of Rochester and of Lincoln, wrote that the Catholics' reliance on the Pope is also, effectively, a *deus ex machina*: "θεός ἀπὸ μηχανῆς (according to the Prouerbe) too Poetlike, who, when in their Tragedies they are come to an exigent, which they cannot extricate, they haue a God in an engine, whome they turne downe with a deuice to make vp the matter" (52). Protestants must remember that one can rely "vpon the Rocke which is Christ & his doctrine" (50) and adhere to *sola Scriptura* and *solus Christus*, and not be deceived by the Papists' *deus ex machina*. Barlow exploited this comparison in a later text, published in 1609, this time attacking the Jesuits' notorious defence of mental equivocation, and this time he refers to both Horace and Cicero (the knot referred to is the Catholics' ethical conundrum over taking the Oath of Allegiance):

> *This* being a knot – *Vindice dignus,* which the *Epistler* [i.e. the Jesuit Robert Parsons] cannot tell hastily how to vnloose; therefore as the *Orator* [i.e. Cicero] notes of *Poets* in their *Tragedies,* that being driuen to an exigent, they will haue *Deum ex improuiso,* some God in an Engine, which must giue them a *list*, and helpe them out cleanly. (1609, 311)

Even more revealingly, decades later, another theologian, the Arminian Thomas Jackson (d. 1640), would translate Horace's lines mockingly against Papists. Jackson states that Catholics believe that the Pope is infallible over questions that "are brought unto him, not in the discovery or finding out of such, as breed Contention" (1653, 274; i.e. he does not have a prophetic power to pre-empt such contentions), and comments:

> The exercise of this *Dominus Deus vester* plenary power is much like the use of the Heathen Gods upon the old Roman Stage.
>
> *Nec Deus intersit, nisi nodus vindice dignus*
> *Inciderit –*
> *Unless it be to loose some Gordian knot,*
> *The Popes decision is not eas'ly got.*

Again, Catholic faith is described as a wilful dependence on something epistemologically false, ontologically fake, and dramaturgically simplistic: a *deus ex machina*. For these Protestant divines, God is much more a *deus absconditus* who does not act like clockwork but moves in mysterious ways.[24] For Calvinists in particular, God's "judgments of election and reprobation [are] already determined, beyond the reach of human reason or experience" (Elton 1968, 9).

Only very rarely is the *deus ex machina* connoted positively. On entering St Andrews on 11 July 1617, King James was saluted with the words: "hic Deorum manus, divina virgula, Deus e machina apparuisti" (Adamson 1618, 164, "you appeared here, hand of the gods, divine wand, *deus ex machina*"), but the metaphor had by then acquired risky connotations. For example, George Buchanan had employed it in reference to James' mother forbidding "hir pretty venereous pigioun [i.e. Lord Bothwell] to do battaile": "the Quene, as it weir some God out of a ginne in a tragedie, had by hir aucthoritie taken vp the mattir" (1571, Iii*r*). A "god out of a gin" could resolve a situation, but it had become a symbol of popish arrogance and falsehood: in Buchanan's words, Mary Stuart, the figurehead for disaffected Catholics, acts not like a saint, but proudly wishes she could alter reality as if she were a deity in a play (which would soon turn tragic for her in real life).

24 It could happen instead that he should choose such a device to test us. Roger Gostwick, a Devonshire minister, claimed, for instance, that God can use the devil as a *deus ex machina*: "So that as the Poets in inextricable exigencies, do bring down Iupiter vpon the stage, ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by a deuise or engine, so doth God in matters that passe the ordinarie pitch, bring in Sathan to shew the transcendencie of the fault" (1616, 16-17). "Do bring down": notice the present tense.

Divine Rescue at the End

Hymen Peace, ho. I bar confusion.
'Tis I must make conclusion
Of these most strange events.
(*As You Like It*, 5.4.123-5)

After considering the cultural connotations of the *deus ex machina* in England, we can revisit the question of its mediations in Elizabethan drama. We have seen that the rarity of pagan gods as *dei ex machina* in Elizabethan drama cannot be fully explained by technological limitations, nor, for that matter, by problems of genre: in the context of rampant 'mongrel tragicomedy' critiqued by Sidney and of *Cambyses* being a *Lamentable Tragedy Mixed Full of Pleasant Mirth*, audiences and readers would not have necessarily frowned to find a tragedy ending with a happy conclusion. And yet, in Elizabethan play after play, be it comedy or tragedy or hybrid forms, gods and abstractions tend to appear as prologues (following, in general, more Plautus, who had employed for that role Lar Familiaris, Fides, Auxilium, Arcturus, and Mercury, and Seneca's ghost prologues of *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon*, than Euripides),[25] choric figures (e.g. Ate in *Locrine*), main characters (e.g. in *The Cobbler's Prophecy* and *The Aphrodysial*), and, more rarely, epilogues (Astraea in *Tomumbeius*) – not as solving and unravelling agents. When, in *As You Like It*, Hymen (a figure which has been played in the most disparate ways over the centuries) enters to give a new meaning to the relationships between the several couples, he invites[26] the *dramatis personae* as well as the audience to question his agency and be rational:

Whiles a wedlock hymn we sing,
Feed yourself with questioning,

25 Such differences can be fuzzy in the early modern period: for example, the prologue of Robert Garnier's *Hyppolite* (1573) is spoken by the ghost of Aegeus but it "may have been inspired by the prologue of Aphrodite in the *Hippolytos* of Euripides" (Witherspoon 1968, 54), and, according to Wiggins and Richardson's *Catalogue*, Garnier's play was used as a source for the anonymous *Caesar and Pompey* performed at Trinity College, Oxford, in 1605.

26 As often happens with gods on stage, Hymen uses a different metre from the one used by the other characters.

> That reason wonder may diminish
> How thus we met, and these things finish.
> (5.4.135-8)

It has been argued that the Elizabethan dramatists "openly scoffed at the device as an avoidance of good plotting", "[holding] strongly to the concept originally stated by Aristotle that a play should be composed of situations provoked by the characters themselves" (Hyde 1949, 87). This critical view is a conjecture and is not corroborated by Elizabethan documents, unlike what was happening on the Continent. We have seen that it is possible that one of the biggest problems was not dramaturgic in nature, but the fact that the device meant the intervention of a pagan god. Why was it so problematic to have a pagan god function as a *deus ex machina* at the end of a play? After all, as Gary Taylor puts it, the following may well have been the thoughts in the spectators' mind: "we do know that this is just playing, and the 'god' before us on stage is staged, stagey, stage-managed, a figure whose essence is the absence of essence" (2001, 14). Nevertheless, the *deus ex machina*, in all its spectacular artificiality, could raise urgent questions in a culture struggling over "the definition of the sacred" (Greenblatt 1988, 95), and this essay has shown that this device had been often and in different ways associated with popery. The all-too-easy solution of the *deus ex machina* could become a concern because "[t]he art of imagining the other in theatre begins with an intentional distancing that creates a space for contemporary epistemes to fill; it automatically entails investments of understanding and identification" (Miola 2001, 44). Immersed in the values and the world of a play where allegorisation is neither programmatic nor clear, spectators could reflect on their own ethical and religious beliefs, and even gain a new perspective. This has been suggested for some plays such as Shakespeare's romances, where:

> the gods are not only invoked and worshipped by ancient pagans, but really exist and change the course of the action. Audiences of Shakespeare's 'pagan plays' are not invited to interpret the pagan religious practices as allegories or as parables, but to experimentally become pagans. (Kullmann 2013, 49)

The gods of Shakespeare's tragicomedies and his contemporaries' later plays could appear once the iconoclast anxieties characterising the Elizabethan period had provisionally faded, and when the State had harnessed the *deus ex machina* to celebrate the court in the Stuart masque, refunctionalising its medievalism.[27] Besides, the function of the *deus ex machina* mutated, as Richard McCoy explains: "Even with deus ex machina descents in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*, the happy ending depends less on gifts from gods than on merely human virtues of fidelity, forgiveness, and good fortune" (2015, 215).

Medieval miracle plays had made especial use of the *deus ex machina* device,[28] and the genre did not die out as utterly as once was thought: as Matthew Steggle remarks, there is a "line of continuation of the saints play tradition into the Renaissance commercial theatre" (2016, 58).[29] The association of the *deus ex*

27 On the Catholic connotations of the masque in early Stuart masques, also via Queen Anna and Queen Henrietta Maria, see e.g. Dunn-Hensley 2017, 775-108 and *passim*, and Demaubus 2003.

28 Recent scholarship has shown that medieval drama itself could problematise the "theatricality of theology" and the "theology of theatricality", as Jody Enders argues (2003, 53), and the complex ways in which the agency of Divine Providence and the manifestation of saints were reformed in Protestant drama are a rich field of study.

29 That the *deus ex machina* was a device linked with the miracle play genre is attested in a late, and yet quite interesting text. Alicia D'Anvers' *The Oxford-Act* (1693) describes a performance of the so-called Terrae Filius, an orator appointed to deliver satirical speeches in ceremonies marking the completion of an Oxford degree. D'Anveras first compares him to Aristophanes (who is called the original "*Terræ-Filius* of old *Athens*" (16), and then writes: "Tho some there are perhaps wou'd blame us, / For making their first rise so famous; / And think these Under-Graduates-Oracles / Deduc'd from *Cornwal*'s Givary Miracles, / From immemorial Custom there, / They raise a *Turfy Theatre;* / Where from a Passage under-Ground, / By frequent Crowds encompass'd round, / Out leaps some little Mephistophilus, / Who ev'n of all the Mob the Offal is, / True *Terrae-Filius* he, we reckon is, / Or *Anti-Theos Apomechanes"* (17). 'Anti-Theos Apomechanes' because the character pops out from the infernal underground, not from above. This text is curious because it implies that the Cornish miracle plays were still active at the end of the seventeenth century: "Givary", a *hapax legomenon*, probably refers to the *plen-an-gwary*,

machina with popery may have inhibited a wide use of the device in the context of the Reformed episteme, but it should be clarified that the experimentation in pagan mentalities suggested by Kullmann did not occur on a direct theological plane. One cannot but agree with Sarah Dewar-Watson when she stresses that the insistence of Shakespeare's late plays on metatheatre has important consequences on the way we perceive the theophanies:

> the late plays have a shared preoccupation with motifs of divine intervention and the device of theophany . . . But the concentration of these motifs . . . is a deliberate archaism, rather than a more immediate cultural reflex. There is an inexact equivalent between the deities which appear in *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* and the divine apparatus of the miracle play: for the medieval audience, the divine apparition is part of the revelation of Christian truth, while for Shakespeare's audience, these appearances of pagan gods can only reinforce their sense of the fictionality of the play. (2018, n.n.)

Such theophanies look back at Elizabethan dramatic romances such as *Clyomon and Clamydes* and *The Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune*, but with a different perspective and a different intended effect on their audience.

In 1599, Jonson had been attacked because, in the original ending of *Everyman Out of His Humour*, he had the scholar and agent of satire Macilente being utterly transformed by the mere sight of a boy playing Queen Elizabeth – a clear instance of a *dea ex machina*. Jonson defended his original plan, explaining that the conclusion "at the first playing" was misliked "*dia to ten basilissan prosopopoesthai*" (Jonson 2001, 372, "because of the Queen's having been portrayed on stage by an actor"). He claimed that such a device had been used also "in divers plays"[30] and "yearly in our

the amphiteatre-like playing space of the Cornish. Richard Carew had referred to the "Guary miracle" as a common Cornish entertainment in the 1600s, characterised by "that grossenes, which accompanied the Romanes *vetus Comedia*" (1602, 71*r*-*v*).

30 A silent actor playing the queen in the guise of Astraea also appears at the end of Marston's *Histriomastix* (1600-1603). Elizabeth-Astraea appeared also in George Peele's civic pageant *Descensus Astraeae* (1591), but there were many similar entertainments (but consider also Elizabeth's portrayal in Peele's

city pageants or shows of triumph" (ibid.); besides, he was sure that such a solution could have "a moral and mysterious end" (374). Yet, as Stephen Orgel observes, "the theatre was considered to have overstepped its bounds, making the monarch subject to the whim of the playwright, a prop for his drama" (2002, 86). Ben Jonson had to wait and fashion, alongside Inigo Jones, a new formula where the *deus ex machina* would be lavishly employed: the Stuart masque.

In the early modern period, the dynamics between theatre, idolatry, and religious truth was tense, as well encapsulated by Stephen Greenblatt, discussing *King Lear*: "*But if false religion is theater*, and if the difference between true and false religion is the presence of theater, what happens when this difference is enacted in the theater?" (1988, 126). The critical attitude, perhaps also scepticism, which could be generated as a ramification of the *deus ex machina* convention as reflected in Elizabethan texts invites further scrutiny: one can argue that the evident artificiality provided by the intervention of a *deus ex machina* made this device particularly problematic in the drama of such a confessionally fraught episteme.

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Part 3
Theatregrams

9

Hermaphroditical Authority: *Epicene* and The Aristophanic Chorus[1]

Tom Harrison

Abstract

Ben Jonson used a number of 'formal choruses' in his comedies, which he deployed to guide and chide audience opinion and reaction. Group behaviour and response are two of Jonson's abiding interests, and consequently his plays contain even more numerous examples of informal choric groupings who watch, comment on, and judge the actions of others. This paper argues that the Collegiate ladies of *Epicene* are one of these informal choric groupings, and that their status and action within the play aligns them specifically to the Aristophanic chorus. I argue, however, that the ladies' Aristophanic links are not consistent, and the comparison is one of 'family resemblance' rather than precise copy. Jonson's selective approach to the Collegiates' Aristophanic forbears offers an insight into his general approach to classical models, which served as 'guides, not commanders' to his own dramaturgical strategies and were effective because of their continuing relevance to the playwright's own age.

Keywords: Ben Jonson; Aristophanes; Chorus; theatregrams

Ben Jonson, like other humanistically-trained playwrights of his age, wrote plays according to the creative principles of *imitatio* – the creation of new material based on direct or indirect reference to sources – and *contaminatio* – the blending of different sources to create a new composite. The clearest example of this practice in Jonson's work can be seen in his 1597 play *The Case Is Altered,* a contamination of two plays by Plautus (*Captivi* and *Aulularia*) that

1 Unless otherwise acknowledged, all citations of Jonson's texts are from Jonson 2012. All citations of Greek text are from Aristophanes 1998; translations are my own, with reference to Sommerstein and MacDowell's commentaries (Aristophanes 1983 and Aristophanes 1971). My thanks to Daniel Squire for his assistance with the Greek, and to Rachel White for her comments – any errors that remain are my own. A further discussion of elements of this essay are in Harrison 2023.

imitates specific elements from both sources, sometimes through close translation of the Plautine originals, sometimes through looser reimaginings. The Plautine elements are familiar – the capture of two sons in war, a miser's jealous guarding of his gold and his daughter – but Jonson gives them an early modern spin: the war is fought between France and Milan; the miser loses not just his gold but his daughter through marriage, and this marriage helps to heal the rift between the play's opposing forces. It is a work that puts into practice Jonson's later claim that the ancients should act as "guides, not commanders" (*Discoveries*, l.98) – a phrase that, appropriately enough, derives from Seneca the Younger (*Ep.* 33). In *The Case Is Altered* Jonson takes inspiration from his Plautine sources but updates and enriches the material for his contemporary audience. It is this relationship with his classical guides that would be one of the most consistent elements of his creative practice.

Jonson's dramatic strategy – which I have elsewhere called his "contaminative dramaturgy" (Harrison 2023) – was idiosyncratic in its focus on classical texts. The general principle of contamination was also central to early modern performance-making, which was dependent on the rapid exchange, interaction, and combination of performative and textual elements. Louise George Clubb's idea of the "theatregram" is a useful heuristic for understanding the elements that were utilised in these contaminative exchanges (Clubb 1989). Theatregrams are mobile dramaturgical units that were transferred between the work of playwrights, theatre-makers and performers and across geo-political and linguistic boundaries, a process that reflects the trans-national, collaborative and hybridised nature of early modern theatre. Clubb's schema includes the "theatregram of person", which refers to identifiable, 'stock' characters; "theatregram of association", groupings of characters in recurring relationships; "theatregrams of motion", familiar verbal and kinetic exchanges generated by individual and multiple characters; and "theatregrams of design", broader patterns of plot and action (Clubb 1989, 8-10). Clubb sees theatregrams operating within a range of scripted and non-scripted drama, but they are most clearly imagined with reference to the *commedia dell'arte*, which as a semi-improvisatory form relied on identifiable stock characters, episodes, and settings: person theatregrams equate to

the *maschere* ('masks') that identify the *commedia*'s key characters; association theatregrams to recognisable character pairings, such as the patriarchal Pantalone with servants like the cunning Pedrolino or the clownish Arlecchino; motion theatregrams to *lazzi* and other pieces of business that a *commedia* actor had in their repertoire, including set speeches, songs, and dances; finally, design theatregrams to the super-structure of the scenario and the sub-structure of individual scenes, both of which offer patterns of action within which performers could work.

Thinking about theatregrams from the perspective of the *commedia dell'arte* is a helpful reminder that these elements of performance are flexible rather than fixed – for example, *maschere* were constantly adapting to new performers and contexts, and *commedia* troupes had their own variations on generally-recognised *lazzi* and scenarios. But the theatregram's curious status of being mobile yet stable creates a problem: if theatregrams can travel great distances and be applied to new contexts, for how long do they remain recognisable? In other words, how much of a particular dramaturgical element can be altered, misinterpreted, or contaminated before it stops being the thing that has inspired it? To take as an example the person theatregram of the 'braggart soldier' – a character that can be traced back to Greek Old Comedy and Atellan farces, through to Pyrgopolynices in Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus*, and whose Renaissance incarnations include Shakespeare's Falstaff and the Capitano of the *commedia dell'arte* – how much 'braggartness' and 'soldierness' of that character can be lost or adapted before it becomes something different entirely?

Clubb's theatregram of person is perhaps the most susceptible to change, as it is with characters that differences are most apparent. I have found Ludwig Wittgenstein's idea of "family resemblance" a useful model for addressing the person theatregram's curious property of being simultaneously rigid and malleable. Wittgenstein originally used this model to describe a group of things not identified by a fixed set of features but by "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail" (Wittgenstein 2001, § 67, 66). Family resemblance imagines things as constituting a field, a constellation, a set of similarities rather than as a binary – so a

braggart soldier is 'more' or 'less' of a relation to another rather than 'is' or 'is not' a member of that character family. The idea that creative borrowings can be thought of as 'more' or 'less' than the thing they are borrowing from is of use when thinking about Jonson's approach to sources: he never adopts models wholesale, but instead combines them with other elements to create new performance types, a process that Alessandro Grilli and Francesco Morosi describe as an "intertwining of literary genres and codes" (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 141). It is a notion also appropriate to the whole idea of the theatregram which, as Robert Henke puts it, always becomes "culturally and locally inflected" when they are moved to new contexts (2008, 2), and are therefore always capable of change.

This chapter argues that Jonson's choral groupings bear a family resemblance to the choruses of the Old Comic playwright Aristophanes. Jonson's interest in the chorus is another expression of what Helen Ostovich sees as his abiding interest in group behaviour and response (1986), and his plays contain numerous examples of informal choric groupings who watch, comment on, and judge the actions of others (Happé 2003). Jonson's understanding of the chorus is a *contaminatio* of Greek, Roman, and English elements. As has been highlighted by Silvia Bigliazzi, ideas concerning the chorus in the early modern period had both classical and native English precedents, with uncertainties about the plurality or singularity of ancient choric figures merging with a native tradition of sole prologue and epilogue speakers, leading ultimately to a transformation "of the idea of choral plurality of classical ascendancy into a new oxymoronic idea of choric singularity" (Bigliazzi 2015, 104). As Bigliazzi's chapter in this volume attests, early modern ideas about classical dramaturgy were influenced by the strong presence of Seneca in print and in classically-inspired neo-Latin and vernacular drama; Euripides also exerted a competing influence, with observers using both playwrights as exemplars to establish similarities and differences in Greek and Roman dramaturgies. A result of these Senecan and Euripidean tussles for tragic supremacy was that no consensus ever emerged in the early modern period of what a classically-inspired chorus should 'look' or 'sound' like, although print and stage traditions frequently returned to the idea

of this grouping being in some way discrete from their play's main action, a return that indicates a particularly Senecan influence.

Like many of his contemporaries, Jonson appears to have viewed the chorus through a Latinate lens, influenced in particular by the writings of Seneca, Horace, and their commentators. Jonson's *Horace His Art of Poetry* – a translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica* – speaks of the "choir" who must take "An actor's parts, and office too" but also "sing / Between the acts" of topics that "fitly 'grees" with the action they frame (*Art,* 276-9). This translation reflects the early modern assumption that the chorus should be separate from the play's main action and yet have an intrinsic relation to it;[1] and, indeed, Jonson puts these notions into practice in his tragedy *Catiline* (1611). The Chorus are a group of citizens living in Rome during the Catilinarian conspiracies of 63-62 BC, and they close acts 1-4 with meditations on the corruption of contemporary Rome, a prayer to the gods for good governors, a recognition that Catiline is a growing threat to the state, and a final acknowledgement of the difficulties faced by magistrates that could apply just as well to Jonson's contemporary moment as his ancient setting. Although the Chorus' numbers are never clarified they are clearly imagined as a collective: they speak consistently in plural first person, with an increase in pronoun usage in each act marking a transition in their role from sententious proclaimers of the existential threats faced by the state from tyranny, to a group that recognise their own culpability in Rome's woes and the danger they now face.[2] As in Seneca's plays the Chorus also interacts with other characters, and their appearance in 3.1 to mark Cicero's election to the consulship represents the play's wider concern with the 'commonwealth' and its manipulation by the powerful. The Chorus' support for the newly-anointed Cicero shows how the ruling class is dependent on the members of that commonwealth: Cicero, whose denunciation of Catiline famously established him as a champion of the Republic,

1 See Bigliazzi's chapter in this volume for a discussion of Thomas Drant's 1567 translation of this section.

2 First-person plural pronoun usage increases significantly from act to act: 2 usages in act 1 (l.1.531-90); 2 usages in act 2 (2.1.363-406); 7 usages in act 3 (3.5.45-80); 19 usages in act 4 (4.4.20-71).

is sneeringly referred to by Caesar as one of the "Popular men", who "must create strange monsters and then quell 'em, / To make their arts seem something" (*Cat.,* 3.1.96-7). No doubt Catiline, whose conspiracy would have wrested control of Rome from the Senate with the aid of the dispossessed poor and the disaffected rich, is just the sort of "strange monster" that a Republican like Cicero should quell. Cicero's veiled allusion to "turbulent practices" (3.1.51) afflicting the commonwealth suggests the dangers of mass conspiracy; we should remember that 'turbulent' derives from the Latin 'turba' ('crowd'), which hints that even a conspirator like Jonson's Catiline, a man whose loyalties are ultimately patrician over plebeian, must placate the mob to a degree. As with their ancient (and particularly Senecan) models, Jonson's Chorus are direct commentators on the play's action and its relevance to the audience, but their own actions within the body of the play pass indirect commentary on the authority they possess as a collective.

Catiline is a notable instance of the classically-inspired tragic chorus on the early modern stage, but Jonson also uses several "formal choruses" in his comedies, which he deployed to guide and chide audience reaction, provide a sort of inter-act commentary on the play itself, and to an extent represent the watching spectators (Savage 1971). Again, a particularly Latinate interpretation of the chorus seems evident. In *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), for example, the playwright-surrogate Asper invites his two companions Mitis and Cordatus to sit onstage as "censors" to the action that follows (*EMO,* Ind.152), with the names of these two figures ('Mitis': 'soft'; 'Cordatus': 'wise') representing opposing ends of the spectrum of audience response. In later plays Jonson's choruses are more formally relegated to the interstices of the action, and are more closely allied to the audience: the Gossips of *The Staple of News* (1626) and the gentleman pairing of Probee and Damplay in *The Magnetic Lady* (1632) are portrayed as, respectively, "persons of quality" (*Staple*, Ind.7) and a "pair of public persons" (*Mag. Lady*, Ind.14) who might be expected to attend the Blackfriars theatre, the venue where these plays premiered; both groups comment on their play's action at the close of each act, with the latter pairing specifically termed a 'Chorus'. The trio of commentators in *Every Man Out of His Humour* are also referred to as a 'Grex', a Latin term

often used in reference to a crowd or troupe,[3] and connected explicitly by Jonson to the chorus (*EMO,* Ind.233). The Induction of *Every Man Out* contains a potted history of the development of "*comoedia*", which "was at first nothing but a simple and continued satire, sung by one only person" (Ind.242-3), but developed in complexity and subtlety across generations of playwrights. Even Aristophanes, whose plays are claimed to be "absolute and fully perfected", had to give way to "Menander, Philemon, Cecilius, Plautus, and the rest", all of whom contributed their own innovations to the genre, including that they "utterly excluded the chorus" (Ind. 246-50). This summary of comedy's development places the Greek playwrights as dramatic forbears in a long line of succession that has continued into Jonson's own day – when, he argues, playwrights "should enjoy the same *licentia,* or free power, to illustrate and heighten our invention as they did' (Ind. 253-4) – and toes a standard line in Renaissance literary theory. But, to return to Jonson's Horatian translation once more, *licentia* has its limits, for the "licence" is "fit to be restrained by law", and as a result the Old Comic chorus, notably described in the singular, "held his peace, / His power of foully hurting made to cease" (*Art,* 368-70). As Colin Burrow highlights in his edition of Jonson's *Art of Poetry*, the description of the Chorus "foully hurting" is a misreading of Horace's "Turpiter obticuit" ("fell silent, to its shame", l.370n). Despite Jonson's apparent error, the change reflects a general unease regarding the chorus' reputation for personal satire that could no longer be upheld in the early modern period.

Jonson wrote in a theatrical context that neither fully understood nor needed a chorus but which – influenced in particular by the literary, critical, and dramatic legacies of Seneca and Horace – simultaneously recognised the group's performative potential while holding concerns about its licentiousness, specifically in its comic incarnation. Bigliazzi suggests that in the early modern period the dramatic capabilities of the chorus became "dislodged" from the chorus, and a more inchoate form of "chorality" was distributed across characters, so that early modern dramatists retained some of the chorus' effects without their obvious presence (Bigliazzi

3 Cf. Plautus: *Asin.,* 942-7; *Cist.,* 782-7; *Epid.,* 732-3; *Pers.,* 858; *Poen.,* 1422.

2015, 104). I argue that the Collegiate ladies of *Epicene* (1609-10) are one of these informal choric groupings, and that – despite the domination in the Renaissance imagination of the chorus from the classical Senecan and native English tradition – their status and action within the play aligns them specifically to the Aristophanic chorus. I suggest, however, that the ladies' Aristophanic links are not consistent, and the comparison is one of "family resemblance" rather than precise copy. The breaking apart of theatregrams associated with the chorus is a way of understanding how this was achieved in practice, and also that Jonson took advantage of the possibilities offered by the 'informal' chorus, retaining the chorus' capacity for "foully hurting" while avoiding dramatic structures that were no longer appropriate in his own theatrical context.

I will illustrate Jonson's Aristophanic connections with specific reference to *Wasps* – a play that, aside from containing a good example of the Aristophanic chorus, also appears to be one with which the later playwright was familiar.[4] As was typical with Jonson's contaminative dramaturgy he has not imitated all aspects of the Aristophanic chorus in his depiction of the Collegiate ladies, but it is in their collective association, their aggression, and their identification with the watching audience that we might trace the features of their Old Comic ancestors. Jonson's selective approach to the Collegiates' Aristophanic forbears offers an insight into his general approach to classical models, which were "guides, not commanders" to his own dramaturgical strategies and effective because of their continuing relevance to the his own age. Like Aristophanes, Jonson seems ambivalent about the power of the crowd, and this ambivalence is communicated through the presentation of choric groupings as categorically indistinct, potentially violent, and prone to crucial misapprehensions.

4 5.4 of *The Staple of News* features the miserly Pennyboy Senior's putting his dogs to a "cross-interr'gatory" (5.4.37) about their bad behaviour, an episode similar to the trial of Philocleon's dogs in *Wasps* (891-1008). Both scenes are a *reductio ad absurdum* of their human characters' obsessions – for Pennyboy Senior it is money, for Philocleon it is lawcourts. For further discussion of the Jonson-Aristophanes dog trial scenes, see Morosi in this volume.

Wasps and the Aristophanic Chorus

In this first section I consider the Aristophanic chorus using Clubb's terminology, imagining this grouping as a set of interrelated theatregrams that operate within the key formal structures of *parodos, agon,* and *parabasis*, which I here regard as theatregrams of design.[5] No two Aristophanic choruses, or indeed plays, are exactly alike, but enough similarities remain for us to make some generalised comments, and to illustrate how the use of theatregrams contributes to the choruses' quality of similarity and difference.[6]

The chorus was one of the most consistent elements in Aristophanic comedy, as this grouping was of fundamental importance to their plays' performance and structure. In contrast to the professional actors who performed as named characters, the twenty-four strong comic chorus was likely comprised of *epheboi*, members of the Athenian citizenry aged between eighteen to twenty, and their importance is suggested by the fact that the plays' financial backers are referred to as *choregoi*, indicating that it was the chorus rather than the play that was being sponsored (Hughes 2012, 87-9). Composed of Athenian performers, the choral group was a bridge between the imagined world of their playwrights and the real world of the audience, a bridge most clearly formalised in the *parabaseis*, when the chorus stepped out of the dramatic action and addressed the audience directly, frequently making appeals for their playwrights' success or connecting the onstage action with real-life analogues. In *Wasps*, for example, the chorus points to Aristophanes not hiding behind pseudonyms but φανερῶς ἤδη κινδυνεύων καθ' ἑαυτόν ("running the risk openly on his own"; *Wasps,* 1021) in standing up to Athens' foes – including one of its leading politicians, Cleon, who in earlier plays such as *Knights* had been portrayed as a violent demagogue. However, in a likely

5 For a description of the formal structures of Aristophanic comedy, see Sommerstein 1980, 8-11. Sommerstein highlights that these structures were not "rigid" (11) – some plays contain elements in a different order, while some repeat or miss others entirely – but they are regular enough to give Aristophanic comedy an identifiable pattern.

6 For a structural overview of Aristophanes' extant plays, see Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 194-212.

reference to the poor reception of *Clouds*, which was awarded third prize in the City Dionysia of 423, the chorus claims that the audience had not rewarded Aristophanes' bravery in the previous dramatic competition: πέρυσιν καταπρούδοτε καινοτάτας σπείραντ᾽ αὐτὸν διανοίας, / ἃν ὑπὸ τοῦ μὴ γνῶναι καθαρῶς ὑμεῖς ἐποιήσατ᾽ ἀναλδεῖς: ("last year you let him down, he having sown his newest ideas, which you made feeble because you did not understand them clearly"; 1044-5). In their rejection of Aristophanes' previous play, the audience are depicted as ungrateful and ignorant, an idea enforced by a closing metaphor that likens playwriting to chariot-racing: ὁ δὲ ποιητὴς οὐδὲν χείρων παρὰ τοῖσι σοφοῖς νενόμισται, / εἰ παρελαύνων τοὺς ἀντιπάλους τὴν ἐπίνοιαν ξυνέτριψεν ("the poet is no worse regarded by the wise, if racing by his competitors he crashed his invention"; 1049-50). It is a prime instance of the Aristophanic chorus attacking while it defends: the playwright concedes that his previous work "crashed" (ξυνέτριψεν) because he was unable to control its power, but that concession also insists on how far ahead of his dramatic rivals – and by extension, his audience – he was before he did so.

The chorus is also capable, through backhanded compliment, of influencing audience reaction:

> νῦν τὰ μέλλοντ᾽ εὖ λέγεσθαι
> μὴ πέσῃ φαύλως χαμᾶζ᾽, εὐλαβεῖσθε.
> τοῦτο γὰρ σκαιῶν θεατῶν
> ἐστι πάσχειν, κοὐ πρὸς ὑμῶν.
> (1011-4)
>
> [Now beware those good things about to be said / do not fall down carelessly on the ground, / for it is to stupid spectators / that this is likely to happen, but not becoming of you.]

Only "stupid spectators" (σκαιῶν θεατῶν) would be so obtuse as to misinterpret the "good things about to be said" (τὰ μέλλοντ᾽ εὖ λέγεσθαι) in defence of Aristophanes in the *parabasis*. To avoid the charge the audience has no choice but to endorse the playwright's words – to be "the wise" (σοφοῖς) who admire his creative charioteering, even if it is occasionally reckless.

Through the *parabasis*, the chorus therefore acts as a mouthpiece for their playwright, attempting to cajole a positive response from

their audience through a mixture of flattery and harangue. The chorus' strange, contradictory qualities are also apparent within the fiction of their play world, and are frequently contrasted – through status, gender, and even species – to the young Athenian men who performed them. Out of the extant comedies, Aristophanic choruses include Greeks from Attica at large (*Acharnians*, *Peace*, *Wealth*), goddesses (*Clouds*), animals or part-animals (*Frogs*, *Wasps*, *Birds*), Dionysian initiates (*Frogs*), rich Athenian citizens (*Knights*), Athenian women (*Thesmophoriazusae*, *Ecclesiaszuae*), and a mixed group of old men and women (*Lysistrata*). In *Wasps*, the chorus are a group of jurors who straddle biological categories, as they represent both old men and wasps: each possesses a "wasped-up waist" (διεσφηκωμένον; 1072) and a "sting" (ἐγκεντρίδος; 1073), but, as veterans of the wars with the Persians, they are also Ἀττικοὶ μόνοι δικαίως ἐγγενεῖς αὐτόχθονες, / ἀνδρικώτατον γένος καὶ πλεῖστα τήνδε τὴν πόλιν / ὠφελῆσαν ἐν μάχαισιν ("the only Athenians truly native, sprung from the land, / the most manly race and one which helped the polis / the most in battles"; 1076-8). Depicted as autochthonous warriors linked to an earlier age of Athenian heroism, the wasp-jurors therefore lay claim to respect, although their current employment implies a decline from their previous glories. As the portion of the Athenian citizenry with the most time on their hands, old men typically served as jurors in the law courts, their participation in this important legal role aided by a daily stipend which had been increased by Cleon, who was believed to have engineered this to ensure the successful conviction of his enemies. The chorus' wasp comparison therefore comes from their association with Cleon's antics, as well as their status as veterans of Athens' military exploits. In the *parabasis* of *Wasps* the Chorus Leader acknowledges the group's waspish qualities, but also claims that these qualities are inherently Athenian:

> πολλαχοῦ σκοποῦντες ἡμᾶς εἰς ἅπανθ' εὑρήσετε
> τοὺς τρόπους καὶ τὴν δίαιταν σφηξὶν ἐμφερεστάτους.
> πρῶτα μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν ἡμῶν ζῷον ἠρεθισμένον
> μᾶλλον ὀξύθυμόν ἐστιν οὐδὲ δυσκολώτερον.
> εἶτα τἄλλ' ὅμοια πάντα σφηξὶ μηχανώμεθα.
> ξυλλεγέντες γὰρ καθ' ἑσμοὺς ὥσπερ εἰς ἀνθρήνια

> οἱ μὲν ἡμῶν οὗπερ ἄρχων, οἱ δὲ παρὰ τοὺς ἕνδεκα,
> οἱ δ' ἐν Ὠιδείῳ[7] δικάζουσ', ὧδε πρὸς τοῖς τειχίοις
> ξυμβεβυσμένοι πυκνόν, νεύοντες εἰς τὴν γῆν, μόλις
> ὥσπερ οἱ σκώληκες ἐν τοῖς κυττάροις κινούμενοι.
> ἔς τε τὴν ἄλλην δίαιτάν ἐσμεν εὐπορώτατοι·
> πάντα γὰρ κεντοῦμεν ἄνδρα κἀκπορίζομεν βίον.
> (1101-13)

> [Examining us in many ways, you will find that in all respects, / in our leanings and way of life, we most resemble wasps. / Firstly, no living thing, having been roused, / is more quick to anger than us, and is no harder to please. / Next, we contrive all other things just like wasps. For, gathered in swarms just like in a wasps' nest, / some of us judge where the archon is, some alongside the Eleven, / while some in the Odeum, crammed up tightly against the walls / like this, bending to the ground, hardly moving / like larvae in their cells. / While in the other way of life we are very resourceful, / for we sting every man and make a living.]

The presentation of the wasp-jurors is deeply ambivalent here. They may "sting every man" (πάντα . . . κεντοῦμεν ἄνδρα), but they are essential to the working of Athens' legal system, judging cases not only "where the archon is" (οὗπερ ἄρχων) and alongside the officials of the state prison ("the Eleven": τοὺς ἕνδεκα), but also "in the Odeum" (ἐν Ὠιδείῳ), a performance venue that, in an interesting echo to the action of *Wasps*, occasionally held trials. And, as the chorus has earlier reminded the audience, their bellicose nature has in large part contributed to Athens' current prosperity: they were a generation who τοιγαροῦν πολλὰς πόλεις Μήδων ἑλόντες / αἰτιώτατοι φέρεσθαι τὸν φόρον δεῦρ' / ἐσμέν, ὃν κλέπτουσιν οἱ νεώτεροι ("having seized / many cities from the Medes [i.e. Persians] / are most responsible for bringing the tribute here, / that the youth now steal"; 1098-1100). As unpleasant as many of their qualities may be, the implication is that they were essential to the establishment of Athens' prosperity, and vital to its continuing good order.

As in other Aristophanic comedies, the wasp-chorus do not begin the play onstage, but other characters often build up anticipation for

7 This is the spelling supplied by Henderson (Aristophanes 1998). The Hall and Geldart edition of *Wasps* (Aristophanes 1907) has 'Odeum' as ᾠδείῳ.

their arrival by talking about their qualities, which are frequently aggressive. *Wasps* centres on Philocleon ('Love-Cleon') an old man who has been trapped inside his home by his son and his slaves to cure him of his unusual νόσον ("illness"; 87): φιληλιαστής ἐστιν ὡς οὐδεὶς ἀνήρ ("he is a lover of trials like no other man"; 88), which makes him desperate to sit in court. The play begins with Philocleon's attempts to escape house arrest through various schemes, including climbing out through the roof and sneaking out the front door, Odysseus-like, hanging to the underside of a sheep. As dawn approaches, his long-suffering son Bdelycleon ('Loathe-Cleon') realises his father may be rescued by his fellow jurors, who ἀπὸ μέσων νυκτῶν γε παρακαλοῦσ' ἀεί, / λύχνους ἔχοντες καὶ μινυρίζοντες μέλη / ἀρχαιομελισιδωνοφρυνιχήρατα ("always call out to him, beginning in the middle of the night, / carrying lanterns and warbling old-Sidonian-sweet-songs by Phrynicus"; 218-20). When the slave Sosias, believing these old men do not sound so dangerous, responds that they will simply αὐτοὺς τοῖς λίθοις βαλλήσομεν ("hit them with stones"; 222) to drive them away, Bdelycleon highlights the men's unusual physical feature:

> ἀλλ' ὦ πόνηρε τὸ γένος ἤν τις ὀργίσῃ
> τὸ τῶν γερόντων, ἔσθ' ὅμοιον σφηκιᾷ.
> ἔχουσι γὰρ καὶ κέντρον ἐκ τῆς ὀσφύος
> ὀξύτατον, ᾧ κεντοῦσι, καὶ κεκραγότες
> πηδῶσι καὶ βάλλουσιν ὥσπερ φέψαλοι.
> (223-7)

> [But, you idiot, if someone angers this gang / of old geezers, it is like a nest of wasps. / For they even have a most sharp stinger out of their backsides / with which they sting, and with a buzz / they leap up and strike like sparks.]

The initial description that suggests a group of peaceable old men μινυρίζοντες ("warbling") songs as they travel to fulfil their democratic duty is countered by Bdelycleon's reference to their waspish qualities; as we see with the wasp-jurors' own account of themselves, the way they are regarded by other characters is frequently ambivalent. The inter-generational antagonisms that Francesco Morosi, elsewhere in this volume, sees as central to

Aristophanic plot dynamics thus finds another outlet in Bdelycleon's concerns about how his father's contemporaries will regard his behaviour.

The chorus underline their importance through their first entrance in the *parodos*, a processional song during which the group move into the *orchestra* space via the entranceways (*eisodoi*) in the theatre. This entrance is often spectacular, marked by a shift in meter and enforced visually and aurally by the appearance of the twenty-four strong choric grouping into a playing space that had hitherto been occupied by a handful of actors. In *Wasps* the *parodos* portrays the aged wasp-jurors as a group past their prime: they enter slowly, their way lit by lanterns, and they are guided into the *orchestra* by several boys, who warn them of the stones that may trip their unsteady feet. The Chorus Leader addresses his fellows and laments that they are πάρεσθ' ὃ δὴ λοιπόν γ' ἔτ' ἐστίν, ἀππαπαῖ παπαιάξ, / ἥβης ἐκείνης, ἡνίκ' ἐν Βυζαντίῳ ξυνῆμεν /φρουροῦντ' ἐγώ τε καὶ σύ ("all that still remain here . . . / of those young men from the time when you and I were together in Byzantium"; 235-6), a reference that suggests these men are veterans of the capture of Byzantium from the Persians in 478, which would make them around eighty years old in 422, the year of *Wasps*' first performance (Aristophanes 1983, 236-7n). A group of war veterans who had fought against one of Athens' most dangerous enemies should be deserving of respect, but the play tempers such impressions by suggesting that they are in the pay of Cleon, and their civic service has now been channelled into a more sinister purpose:

> ἀλλ' ἐγκονῶμεν, ὦνδρες, ὡς ἔσται Λάχητι νυνί
> σίμβλον δέ φασι χρημάτων ἔχειν ἅπαντες αὐτόν.
> χθὲς οὖν Κλέων ὁ κηδεμὼν ἡμῖν ἐφεῖτ' ἐν ὥρᾳ
> ἥκειν ἔχοντας ἡμερῶν ὀργὴν τριῶν πονηρὰν
> ἐπ' αὐτόν, ὡς κολωμένους ὧν ἠδίκησεν.
> (240-4)

> [But let us be quick, o men, as Laches will get it now: / all say that he has a bee-hive of cash. / Yesterday therefore Cleon our protector ordered us / to come on time holding a three-day supply of nasty anger / against him, in order to punish him for what he did wrong.]

The speech endorses the earlier description of the wasp-jurors while clarifying it further. The power κολωμένους ("to punish") with their ἡμερῶν ὀργὴν τριῶν πονηρὰν ("three-day supply of nasty anger") – a reference to the jurors' stipend – is connected here to Laches, an Athenian general whom the play suggests Cleon saw as a rival worthy of attack. But the wasp-jurors' power is heavily circumscribed: they are in the pay of Cleon (ὁ κηδεμὼν ἡμῖν: "our protector"), and the suggestion that they have been recruited specifically to find Laches guilty implies that the defendant will not gain a fair trial. In this depiction the chorus thus invite two contradictory reactions: they are worthy of admiration for the sacrifices they have made in service to the *polis*, but also portrayed as in hock to a ruthless politician who uses them to persecute his enemies.

Following their entrance in the *parodos,* the Aristophanic chorus is frequently deployed to enhance the central struggle between their play's protagonists, often focused on what William Arrowsmith terms the protagonists' "Great Idea" (Arrowsmith 1973): the founding of a new city (*Birds*), a sex strike to avoid war (*Lysistrata*), the procurement of a private peace treaty (*Acharnians*). The "Great Idea" of *Wasps* is represented by Bdelycleon's desire to cure his father's love of trials by keeping him away from the law courts. The ὀργὴν . . . πονηρὰν ("nasty anger") of the jurors is put to the test when, discovering Philocleon's imprisonment in his own home, they threaten violence against Bdelycleon and his slaves:

> ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ Ἡράκλεις, καὶ κέντρ' ἔχουσιν. οὐχ ὁρᾷς, ὦ δέσποτα;
> ΒΔΕΛΥΚΛΕΩΝ οἷς γ' ἀπώλεσαν Φίλιππον ἐν δίκῃ τὸν Γοργίου.
> ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ καὶ σέ γ' αὐτοῖς ἐξολοῦμεν. ἀλλ' ἅπας ἐπίστρεφε
> δεῦρο κἀξείρας τὸ κέντρον εἶτ' ἐπ' αὐτὸν ἵεσο,
> ξυσταλείς, εὔτακτος, ὀργῆς καὶ μένους ἐμπλήμενος,
> ὡς ἂν εὖ εἰδῇ τὸ λοιπὸν σμῆνος οἷον ὤργισεν.
> ΞΑΝΘΙΑΣ τοῦτο μέντοι δεινὸν ἤδη, νὴ Δί', εἰ μαχούμεθα.
> ὡς ἔγωγ' αὐτῶν ὁρῶν δέδοικα τὰς ἐγκεντρίδας.
> ΧΟΡΟΣ ἀλλ' ἀφίει τὸν ἄνδρ'· εἰ δὲ μή, φήμ' ἐγὼ
> τὰς χελώνας μακαριεῖν σε τοῦ δέρματος.
> ΦΙΛΟΚΛΕΩΝ εἶά νυν, ὦ ξυνδικασταί, σφῆκες ὀξυκάρδιοι,
> οἱ μὲν εἰς τὸν πρωκτὸν αὐτῶν εἰσπέτεσθ' ὠργισμένοι,
> οἱ δὲ τὠφθαλμὼ κύκλῳ κεντεῖτε καὶ τοὺς δακτύλους.
> (420-32)

> [Xanthias Heracles, they actually carry sharp stingers! Do you not see them, master? // Bdelycleon Yes, with these they obliterated Philippos son of Gorgias in a trial. // Chorus Leader And we will obliterate you with them! But everyone: about turn, / presenting stingers, then charge this man [Bdelycleon], / shoulder to shoulder, in ranks, filled with anger and force, / so he will know well henceforth what sort of wasp nest he provoked! // Xanthias This is now really terrible, by Zeus, if we fight. / How frightened I am, seeing those stingers of theirs! // Chorus: But send forth the man [i.e. Philocleon]. If you do not, I declare that / you will think tortoises are blessed on account of their shells. // Philocleon Come on now, fellow jury-men, sharp-hearted wasps: / one squadron, having been riled up, fly into his arsehole, / While the other sting all around his eye and his fingers.]

The κέντρον ("stingers") that Bdelycleon had anticipated are on full display here, likely brandished as part of the chorus members' costume, and the Chorus Leader's appeal to the σφῆκες ὀξυκάρδιοι ("sharp-hearted wasps") is couched in militaristic language that suggests their combative nature. The doddery old men of the *parodos* are still a force to be reckoned with, and in performance, one imagines that the twenty-four strong chorus, bearing down on Bdelycleon and his two slaves, would be an imposing sight.

As in other Aristophanic plays, the violence threatened by the chorus is diverted into a debate or contest (*agon*) between the protagonists. Philocleon and Bdelycleon agree that they will each present their arguments as to why the other is wrong:

> ΒΔΕΛΥΚΛΕΩΝ νὴ Δί', εἰθίσθης γὰρ ἥδεσθαι τοιούτοις πράγμασιν.
> ἀλλ' ἐὰν σιγῶν ἀνάσχῃ καὶ μάθῃς ἁγὼ λέγω,
> ἀναδιδάξειν οἴομαί σ' ὡς πάντα ταῦθ' ἁμαρτάνεις.
> (512-14)

> [BDELYCLEON By Zeus, for you are accustomed to take pleasure in such acts. / But if you keep silent and learn what I say, / I predict I will teach you that you missed the mark on everything.]

The *agon* that follows is a battle of words rather than fists, and tellingly both father and son agree that the wasp-jurors should be judges of their τῇ διαίτῃ ("arbitration"; 524), a decision that

recognises not only their professional expertise but also the importance of their collective endorsement.[8] The chorus address Philocleon, realising that his success reflects on themselves:

νῦν δὴ τὸν ἐκ θἠμετέρου
γυμνασίου λέγειν τι δεῖ
καινόν, ὅπως φανήσει –
. . .
– μὴ κατὰ τὸν νεανίαν
τόνδε λέγειν. ὁρᾷς γὰρ ὥς
σοι μέγας ἐστὶν ἀγὼν
καὶ περὶ τῶν ἁπάντων.
εἰ γάρ, ὃ μὴ γένοιθ', οὗτός
σε λέγων κρατήσει –
. . .
οὐκέτι πρεσβυτῶν ὄχλος
χρήσιμος ἔστ' οὐδ' ἀκαρῆ:
σκωπτόμενοι δ' ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς
θαλλοφόροι καλούμεθ', ἀντωμοσιῶν
κελύφη.
(526-8, 531-7, 540-5)

[Now then the man from our / Gymnasium [Philocleon] must say something / new, so that you [i.e. Philocleon] may appear – / . . . to not speak in the manner of this / young man [Bdelycleon]. For you see that / the debate facing you is a great one / and about everything. If, indeed – may this not happen – he / is able to defeat you / . . . / No longer is a crowd of old men / serviceable, not even a little bit. / We, being jeered at in the roads / are called olive-bearers, and / dried-up husks of oaths.]

The wasp-jurors thereafter respond to Bdelycleon's position that is, again, typical of the chorus' general pattern of initial resistance to and eventual acceptance of the protagonist's viewpoint. They meet Philocleon's opening argument – that jurors are all-powerful with

8 Although the *agon* is a common feature in Aristophanic comedy and the chorus act as witnesses to the victory of one of the agonists (always, with the exception of *Wealth,* the final speaker), it is worth noting with Sommerstein that *Wasps* contains "the only competitive *agon* in Ar[istophanes] in which the chorus act formally as judges"; Aristophanes 1983, 521n.

defendants, with prosecutors, and in their own homes (548-630) – with enthusiasm:

οὐπώποθ᾽ οὕτω καθαρῶς
οὐδενὸς ἠκούσαμεν οὐδὲ
ξυνετῶς λέγοντος.
. . .
ὡς δ᾽ ἐπὶ πάντ᾽ ἐλήλυθεν
κοὐδὲν παρῆλθεν, ὥστ᾽ ἔγωγ᾽
ηὐξανόμην ἀκούων,
κἀν μακάρων δικάζειν
αὐτὸς ἔδοξα νήσοις,
ἡδόμενος λέγοντι.
(631-3, 636-41)

[Never have we heard / anyone speaking so spotlessly or / smartly. / . . . / How he covered all the bases, / and neglected nothing, that / I was puffed up while listening. / And I myself seemed to judge / on the Isles of the Blessed, / delighting in him speaking.]

By contrast, the chorus are hostile to Bdelycleon as he prepares his response:

ΧΟΡΟΣ δεῖ δέ σε παντοίας πλέκειν
εἰς ἀπόφευξιν παλάμας·
τὴν γὰρ ἐμὴν ὀργὴν πεπᾶ-ναι
χαλεπὸν <νεανίᾳ>
μὴ πρὸς ἐμοῦ λέγοντι.
ΚΟΡΥΦΑΙΟΣ πρὸς ταῦτα μύλην ἀγαθὴν ὥρα ζητεῖν σοι
καὶ νεό-κοπτον,
ἢν μή τι λέγῃς, ἥτις δυνατὴ τὸν ἐμὸν θυμὸν κατερεῖξαι.
(644-9)

[Chorus You must entwine all sorts / of methods to obtain acquittal. / For it is hard <for a young man> to soften my anger, / if he does not speak in my favour. // Chorus Leader Because of these things, it is time for you to look for a good, newly-chiseled millstone / if you don't say something of importance, which is capable of grinding down my anger.]

But when Bdelycleon responds with a counter-argument – that jurors receive a pittance in comparison to the wealth of the *polis,* and they have been hoodwinked by politicians and officials (650-724) – their opinion changes:

> Κορυφαιος ἦ που σοφὸς ἦν ὅστις ἔφασκεν· "πρὶν ἂν ἀμφοῖν
> μῦθον ἀκούσῃς,οὐκ ἂν δικάσαις." σὺ γὰρ οὖν νῦν μοι νικᾶν
> πολλῷ δεδόκησαι·
> ὥστ' ἤδη τὴν ὀργὴν χαλάσας τοὺς σκίπωνας καταβάλλω.
> ἀλλ', ὦ τῆς ἡλικίας ἡμῖν τῆς αὐτῆς συνθιασῶτα,
> Χορος πιθοῦ πιθοῦ λόγοισι, μηδ' ἄφρων γένῃ
> μηδ' ἀτενὴς ἄγαν ἀτεράμων τ' ἀνήρ.
> εἴθ' ὤφελέν μοι κηδεμὼν ἢ ξυγγενὴς
> εἶναί τις ὅστις τοιαῦτ' ἐνουθέτει.
> σοὶ δὲ νῦν τις θεῶν παρὼν ἐμφανὴς
> ξυλλαμβάνει τοῦ πράγματος,
> καὶ δῆλός ἐστιν εὖ ποιῶν·
> σὺ δὲ παρὼν δέχου.
> (725-35)

> [Chorus Leader Doubtless it was a wise man who said: "do not judge until you / have heard both sides of a story." For in fact you now seem to me / to have won by a lot. Therefore, having softened my anger, we throw down our sticks. / [To Philocleon] But, o brother of our same time of life – // Chorus Heed, heed the words, and don't be senseless, / and don't be too stubborn and too tough a man. / Would that I had a protector or family member / who could advise about such things. / Now one of the gods, being clearly at hand, / assists you in the matter, / and clearly serves you well. / Just be there, you, and accept the help!]

It is with the chorus' endorsement that Philocleon's attitude also alters, and his desire to sit in an Athenian court is replaced by a more comfortable domestic alternative – where he can preside over the prosecution of his dog and eat as much soup as he likes – and partying in his neighbourhood, where he behaves outrageously with no fear of reprisal. After the *agon* the wasp-chorus' central role as characters within the world of the play shifts in and out of focus in the play's two *parabaseis* (1009-121; 1264-91) – during which they extol their playwright's virtues, remind the audience

of their responsibility, and reflect on their own waspish qualities – and following a small stasimon in which they note the change that Philocleon has undergone (1449-73) and a final choral address (1516-37), they depart the *orchestra* in the final *exodos.*

Table 1:
Aristophanic chorus theatregrams

Theatregram	**Description**
Person	Grouping of chorus as a 'character' with collective identity and behaviour
Association	Interactions with characters in the play
Association	Interactions with audience through *parabaseis*
Motion	Aggressive group movement, including in *parodos*
Motion/Design	Dance and song as part of performance
Motion/Design	Massed entry in *parodos*
Design	Delivery of *parabaseis*
Design	Involvement in and contribution to *agon*[*es*]

As the table above illustrates, the Aristophanic chorus is composed of a series of theatregrams that merge in different combinations across Aristophanes' plays. By imagining the group as composed of characteristics represented by discrete theatregrams we can see that the chorus is a 'family' of theatregrams rather than a group possessing fixed characteristics, and that it is Aristophanes' manipulation of the positioning and emphasis of these theatregrams in each of his plays that give his choruses both a general identity and local differences.

The wasp-chorus illustrate not just the essential structural function the chorus fulfils in Aristophanes' plays, as represented by the theatregrams listed above, but also the general agonistic tone that animates the action. The threat of violence the chorus brings to the stage catalyses the stand-off between father and son, and their judgement that it is Bdelycleon rather than Philocleon who has carried the day marks a shift from familial hostility to acceptance.

Indeed, the transition from hostility to acceptance is a broader pattern in Aristophanic Old Comedy, which frequently focuses on the protagonists' aim to achieve their 'Great Ideas', with these attempts formally represented by the *agon*. It is worth repeating the importance of the *parodos*, *agon*, and *parabasis* to the structure of extant Aristophanic comedy, and the central role the chorus plays in each of these elements. Each of these design theatregrams produces dramatic conflict – chorus against characters, characters against characters, and chorus against audience – and might be imagined as representing a broader agonistic element in the context of the plays' first performance, where their place in competitions was determined by the extent to which they swayed the judges' opinions.

The categorical indeterminacy of the Aristophanic chorus is frequently literal and metaphorical. In *Wasps* the chorus are aggressive, opinionated, hasty, but both in their roles as jury members within the play and as real citizens in the context of performance they have a connection to the real Athens of their audience. The play makes a broader point about the limitations of a legal and political system that is heavily reliant on rhetorical manipulation and outright cheating. It is glimpsed in the play's absurd dog trial (891-1008), in which Philocleon's dog Labes is accused of eating cheese and – despite a rhetorically-sound defence that appeals to the *ethos* of the canine's past character, the *logos* of witness testimony, and the *pathos* of an appeal on behalf of Labes' puppies – he is ultimately acquitted only when Bdelycleon tricks his father into placing his vote in the wrong voting urn. Corruption is also glimpsed in the state at large: in the prologue the slave Sosias recounts a dream in which ἐν τῇ Πυκνὶ / ἐκκλησιάζειν πρόβατα συγκαθήμενα ("the sheep sat in session in the Pnyx"; 31-2), μοὐδόκει / δημηγορεῖν φάλλαινα πανδοκεύτρια, / ἔχουσα φωνὴν ἐμπεπρημένης ὑός ("expecting an all-consuming whale / to speak in the assembly for the sheep, / bearing the voice of a swollen pig"; 34-6). The πρόβατα ("sheep") in Sosias' dream are clearly Athenian citizens – their possession of βακτηρίας . . . καὶ τριβώνια ("staves and . . . cloaks"; 33) evokes the dress of typical poor Athenians, as well as the stick-wielding wasp-jurors (Aristophanes 1971, 33n) – whereas the φάλλαινα πανδοκεύτρια ("all-consuming whale") is Cleon, portrayed as interested in personal gain, who ἔχουσα τρυτάνην /

ἵστη βόειον δημόν ("holding a pair of scales, / Started weighing out the fat of the land"; 39-40). Despite the gravity of the situation – Sosias sees the dream as περὶ τῆς πόλεως . . . τοῦ σκάφους ὅλου ("about the entire ship of state"; 29) – the Athenian sheep-citizens are portrayed as helpless in the face of a domineering politician like Cleon who τὸν δῆμον ἡμῶν βούλεται διιστάναι ("wishes to separate the demos from us"; 41).[9] As in the trial of Labes (whose name perhaps evokes the 'Laches' that the wasp-jurors had earlier been keen to convict?) Sosias' dream suggests a legal and political context in which due processes can be upended by sleight of hand or force of personality.

But if Aristophanes sees emotional appeal as problematic in the legal system he is not immune from using it in his own theatrical defence. In the play's first *parabasis* the Chorus Leader reports that Aristophanes ἀδικεῖσθαι γάρ φησιν πρότερος ("says he was wronged first"; 1017) by his public, despite the fact that in his previous work οὐδ' . . . ἀνθρώποις φήσ' ἐπιθέσθαι ("he did not . . . attack men"; 1029) but rather he θρασέως ξυστὰς εὐθὺς ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτῷ τῷ καρχαρόδοντι ("boldly joined battle straight from the beginning with the saw-toothed one himself [i.e. Cleon]"; 1031), and other τοῖς ἠπιάλοις ἐπιχειρῆσαι πέρυσιν καὶ τοῖς πυρετοῖσιν ("agues and boiling fevers"; 1038) that assail the body politic. Aristophanes is presented as a civic-minded playwright, but despite being a τοιόνδ' . . . ἀλεξίκακον τῆς χώρας τῆσδε καθαρτὴν ("deliverer from evil such as this, a cleanser of this land"; 1043) the Chorus Leader scolds the audience that καταπρούδοτε ("last year you let him down"; 1044) by not recognising the quality of his previous play. In the onstage action of *Wasps* Bdelycleon succeeds because he can manipulate the chorus' strong emotional state – commonly depicted as "anger" (cf. 223, 646, 727), a state shared by Philocleon (560, 574) – and his playwright – who is, crucially, depicted as attacking Athens' enemies with Ἡρακλέους ὀργήν ("Herculean anger"; 1030) – also appears aware of its benefits in his own context. Aristophanes portrays himself as a battler, one who is willing to fight for the little people despite dangers to

9 See Aristophanes 1971, 32n, where MacDowell notes that Aristophanes returns to this connection elsewhere: cf. *Cl.*, 1203; *Kn.*, 264; *Wasps*, 955.

himself, but who also expects to be rewarded in kind. *Wasps* won first prize at the Lenaia, and although it is impossible to know the precise reasons for his victory it is worth noting that this *parabasis* certainly attempts to influence public opinion in a manner that he satirises in the play.[10]

This examination of the function of the chorus in *Wasps* reveals a fact borne out by Aristophanic choruses in general: Aristophanes recognises the importance of public endorsement – as evidenced by the chorus' role as witnesses to the protagonists' victory in the *agon*, and in their metatheatrical function as cheerleaders for the playwright's own victory in the dramatic competition – but he is also aware that the crowd are susceptible to misdirection, misinformation, and misunderstanding. Aristophanes' ambivalence about the chorus is perhaps most aptly represented in their characterisation, for if the performers who comprised the Aristophanic chorus represented an important civic function, it is striking that the characters they portrayed were often not Athenian citizens, and frequently not even human. Part of the categorical distance between characters and performers may be due to Old Comedy's likely origin in the *komos*, a form of ritualistic revelry where evidence suggests that revellers dressed as animals and – possibly – non-Athenian foreigners (Pickard-Cambridge 1962, 151-8). But if this distance is in part traditional to Old Comedy, Aristophanes also makes dramatic capital out of it: his choruses can be absurd, articulate positions that are contrary to Athenian orthodoxy, or – as in the case of *Wasps* – represent the best and worst qualities of the Athenian citizenry.

Epicene and the Jonsonian Chorus

In this section I turn to *Epicene* and suggest that Jonson's Collegiate ladies evoke some of the functional and thematic elements of the

10 Interestingly, the Chorus Leader's monstrous description of Cleon and of Aristophanes' defence of Athens (1030-7) is repeated almost exactly in *Peace* 752-9, which was performed in 421 BC after Cleon's death. If this repetition in *Peace* is not due to an error in the text's transmission, one wonders whether its reappearance was Aristophanes' way of underlining that his victory over Cleon was now indisputable.

Aristophanic chorus, albeit in a very different dramatic context. Early modern playwrights worked in a theatrical *milieu* more clearly indebted to Latin than Greek drama, so gone are the formal design theatregrams of *parodos*, *agon*, and *parabasis*, the choral odes sung in intricate meters and accompanied by dancing, all of which were performed by a small number of actors and a large chorus in the large, open-air performance space of the Athenian theatre. Jonson's play instead follows a five-act structure – a structure based on an early modern understanding of ancient drama, and particularly prevalent in the indoor, hall playhouses – and was performed in a commercial context by 'boy' players, ranging in age from mid-teens to early twenties.[11] *Epicene* does not therefore echo Aristophanic comedy in any overt way. Where we do see Jonson's Aristophanic influence, however, is in his presentation of his Collegiate ladies as representatives of his society at large, and in his deployment of theatregrams that evoke the Old Comic chorus' movement, dominance of space, and involvement in a central struggle between the play's protagonists.

Jonson's *Epicene, or The Silent Woman* was first performed in the Whitefriars theatre, a small hall playhouse in the Whitefriars liberty of London that likely attracted, as with other hall playhouses of the time, a more socially-elite audience than found in the amphitheatres. Jonson's audience would have recognised the world of the play as their own: *Epicene* is set in their contemporary London, with familiar locations in the city's rising West End featuring prominently, and its cast of characters, drawn from the minor gentry and middling sort, may not have been too socially distinct from the audience that gathered to watch them. The plot works within the typical pattern of city comedy plays, but demonstrates that curious interleaving of Aristophanic and Menandrean New Comic elements that Morosi's essay in this volume identifies in Jonson's *The Staple of News*. At its heart, *Epicene* is a struggle between young and old that focuses on a tussle over marriage, with the twist being that it is not the play's young man (Dauphine Eugenie) who wishes to marry but his misanthropic uncle (Morose), and the wife this uncle

11 For more on the boy actor in *Epicene* and other plays as a "rhetorical and theatrical construct", see Lamb 2008, 188-9.

weds (the Epicene of the title) turns out not to be a she but a he. In this broad outline of romantic intrigue we may already detect design theatregrams derived from Italian and Latin New Comedy – specifically the pattern of two young lovers whose marriage is blocked by another, often a 'senex' ('old man') related to one of the pair. However, the changes the play makes to the basic pattern – it is a young woman and old man who are to marry, the blocking figure is young man, and the play concludes not with marriage but with divorce – shows Jonson's characteristic manipulation of his source material.

Epicene is a play about London, and more specifically about a "polite society" of men and women for whom city life is more concerned with the exercise of "wit and taste" (Zucker 2004, 41) – and idle talk, "of pins and feathers and ladies and rushes and such things" (*Epicene,* 1.1.50) – than the pursuit of more serious business or political activities. The attractive vacuity of the urban experience is represented by a group of socially and financially independent women called the ladies Collegiate – Lady Haughty, Lady Centaur, and Mistress Dol Mavis, and a number of aspirants or "pretenders", including Mistress Trusty and Mistress Otter – whose days are filled with social calls, sexual liaisons, and visits "to Bedlam, to the china houses, and to the Exchange" (4.3.19), those hubs of entertainment for the moneyed classes. The Collegiates take advantage of the enticements that city life has to offer, although their gender lends their activities a *frisson* of moral dubiousness not often ascribed to their male counterparts; Truewit, one of the play's gallants, depicts them as "A new foundation . . . an order between courtiers and country madams that live from their husbands", who "cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion with most masculine, or rather hermaphroditical, authority" (1.1.58-63). These women are unusually independent – Truewit notes they "live from their husbands" – and the description of their group as a "foundation", an "order", gives them an institutional identity one might more readily associate with male groups – indeed, the "most masculine, or rather hermaphroditical, authority" that they exercise hints that their behaviour is transgressive, even monstrous.[12] Such

12 For more on the Renaissance connection between hermaphroditism

a suggestion of transgression and monstrosity is carried over into the names of some of the Collegiates: the surname of Lady Haughty, the group's leader, reveals a characteristic frequently regarded as a male preserve; Lady Centaur evokes a chimera of human and animal from classical myth; and one of the Collegiates' applicants, Mistress Otter, is named after the creature regarded as "*animal amphibium*", at home on both land and water (1.4.20). The Collegiates' domineering behaviour over the course of the play – in which they impose on Morose and Epicene's wedding, seek to recruit additional members, and pursue Dauphine as a sexual conquest – all confirm their "masculine authority". No wonder, then, that Morose will later characterise these women as the "mankind generation" that have tormented him so heavily (5.4.17).

Although much of Jonson's play focuses on the home of the antisocial Morose, the Collegiates are a synecdoche for the society beyond its walls. In this they hold an affinity with the Aristophanic choruses who represent Athenians and the inhabitants of Attica more broadly and, like their Aristophanic counterparts, Jonson's Collegiates seem susceptible to the worst aspects of collective attitudes and behaviours. As Truewit will later tell Dauphine:

> . . . all their actions are governed by crude opinion, without reason or cause. They know not why they do anything but as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and – in emulation of one another – do all these things alike. Only they have a natural inclination sways 'em generally to the worst when they are left to themselves. (4.6.54-9)

As in Aristophanic comedy, in which the audience are frequently given a sense of the chorus' attitude and behaviour before their arrival, the association between Collegiates and chorus comes even before the ladies have stepped onstage. In the first scene Clerimont's Boy describes the reception he receives when he visits Lady Haughty and her companions: "The gentlewomen play with me and throw me o'the bed, and carry me in to my lady, and she kisses me with her oiled face and puts a peruke o'my head and asks me an I

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and monstrosity, see Rackin 1987, 29.

will wear her gown, and I say, 'No.' And then she hits me a blow o'the ear and calls me innocent, and lets me go." (1.1.10-14). Such behaviour illustrates the Collegiates' capacity to dominate younger males (Billing 2014), and Truewit's later claim to Morose that a "she-friend or cousin at the college" will "instruct" his new bride "in all the mysteries of writing letters, corrupting servants, taming spies" (2.2.75-7) voices a fear that the ladies could have an insidious influence on other women too. Their capacity for social judgement is also apparent: Clerimont claims to Epicene that she has only been invited to see Morose "o'purpose to be seen and laughed at by the lady of the college and her shadows" (2.3.6-7); later, he separately tells Daw and La Foole that each intends to use the Collegiates as witnesses to the others' social humiliation, the former by shutting La Foole out from a feast attended by the ladies, the latter by diverting the feast elsewhere to "frustrate your provision and stick a disgrace upon" Daw (3.3.41). Both claims are untrue, but they help to facilitate the appearance of the wedding breakfast at Morose's home, and to suggest the idea that the judgement of the Collegiate ladies – despite the misgivings of the play's male characters – is key to condoning or condemning one's social position.

Jonson's small Whitefriars stage could not hope to accommodate a group as physically imposing as the twenty-four strong comic chorus, but discussion of them prior to their arrival builds the Collegiates up to ominous proportions in the minds of other characters. In his earliest description of the Collegiates Truewit claims that they "every day gain to their college new probationer" (1.1.63-4); this claim proves to be true, as Mistresses Trusty and Otter both lobby to join their ranks and the ladies themselves pursue Epicene and Dauphine, the second of which they imagine as a sort of honorary member. What makes their first appearance more foreboding is that there is no clear indication of the group's size. Truewit tells Morose that "three or four fashionable ladies from the college" are coming to visit him, and he exaggerates the group further by claiming they are coming with a "train of minions and followers" (3.5.22-3). The suggestion of a "train" is indeed borne out in the subsequent action, as the Collegiates' appearance is accompanied not just by their hangers-on – the aspirants to the college, the two knights La Foole and Daw, and the three gallants as

fascinated onlookers – but also by an accompaniment of musicians, who invade Morose's home with more noise and bodies in 3.7.

The ladies' reputation certainly precedes them, for despite introducing them in act 1, a description of their preparations for the feast in act 2, and Mrs Otter's deferential references to the "great ladies" and "my Lady Haughty" in act 3 (3.1.14; 3.2.51), it is not until 3.6 that they make their entrance. Their first appearance – when all four Collegiates enter, accompanied by their satellite, Daw – does not disappoint, as the group fill the stage space in a manner similar to the Aristophanic *parodos*:

> [*Enter*] *Daw, Haughty, Centaur, Mavis, Trusty.*
> Daw This way, madam.
> Morose Oh, the sea breaks in upon me! Another flood! An inundation! I shall be o'erwhelmed with noise. It beats already at my shores. I feel an earthquake in myself for't.
> . . .
> Truewit [*To Morose*] Nay, sir, you must kiss the ladies; you must not go away now. They come toward you to seek you out.
> Haughty I'faith, Master Morose, would you steal a marriage thus, in the midst of so many friends, and not acquaint us? Well, I'll kiss you, notwithstanding the justice of my quarrel. [*To Epicene*] You shall give me leave, mistress, to use a becoming familiarity with your husband. [*She kisses Morose.*]
> (3.6.1-4, 15-20)

Morose's comparison of the ladies' entrance in catastrophic terms as a "flood", "an inundation", "an earthquake" suggests not only their imposing size but also the physical impact they bring to the scene. The Collegiates' seemingly-elemental invasion of Morose's home is accompanied by an invasion of personal space when Lady Haughty insists on kissing the unhappy husband. The domineering treatment that Clerimont's Boy had earlier described is shown onstage when Haughty treats Morose with "becoming familiarity" by kissing him; the episode also echoes an earlier kiss that Morose gives to Epicene, which he gives in order "to print, on those divine lips, the seal of being mine" (2.5.66-7).

The Collegiates do not spend the rest of their time onstage like the Aristophanic chorus, but even when they leave they maintain

a conspicuous influence over the play's action. Having discovered that Epicene may be of more interest than they expected, Haughty declares "An she have wit, she shall be one of us . . . We'll make her a collegiate" (3.6.44-5) and the group withdraw offstage, "instructing her i'the college grammar" (4.1.21), some of which we glimpse when they appear onstage again in 4.3, discussing how Epicene should "manage" her husband (4.3.15). It is noteworthy that the ladies refer to Epicene at this point as "Morose" (4.3.11) a moment that – as with Haughty's imposition of a kiss on Morose – indicates that the Boy's earlier hint at the Collegiates' dominance over men is being realised onstage.

The Collegiates' most crucial function within the play is as witnesses to the social humiliation or elevation of the plays' other characters. This function is first seen onstage in the gulling of Daw and La Foole in 4.5, notably instigated on Dauphine's behalf in response to the ladies laughing at him "most comically [i.e. mockingly]" (4.5.6) and in an effort to make them "all in love with thee afore night" (4.1.109). After tricking La Foole and Daw into thinking that each seeks revenge for an insult from the other, the ladies are brought onstage as witnesses to a disguised Dauphine kicking Daw and tweaking La Foole's nose. The moment has its effect, for the Collegiates enter the next scene—according to a stage direction original to the 1616 folio, "*having discovered part of the past scene above*" (4.6.0.SD.3-4) – with Haughty complaining "how our judgements were imposed on by these adulterate knights" (4.6.1-2) and the ladies turning their attention to wooing Dauphine, wishing "to style him of our friendship and see him at the college" (4.6.49-50).

From their entrance, then, the play's action begins to revolve conspicuously around the Collegiate ladies, with the play's various factions all keen to capitalise on what is referred to as their "judgements". The gulling scene is imagined as a play-within-a-play: Truewit promises his two companions "a tragicomedy between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines, Daw and La Foole", and he asks his friends to "be the chorus behind the arras, and whip out between the acts and speak" (4.5.25-7). Such an arrangement evokes Renaissance neo-Senecan drama, with the chorus as moralising frame to their play's action, although here the gallants present a debased version of the choric role, as their interest in Daw and La Foole's shaming is

far from ethical.[13] In this scene the Collegiate ladies function more as audience members. It is worth noting that the ladies will be invited to see the "catastrophe" (4.5.190), a term defined in Evanthius' *De Fabula* as "the reversal of affairs preparatory to the cheerful outcome; it reveals all by means of a discovery" (Evanthius, qtd in Herrick 1950, 59). Although the language evokes an understanding of dramatic structure derived from the Latin tradition, Clerimont clearly imagines the Collegiates' judgement as a pivot in the playlet's action, a moment where the ladies' previous opinions are changed through the revelation of the two knights' foolishness. The scene is prelude to a much more profound display of the Collegiates' lack of judgement – the moment when they discover that Epicene is not, in fact, a woman – but in both instances we see a similar pattern to that found in Aristophanic comedy: a group bearing witness to a contest between different characters, and the result of that contest shifting their favour from one to the other.

As table 2 illustrates, the Jonsonian chorus shares some striking features with the Aristophanic chorus, features which may be imagined as discrete theatregrams of person, association, motion, and design. Despite the Collegiates' lack of identity as a 'formal' chorus, and the absence of structural units like the *parodos*, *agon*, and *parabasis* in Jonson's comedy (and indeed early modern comedy more generally), we can see that the ladies' function echoes their Aristophanic equivalents. The most crucial omission of the Aristophanic chorus is the *parabasis*, but in this final section I argue that parabatic qualities can be glimpsed first in the identification between the Collegiate ladies and the watching audience, and secondly in the prologues which serve as a frame and a guide for audience interpretation.

13 We might also add that the gallants' imagining of the episode as a play to which the two gulls are unwitting actors is an example of meta-performance, a dramatic quality that Grilli and Morosi see as present in both Aristophanes and Jonson, but which in the latter playwright's work is a representation of how social situations and interactions can be parsed and manipulated by intellectually superior protagonists (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 137).

Table 2:
Comparison of theatregrams in Aristophanic and Jonsonian choruses.

Theatregram	**Description of Aristophanic Chorus**	**Description of Jonsonian Collegiates**
Person	Grouping of chorus as a 'character' with collective identity and behaviour	Grouping as 'ladies Collegiate' with collective identity and behaviour
Association	Interactions with characters in the play	Interactions with characters in the play
Association	Interactions with audience through *parabaseis*	N/A
Motion	Aggressive group movement, often in *parodos*	Collective movement when onstage. Actions perceived as aggressive by several characters
Motion / Design	Dance and song as part of performance	N/A
Motion /Design	Massed entry in *parodos*	Massed entry as a 'flood', an 'inundation' in 3.6
Design	Delivery of *parabaseis*	N/A
Design	Involvement in and contribution to *agon*[*es*]	Involvement in and contribution to gulling of Daw and La Foole, and to Dauphine's final revelation of Epicene

The Collegiate ladies do not maintain the parabatic quality of the Aristophanic chorus, but Jonson may have used another means to imply a connection between them and his audience. Truewit's claim

that the ladies act with a "masculine, or rather hermaphroditical, authority" highlights their transgressiveness, but also that their behaviour reflects both male and female characteristics. The same sort of liminal positioning is apparent in their social description as "an order *between* courtiers and country madams" (1.1.59-60; emphasis added), with the preposition implying social and locational difference (court and country) as well as gendered differences (a "madam" is female, but a "courtier" is less clear).

Similar to the "hermaphroditical" description of the Collegiate ladies, Jonson's description of his audience defies easy categorization. According to Thomas K. Hubbard, paratextual material like prologues, inductions, and epilogues are the closest things to *parabaseis* in Jonson's work (Hubbard 1993, 231-40), and indeed the first prologue to *Epicene,* which represents the play as a feast to which his audience have been invited as discerning guests, provides an Aristophanic bridge between the content of the play and the context of performance. The prologue's description of who this play-feast might be "fit for" has a similar indeterminacy to the description of the Collegiate ladies:

> The poet prays you, then, with better thought
> To sit, and, when his cates are all in brought,
> Though there be none far-fet, there will dear-bought
> Be fit for ladies: some for lords, knights, squires,
> Some for your waiting-wench and city-wires,
> Some for your men and daughters of Whitefriars.
> (Pro.19-24)

The guests cover a broad social range – from "waiting-wench" to "lords" – and the reference to "city wires" alludes to the sort of fashionable, urbane men and women that anticipate the Collegiate ladies themselves. Most telling, though, is Jonson's imagined audience including the "men and daughters of Whitefriars". As Richard Dutton highlights, this phrase may allude directly to Jonson's audience –the men and women occupying the Whitefriars theatre – but could also carry an alternative meaning, referring to the inhabitants of the wider area: the Whitefriars liberty, which was itself "notorious for vice and crime" (Jonson 2003, Pro. 24n). When these ambiguities are considered, the prologue's welcome takes on

a more cynical implication: if *everyone* is welcome then *anyone* is welcome, and the audience become less a congregation of 'the better sort' than a group that might contain any manner of individual.

As in Aristophanic comedy the 'between-ness' of the Collegiates – a group who, we must remember, behave with "hermaphroditical authority" – may have reminded the audience of itself. Like the Collegiates, the original audience of *Epicene* occupied a similarly liminal space in Jacobean high society: their status as spectators in one of the hall playhouses suggests a degree of elitism and sophistication, but the Whitefriars was still a comparatively minor venue, its novelty and the notoriety of the area in which it was located meaning that it probably did not attract the same clientele as found at the Blackfriars. Perhaps its audience (male or female) saw something of themselves in the socially ambitious – but ultimately foolish and gauche – Collegiate ladies and gulled gentlemen that Jonson presents onstage.

This suspicion is strengthened by the fact that first-time audiences of *Epicene* are expected to be caught out by its closing *coup de théâtre*, just like their onstage counterparts. After securing Morose's promise of restoring him to his inheritance if he will rid him of the suddenly-talkative Epicene, Dauphine whips off Epicene's peruke to reveal that 'she' is in fact a disguised boy, and therefore the marriage is void. As Sonia Desai highlights, this moment is "orchestrated to call into question the entire sign system of gender in the theatre", the removal of the wig "metaphorically remov[ing] the wigs from the other female characters on the stage whose gender identities are also called into question" (Desai 2020, 99). This is the second moment where the Collegiates are witnesses to an agonistic triumph of one character over another, although on this occasion the ladies – who in the gulling of Daw and La Foole had been vocal about the imposition against their "judgements" by the two "adulterate knights" – can only be stunned observers to this metatheatrical revelation of Epicene's own gendered indeterminacy (Truewit remarks: "Madams, you are mute upon this new metamorphosis!", 5.4.197). In their role as witnesses to and catalysts for the behaviour of others within the play, Mark A. Anderson sees the Collegiate ladies representing "the deception within society as well as the often deluded and deceived nature of

society" (Anderson 1970, 363). The women's gullibility is a marker of a wider gullibility that has affected not just foolish men like Daw and La Foole but also the gallants Clerimont and Truewit; it is the lone plotter, Dauphine, rather than any group that triumphs by the play's end. Even the watching audience – earlier flattered as possessing "cunning palates" (Pro.10) and apparently complicit with the gallants' schemes – have been kept from Dauphine's trick, and have found the convention of boys playing girls exploited for dramatic effect.

The play's *denouement* encourages its audience to take heed that they reach their own judgements independently, not as part of the crowd. A second prologue acknowledges the potential for human failing, but also that such failings should confer a lesson rather than be taken personally:

> The ends of all who for the scene do write
> Are, or should be, to profit and delight;
> And still't hath been the praise of all the best times,
> So persons were not touched, to tax the crimes.
> (2 Pro.1-4)

This prologue – "Occasioned", as its title notes, "by some person's impertinent exception" to *Epicene*'s contents – echoes the Aristophanic *parabasis* through its emphasis on comedy as a social good. The conciliatory tone it strikes – that plays should follow the Horatian line of profit and delight, that comedy should punish the sin, not the sinner – is endorsed by Truewit, who does not condemn the ladies but rather warns them to "Take heed" of women-traducing men like Daw and La Foole (5.4.198), and that even Dauphine "will make a good visitant within this twelvemonth" (5.4.200-1; see Swann 1998, 302). Just like Aristophanes before him, Jonson recognises not only the important role that groups play in validating or condemning individual actions, but also that the members of these groups are no more likely to hold admirable or positive qualities than those they judge, and that there are lessons to be learned from their mistakes. Jonson's audience are presented with onstage versions of themselves who could profit from the play's lessons, and in Truewit they have a model for how they should respond to the sort of chastising trickery they have experienced themselves. And,

like Aristophanes' warning reference to σκαιῶν θεατῶν ("stupid spectators"), *Epicene*'s parabatic prologues provide a framework for how audiences might imagine themselves as worthy guests at Jonson's feast.

Conclusion

It is in their manipulation of the tension between the collective and the individual and their distinction between the discerning and indiscriminate audience members that I see the closest convergence between Jonson and Aristophanes, and nowhere is this more clearly manifested than in their use of choral groups. Both playwrights believed in the didactic function of theatre: for Jonson, "poesy", including drama, was to "inform men in the best reason of living" (*Volpone,* Epistle 81-2), while Aristophanes referred to himself and his fellow playwrights as "*komododidaskaloi*" (cf. *Kn.* 507, *Peace* 734), a word that could be interpreted – and was, by Renaissance readers – as "comic teachers".[14] In their focus on "Great Ideas" or purging individuals of personality imbalances or 'humours', both playwrights seem interested in using their plot as a 'cure' for social ills – represented in *Wasps* by Philocleon's trial-loving νόσον ("illness") and in *Epicene* by Morose's intense misanthropy. Jonson and Aristophanes trusted that their audiences had the capacity to behave and judge appropriately but realised it was not a given – to help them, they provided them with onstage analogues who could both flatter and offend, and frames like the prologue and the *parabasis* to guide their reactions further. Much modern criticism of *Epicene* has discussed its misogynistic elements, not only its central joke – the 'silent woman' of the title turns out to be a fiction because there is, according to a misogynist perspective common in the Renaissance, no such thing as a silent woman – but also its unflattering portrayal of the Collegiate ladies as acquisitive, promiscuous, domineering, overly-urbane (Rackin 1987; Helms 1989; Lyons 1989; Newman 1991; Lanier 1994). Conversely, others

14 On Jonson's misreading, via Daniel Heinsius, of διδάσκαλος, see Grilli in this volume.

have argued that the monstrous women of *Epicene* are equalled by the men, and rather than offering a critique of women Jonson instead exposes the vacuousness and cruelty of individuals and groups within his contemporary society – in other words, that the play is less a misogynistic satire than a satire on misogyny itself (Ostovich 1986, 119-21; Sanders 1998, 49-67; Swann 1998; Merrens 2000, 257-8). It is with this second critical group that this essay most closely aligns, for I see Jonson's women as only the most obvious manifestation of a broader social discordance within the play – a play in which, as Edward Partridge memorably pronounced, "nearly everyone . . . is epicene in some way" (1964, 162). Jonson and Aristophanes seem to share Truewit's conviction that crowds "do anything but as they are informed, believe, judge, praise, condemn, love, hate, and – in emulation of one another – do all these things alike". But, as both playwrights demonstrate, they also recognise that a poorly-informed group has the capacity to change, and in their close identification with the watching audience they imply that these failings are human qualities that we all share.

I have found the "family resemblance" approach to Clubb's theatregram a useful way of thinking about how Jonson exploits elements of dramatic models without using them wholesale. What we imagine as the Aristophanic chorus is in fact a system of theatregrams, all potentially detachable from one another, and a dramatist can be selective in what they choose in order to create an analogue that bears the feature of its original. There are pragmatic reasons why Jonson may have done this: early modern English playwrights wrote their plays for markedly different performers and performance conditions to their Athenian forbears; equally, their audiences were no longer primed to recognise and respond to dramatic structures like the *parodos, agon,* and *parabasis* that Aristophanes deploys in his comedies. Jonson's selection of elements of the Aristophanic chorus that would still resonate with his Whitefriars audience is thus partly an act of dramaturgical expediency, but there are perhaps deeper ideological reasons behind this selection as well. From one perspective, the use of a choric group of Collegiate ladies as both objects of mockery and the means by which others are mocked is another instance of the Renaissance reception of Aristophanes-as-satirist (a phenomenon

observed in Grilli's essay). But the ambivalent presentation of the Collegiates also gets closer to Aristophanes' distinct ability to make his audience both laugh *at* and *with* the same characters, a quality often missing in Jonson's dramaturgy, which draws a sharp distinction between winners and losers based on an elitist notion of an individual's "poetical" and intellectual capacities (Grilli and Morosi 2023, 138). Jonson's "elitist" preference for the clever and performatively-astute protagonist was typically one that the ideologically "anti-elitist" Aristophanes was more inclined to view with suspicion (see Grilli in this volume), but in the figures of the Collegiate ladies we encounter a moment where Jonson and Aristophanes perhaps come into closer alignment.

If my reading is accurate, the Collegiate ladies provide another instance of how 'middle-phase' Jonson was moving from his earlier engagement with Aristophanes – which, as Grilli's essay demonstrates, is more concerned with the 'idea' of Aristophanes as refracted through Roman and early modern commentators – to a deeper exploitation of the Old Comic's plays as repositories of themes, codes, and dramatic structures (Grilli). I see Jonson's creative selection of Aristophanic theatregrams as another instance of his contaminative practice, which may be a practical way of explaining how Jonson was able to write in what Helen Ostovich calls "an Aristophanic mode" without being overly-beholden to specific elements of his forbear's plays (Ostovich 2001, 12). By adapting the chorus' formal elements and characteristics to suit the tastes and conventions of his own age, Jonson tapped into the chorus' capacity for social commentary while avoiding the more overt, and therefore dangerous, charge of "foully hurting" that he inherited from the Horatian tradition.

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10

Unveiling Wives: Euripides' *Alcestis* and Two Plays in the Fletcher Canon*

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Abstract

Shakespeare's familiarity with at least some of Euripides' works – *The Winter's Tale* and its reworking of *Alcestis* being one of the most egregious examples – has been a critical commonplace for several decades now. This essay argues that the affinities between the two had already been recognised and re-enacted on the early modern English stage by Shakespeare's fellow playwright John Fletcher. In line with Fletcher's penchant for appropriating classical elements and mixing them with contemporary ones into a uniquely irreverent and self-conscious artistic blend, his tragedy of *Thierry and Theodoret* builds and then subverts the audience's tragicomic expectations by setting up a reunion that is highly evocative of that between Hermione and Leontes from *The Winter's Tale* – with hints of *King Lear* – and especially by playing with the Euripidean trope of the supposedly dead wife who turns out to be alive by reappearing veiled before her husband, only to shatter the illusion of a happy ending and a tragicomic resolution. By creatively recuperating the theatregram of the veiled revenant woman in *Thierry and Theodoret*, Fletcher gratifies the playgoers' desire for being in the know, while simultaneously teasing and defying their generic expectations by inhibiting the transition of tragedy into tragicomedy.

KEYWORDS: John Fletcher, *Thierry and Theodoret*, William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, Euripides, *Alcestis*

Introduction[1]

Ancient Greek drama has recently been proved to have had a wider circulation in early modern England than previously assumed

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thanks to work carried out especially by such scholars as Laurie E. Maguire (2007, 97-104), Micha Lazarus (2015), Tanya Pollard (2017), Tania Demetriou and Pollard (2017). The largest share of the critical exploration of the engagement of early modern English playwrights with the works of Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides has been predictably devoted to trying to identify Greek echoes in the dramatic output of William Shakespeare.

Notwithstanding the resistance and scepticism with which the idea was met until the early twenty-first century (see, e.g., Braden 1985, 1; Miola 2000, 166; Nuttall 2004, 210-12; Silk 2004, 241), there now appears to be relative scholarly consensus over Shakespeare's acquaintance with at least a few among the dramatic works penned by Euripides. One Shakespearean play in which the Euripidean model is particularly on display is *The Winter's Tale* (1611), the concluding scene of which bears unmistakable affinities with *Alcestis*.[2] In Euripides' play, Alcestis accepts to die instead of her husband Admetus. However, when Hercules arrives at Admetus' house and learns what has happened, he wrestles with Death and brings Alcestis back to life, unbeknown to Admetus. Hercules then leads Alcestis veiled to her husband (who does not recognise her) and suggests that he take her as his new wife. Admetus is horrified at this prospect and adamantly refuses to remarry after losing such an incomparable wife as Alcestis. Hercules insists and, when Alcestis finally unveils, Admetus is overjoyed at the return of his beloved and supposedly dead wife. Alcestis says nothing though: three days need to elapse before she can speak again. Shakespeare reworks this story in *The Winter's Tale* – as he had already done about a decade earlier in *Much Ado about Nothing* (Bate 1994; Pollard 2017, 171-8; Wofford 2018). The play's main narrative source is Robert Greene's *Pandosto* (1588), in which the title character's wife, Bellaria, dies of grief with her child when he drives her away – and she stays dead. In Shakespeare, though, Hermione, the wife of Leontes, dies only apparently and is reunited to her husband sixteen years later. Paulina, a noblewoman and friend to Hermione, leads Leontes to see a newly sculpted statue of Hermione, which

2 The date limits and "best guesses" for all the plays mentioned in the article are those provided by Wiggins (2012-2018).

is covered by a curtain. The statue scene is redolent of the myth of Pygmalion as related in book 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and beyond (Barkan 1981; Enterline 1997; Engel 2013; Porter 2013, 64-97; Delsigne 2014), but the reunion between a husband and a supposedly dead wife after the curtain is opened is principally modelled on the corresponding unveiling moment in *Alcestis*. Leontes is overwhelmed by happiness as Admetus is, and Hermione says nothing to her husband, though she does talk to her daughter.

The relationship between *Alcestis* and *The Winter's Tale* has been variously discussed in the twentieth century by Tom F. Driver (1960, 197-8, 215-18) and Douglas B. Wilson (1984), among others. More recent examinations have been brought forward by Bruce Louden (2007), Sarah Dewar-Watson (2009), John Pitcher (2010, 13-15), Tanya Pollard (2017, 187-94) and Tom Bishop (2019). To be sure, the resemblance had been recorded as early as the second half of the nineteenth century, first by William Watkiss Lloyd (1875, 161-3) and then by Israel Gollancz (1894, viii). As Dewar-Watson points out, however, the parallel "had already been registered in performance" about a century earlier, as suggested by the fact that "An engraving dated circa 1780 depicts a scene from [David] Garrick's production of the play, in which Elizabeth Farren, as Hermione, leans against a pedestal bearing images from the *Alcestis*" (2009, 74). Yet, as I argue in what follows, Shakespeare's engagement with Euripides' *Alcestis* in *The Winter's Tale* had in fact been recognised even earlier by a fellow playwright who collaborated with Shakespeare in the writing of three plays in the early 1610s and who would go on to become the leading dramatist for the King's Men after his older colleague's death. That man is John Fletcher.

One of the distinctive marks of the works in the canon of Fletcher and his collaborators, which totals around fifty plays, is their constant, resourceful and irreverent engagement with Shakespeare's oeuvre (cf. e.g., McKeithan 1938; Leech 1962, 162; Frost 1968; McMullan 2000, 114–15; McManus 2012, 11). Aside from multiple Shakespearean verbal echoes, the plays in the Fletcher canon exhibit Fletcher's penchant for appropriating and reviving well-established units of repertoire, prominent action and character clusters, compelling bits of stage business or, to put it more concisely, effective "theatergrams" (Clubb 1989, 6) from Shakespeare's plays

— often with a playful attitude, to achieve unexpected effects or to re-enact them with a higher degree of sophistication and self-consciousness. The Shakespearean echoes and motifs artfully woven into Fletcher's writings for the stage over the entire duration of his dramatic career (1606-1625) testify to a collaboration with Shakespeare that was not limited to the couple of years during which they worked together on the lost 'Cardenio' (1612), *All Is True; or, King Henry VIII* (1613) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613).[3] Well before then, Fletcher had in fact started an imaginary collaboration of sorts with Shakespeare that would continue long after the latter had stopped writing for the stage.

Yet, if Shakespeare was a major shaping influence on Fletcher's dramatic craft, it was not the only one. Fletcher was immensely fond of texts from the Continent, especially from Spain, France and, to a much lesser extent, Italy. He could probably read Spanish, French and Italian, but he habitually resorted to English translations. This was also true in the case of his engagement with classical texts. Even though Fletcher had attended the cathedral church grammar school in Peterborough (Mellows 1941, liv) and possibly Queens' College, Cambridge (Kelliher 2000), he seems to have favoured English or French translations over Latin and Greek originals and, in general, he appears to have been relatively unimpressed by the authority and solemnity of the classics (Lovascio 2022, 50-2). He read them, he was familiar with them, they helped him think about the world and about history, and he did sometimes rely on them for the sake of plot construction but, when he did, he invariably mixed them with vernacular texts, thus producing "an unmistakably characteristic blend of old and new, far and near, foreign and familiar . . . either with an ironic or unsettling intent, in such a way that classical patterns and conventions might be at least implicitly questioned" (36, 43).

Such a concoction of ancient and contemporary is to be identified – I argue – in *The Tragedy of Thierry and Theodoret* (1613-1621, probably 1617), written with Philip Massinger and Nathan Field. Here, the final scene of the play consciously revives the Euripides-

3 I follow the convention of the *Lost Plays Database* (https://lostplays.folger.edu) in indicating titles of lost plays by quotation marks.

like surprise reunion between Leontes and Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*. At the same time, it directly recuperates the theatregram of the veiled revenant woman from *Alcestis* itself, together with aspects of the Lear-Cordelia reconciliation towards the end of *King Lear*, which had in turn influenced the one in *The Winter's Tale* (Pitcher 2010, 19-21). On the one hand, Fletcher's retrieval of the Euripidean trope is in line with his catering to the tastes of the most sophisticated section of his audience; on the other, it is instrumental to his repeated teasing and defying playgoers' generic expectations: tragicomic resolution seems to be in sight all along, but it never materialises in *Thierry and Theodoret*. The fact that another play that Fletcher wrote in the same period with Massinger and Field, *The Knight of Malta* (1616-19, probably 1618), also makes use of the same theatregram, though employing it in its native tragicomic context, appears to leave little doubt as to the intended function of the Euripidean borrowing in *Thierry and Theodoret*.

Thierry and Theodoret, The Winter's Tale and *King Lear*

Before examining how the final scene of *Thierry and Theodoret* draws upon Shakespeare and Euripides, it seems helpful to provide some contextualization in light of the likely unfamiliarity of this relatively obscure play with most readers.

Thierry, the King of France, has married the young Ordella, thus prompting his mother Brunehaut's preoccupation that the young woman will eclipse her in court. As a result, Brunehaut manages to have Thierry drink an anaphrodisiac potion at the wedding banquet, which makes him temporarily impotent. In this way, Brunehaut surmises, Ordella will be dissatisfied with her match, and the marriage will sink. Surprisingly, Ordella turns out to be very understanding of Thierry's predicament, so that Brunehaut needs to devise another plan to ruin their marriage. Given that Thierry is worried about his own ability to beget an heir, Brunehaut suggests that he consult the eminent astrologer Lefort, who is in fact one of her minions disguised. The fake astrologer tells Thierry that the only way to regain his sexual prowess and generate children is to kill the first woman he will see come out of the Temple of Diana the

next morning before sunrise. Brunehaut arranges for that woman to be Ordella. As Thierry and his friend Martel wait outside the temple, Ordella exits veiled. Thierry is ready to sacrifice the veiled woman, but he cannot bring himself to do it when she unveils and he discovers her identity. He abruptly runs away. Ordella threatens suicide, but Martel dissuades her from her decision and hides her.

Meanwhile, Martel tries to expose Brunehaut's machinations. He tells Thierry that Ordella has killed herself in order for her husband to generate offspring and urges Thierry to get married again. Thierry, initially reluctant, finally accepts Martel's suggestion and chooses the young Memberge, the daughter of Thierry's late brother Theodoret, whom he believes to have been his adopted brother, as Brunehaut has told him after having him stabbed because Theodoret meant to interfere with her dissolute lifestyle. Horrified at the possibility of incest between Thierry and Memberge, Brunehaut recants her previous report, but Thierry no longer believes her. To avoid the incestuous union, Brunehaut then gives Thierry a poisoned handkerchief that will kill him by depriving him of sleep forever. As Thierry is on his death bed, Martel enters the stage with a veiled woman, who is then revealed to be Ordella. Thierry initially takes her to be a spirit but then realises she is the real Ordella. They kiss, exchange words of love and then die, Ordella passing away from a mixture of excessive grief and joy. Brunehaut dies too, offstage, committing suicide at the sight of her lover Protaldi being tortured, and the kingdom passes to Martel, who marries Memberge.

Few readers will be familiar with the final segment of the play. Hence, in order to make it easier for readers to appreciate the similarities with Shakespeare, I find it convenient to quote the section of the denouement sequence between Ordella and Thierry after her unveiling at some length:

Thierry What's that appears so sweetly? There's that face —
Martel [*To Ordella*] Be moderate, lady.
Thierry That angel's face —
Martel [*To her*] Go nearer.
Thierry Martel, I cannot last long. See the soul
(I see it perfectly) of my Ordella,
The heavenly figure of her sweetness there. —

Forgive me gods! It comes! [*To her*] Divinest substance! —
Kneel, kneel, kneel everyone! [*To her*] Saint of thy sex,
If it be for my cruelty thou com'st —
Do ye see her, ho?

MARTEL Yes, sir, and you shall know her.

THIERRY Down, down again. [*To Ordella*] To be revenged for blood,
Sweet spirit, I am ready. – She smiles on me,
O blessèd sign of peace.

MARTEL Go nearer, lady.

ORDELLA [*To Thierry*] I come to make you happy.

THIERRY Hear you that, sirs?
She comes to crown my soul. Away, get sacrifice
Whilst I with holy honours –

MARTEL She's alive, sir.

THIERRY In everlasting life, I know it, friend.
O happy, happy soul.

ORDELLA [*Weeping*] Alas, I live, sir,
A mortal woman still.

THIERRY Can spirits weep too?

MARTEL She is no spirit, sir; pray, kiss her. – Lady,
Be very gentle to him. [*She kisses Thierry.*]

THIERRY Stay, she is warm,
And by my life the same lips – Tell me, brightness,
Are you the same Ordella still?

ORDELLA The same, sir,
Whom heavens and my good angel stayed from ruin.

THIERRY Kiss me again.

ORDELLA The same still, still your servant.
[*Kisses him again.*]

THIERRY 'Tis she! I know her now, Martel.
(5.2.148-72)[4]

Moments later, the two lovers die. Thierry's reconciliation with the supposedly deceased Ordella is the playwrights' invention and nowhere to be found in the historical sources upon which the events dramatised in the play are based, the most relevant one being Edward Grimeston's translation of Jean de Serres's *A General Inventory of*

4 Quotations from all early modern English texts are modernised in spelling and punctuation or are taken from modernized editions.

the History of France from the Beginning of That Monarchy unto the Treaty of Vervins in the Year 1598. Fletcher and his collaborators possibly consulted Grimeston/de Serres in the 1611 edition, in which the name of the King of Burgundy is spelled "Thierry" and not "Thierri" as in the 1607 edition (Ulrich 1913, 7-25).[5] This makes Fletcher's veering towards Shakespeare even more manifest and interesting. The final scene in *Thierry and Theodoret* exhibits evident affinities with the much better-known reunion between Leontes and Hermione in *The Winter's Tale* described above. A supposedly dead wife is returned veiled by a third party to her husband, who is at first incredulous and then ecstatic on recognising her. The closeness between the two scenes even includes a direct verbal borrowing – "she is warm" (5.2.167; cf. *The Winter's Tale*, 5.3.109) – but there are also a few differences, such as the fact that in *Thierry and Theodoret* the third party is a man, the couple is childless, a much longer time elapses in *The Winter's Tale*, Ordella is not presented as a statue, she does talk to her husband, and they both die.

The reconciliation between Thierry and Ordella also displays analogies with *King Lear*, which had itself helped Shakespeare shape the denouement of *The Winter's Tale* (Pitcher 2010, 19-20), most evidently in the reworking in *The Winter's Tale* (5.3.76-7) of Lear's believing that Cordelia's lips have life in them during his delirium (*King Lear*, 5.3.109-10). Daniel Morley McKeithan has usefully recorded the similarities between the reunion of Thierry and Ordella and the reconciliation of Lear and Cordelia (*King Lear*, 4.7):

1. Ordella, like Cordelia, is cautioned to be gentle with the sick man.Thierry, like Lear, takes the lady to be a spirit in bliss. . . .
2. Lear kneels to Cordelia, and Thierry, though possibly too ill to kneel, commands the other characters present to kneel before Ordella.
3. Both Lear and Thierry think at first that the spirit has come to inflict punishment. . . .
4. Each is amazed to see the spirit shedding tears.
5. Each soon recognises his loved one and is overjoyed at having her again.

5 *Pace* Wiggins (#1848), who indicates as the main source Claude Fauchet, *Les antiquités et histoires Gauloises et Françaises* (Paris, 1579; 2nd edn 1599).

6. The name Ordella may possibly have been derived from the name of Cordelia.

(McKeithan 1938, 144-5)[6]

The reconciliation scene in Fletcher's play therefore fuses material from at least two Shakespearean plays, the latter of which (*The Winter's Tale*) had been in turn influenced by the former (*King Lear*). Fletcher appears to be looking at *The Winter's Tale*'s denouement and consciously tracing its literary and dramatic roots. In doing so, he also recognises that *The Winter's Tale* is in active conversation with Euripides' *Alcestis*, and he crafts the last moments of his own play accordingly.

Thierry and Theodoret and *Alcestis*

That the final scene of *Thierry and Theodoret* has affinities with the story of Alcestis has been casually remarked before by Nancy Cotton Pearse, who argues that "the plot of *Thierry and Theodoret* implies that Ordella is a modern Alcestis" (1973, 228) and notes a few similarities between the stories of the two women (170-1), though she never mentions Euripides himself or his play and rather refers generically to "the Alcestis myth" (171n20), which would seem to imply some scepticism on her part as to Fletcher's first-hand knowledge of *Alcestis*. Ordella indeed shares some traits with Alcestis: she voluntarily accepts the prospect of death for her husband and expresses love for the same husband who has brought the sentence about.

Another important resemblance between the scenes is the fact that in *Thierry and Theodoret*, just like in *Alcestis* (and *The Winter's Tale*), a third party, Martel, guides the husband through a recognition scene with his supposedly dead wife. In all cases, the third party deliberately withholds information from the husband – especially the knowledge that the wife is in fact still alive. Moreover, the third party, as in *Alcestis*, tries to convince the husband to remarry, and

6 In addition to McKeithan's last observation, it is worth mentioning that Ordella's unhistorical name is possibly reminiscent of "Cordella" in *King Lear and His Three Daughters* (1589).

these manoeuvres function as a prelude to the recognition scene. Interestingly, in *Thierry and Theodoret* the agent of restoration is a man, Martel, as is Hercules in *Alcestis*, rather than a woman, as is Paulina in *The Winter's Tale*. Fletcher is going back to the roots of Shakespeare's scene. There is never any ambiguity, though, for the audience, as to Ordella's being still alive, unlike *Alcestis* or *The Winter's Tale*, in which the audience is surprised to see the heroines come back from real or apparent death. Thierry is more favourably presented than Admetus because he cannot bring himself to sacrifice his wife – the fact itself that this issue arises in the first place is more directly Euripidean than Shakespearean – and in any case the quick pace of the action would not allow the play to present, as does Shakespeare's, "how the husband transforms himself through suffering to become worthy of his wife" (Wilson 1984, 351).

The crucial element, however, is clearly the Euripidean theatergram of the presumed deceased veiled wife restored to her grieving husband, which Fletcher reproduces much more closely than Shakespeare. It is impossible to ascertain exactly where Fletcher may have become acquainted with the Euripidean motif. To be sure, even if we assume that Fletcher had no sufficient knowledge of ancient Greek to read *Alcestis*, at least one Latin translation would have been available to him. As Pollard expertly and helpfully summarises,

> *Alcestis* was among the most popular Greek plays in the sixteenth century; the play appeared in fourteen individual or partial editions before 1600 . . . Included in the first printed edition of Greek tragedies, a 1495 selection of four plays, it was subsequently translated into Latin by George Buchanan for performance at the Collège de Guyenne in Bordeaux between 1539 and 1542. Although we do not know which edition he read, in 1545 Roger Ascham attested to the play's visibility in England, when his Toxophilus discusses with Philologus the "Alcestis of Euripides, whiche tragidie you red openly not long ago". Buchanan's translation was published in Paris in 1556, and reprinted in 1557, 1567 (in separate editions), 1568 (again in separate editions), and 1581; Italian translations appeared in 1525 and 1599; and additional translations of the play appeared in editions of Euripides' complete works. (2017, 179-80)

Whatever the way through which *Alcestis* reached Fletcher,[7] the fact that ancient Greece was much on Fletcher and his collaborators' minds as they wrote *Thierry and Theodoret* is also forcefully suggested by other Hellenising details that more or less stridently clash with the Merovingian setting of the play and depart from Fletcher and his collaborators' main narrative source. First, the characters repeatedly invoke the gods in the Greek pantheon: there are at least sixteen mentions of or invocations to the "gods" throughout the play, and Theodoret specifically refers to "the Thunderer" (i.e., Zeus/Jupiter) while talking to Martel (*Thierry and Theodoret*, 1.2.9). Second, one of the key locations in the play is the Temple of Diana/Artemis, which is clearly out of place in medieval France and obliquely recalls Shakespeare's self-consciousness in having "Greek female institutions such as the Delphic oracle and the temple of Diana at Ephesus" in *The Winter's Tale* and *Pericles* (1607) respectively (Pollard 2017, 14). Third, when Martel resoundingly extols the virtue of the allegedly dead Ordella, he claims that in her "All was that Athens, Rome or warlike Sparta / Have registered for good in their best women, / But nothing of their ill" (*Thierry and Theodoret*, 4.2.111–13). Fourth, Brunehaut conceptualises the clash she herself has set up between her sons Thierry and Theodoret in terms of the hatred between Eteocles and Polynices, the sons of Oedipus and Jocasta, who had been doomed by their father to kill each other. Brunehaut claims that she has been forced by Theodoret "to divide / The fires of brotherly affection, / Which should make but one flame" (*Thierry and Theodoret*, 2.1.15–17), with a subtle allusion to the version of the myth – related both by Lucan (*Pharsalia*, 1.549–52) and Statius (*Thebais*, 12.429ff) – according to which the flame arising from their funeral pyre divided into two separate fires to signify their never-ending hatred. Fifth, in the opening scene, Theodoret violently reproaches his mother for her lascivious ways and, just before leaving the stage, bids Brunehaut to "live like Niobe" (*Thierry and Theodoret*, 1.1.125), thus evoking again a figure belonging to Greek mythology, who was largely identified in the early modern period as a symbol of grief (cf. Shakespeare,

7 On the question of the *Alcestis* intertext in Shakespeare, see, within this volume, Colin Burrow's and Tania Demetriou's essays.

Hamlet, 1.2.149: "Like Niobe, all tears") and was a widow as well. Sixth, Ordella intervenes to defuse a rapidly escalating quarrel between Martel and Protaldi that threatens to end in a duel by asking Thierry not to "suffer / Our bridal night to be the Centaurs' feast" (2.3.103-4), with another explicit (and ominous) allusion to Greek mythology, namely to the feast to celebrate the wedding of Pirithous, King of the Lapiths, a group of legendary people based in Thessaly, with Hippodamia. The Centaurs, mythological creatures with the upper body of a human and the lower body and legs of a horse, were invited. Under the influence of wine, to which they were not accustomed, one of them attempted to abduct the bride. The other Centaurs followed suit, trying to seize women and boys. A bloody war ensued, which ended with the Centaurs' defeat and banishment from Thessaly.

Finally, and even more importantly, Fletcher's characterisation of Ordella seems to glance sideways to a further Greek female myth – though not necessarily to a specific Greek play in this case – by virtue of a connection between the myth of Iphigenia and a biblical story. As first noticed by Emil Koeppel (1985, 36), the scene in which Thierry and Martel wait outside the temple for the first woman to come out is redolent of the tale of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:30-9) – and is absent in Grimeston/de Serres. After defeating the Ammonites in battle, Jephthah vowed that he would burn the first thing that came out of his house and offer it to Yahweh. The first thing that came out, however, was his daughter, who then encouraged her father to fulfil his vow, which he eventually did. Fletcher had already modelled on this story a passage of one of his solo plays, *The Mad Lover* (1616), set in Paphos, a coastal city in southwest Cyprus. There Cleanthe, the waiting-woman of the Princess Calis, bribes the Priestess of Venus to tell Calis that she should marry the first man she meets on leaving the Temple of the goddess and tells her brother Syphax to wait outside, all ready to marry her (*The Mad Lover*, 3.6.21-32, 4.3.25-6).

The story of Jephthah's daughter had been revived relatively recently by the Admiral's Men, who had staged the lost "Jephthah" (1602) by Anthony Munday and Thomas Dekker. Besides, the tale may have reached Fletcher not only via the Bible but also via *The Famous and Memorable Works of Josephus*, translated by Thomas

Lodge (1602), or George Buchanan's older Latin play *Jephthes, sive Votum* (1542).[8] This play is particularly interesting in this context, insofar as it is largely based on Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, in which the title character accepts to be sacrificed for the sake of the Greek nation by her father, the General Agamemnon, after learning that according to a prophecy the Greek fleet will not be allowed to sail for Troy unless Agamemnon's daughter is immolated. In a tragicomic twist of events, though, Iphigenia disappears at the moment of sacrifice. She has been saved by Artemis, who has sent a hind to replace her. The wind begins to blow again, and the Greek can finally depart for Troy. Although Buchanan's *Jephthes* does not share *Iphigenia in Aulis*' unexpectedly happy resolution, the link between the two plays is further underscored by the fact that the daughter, unnamed in the Scriptures, became Iphis in Buchanan's play (Pollard 2017, 45). Another play of the same period, *Iephthae* (1543-1547, probably 1544), which John Christopherson first wrote in Greek and then translated into Latin, significantly draws upon *Iphigenia in Aulis*. While Fletcher and his collaborators' familiarity with Christopherson's play (only available in manuscript at the time) is unlikely, this suggests that the association between Jephthah's nameless daughter and Iphigenia was customary in the early modern period (see also Shuger 1994, 134-66), which strengthens the likelihood that Fletcher and his collaborators may have had both women in mind when creating Ordella in *Thierry and Theodoret*.

In heroically and enthusiastically accepting the prospect of being immolated for the sake of her country in act 4, scene 1, Ordella comes off as an Iphigenia-figure that elicits sympathy through her expression of powerful emotion. To be sure, Ordella's willingness to sacrifice herself by means of suicide is largely irrelevant for the plot but enables Fletcher to create a very intense sequence in which the virginal, Iphigenia-like Ordella manages to mobilise the playgoers' feelings. While discussing *The Winter's Tale*, Pollard argues that Shakespeare, by harking back to *Alcestis*, "not only dramatises a wife's miraculous return to life from apparent death, but also links this recovery with the performance of female lament, which elicits sympathies and melts audiences into supportive alliances" (2017,

8 On Buchanan and Euripides, see Crawforth and Jackson 2019.

171). In this way, Shakespeare exhibits "a particular investment in redeeming female suffering" (23). By contrast, although Fletcher does channel potent emotions through Ordella's performance, there is no moral redemption in store for any of the characters, and the emotional impact of the temple scene – which Charles Lamb "considered as the finest in all Fletcher, and Ordella to be the most perfect notion of the female heroic character" (1808, 403n100) – in fact proves to be secondary, as we now shall see, to two other interrelated effects on the audience that the play seems to pursue through the reuse of the Euripidean theatregram, thus bringing, in my opinion, the ancient Greek model in even fuller view than it is in Shakespeare's play.

Playing with the Audience

Fletcher shapes the final scene of *Thierry and Theodoret* largely after the corresponding segment of *The Winter's Tale*; at the same time, he anatomises Shakespeare's scene, goes back to two of the models that stand behind it, namely Shakespeare's own *King Lear* and Euripides' *Alcestis*, and decides to set up a sequence to which all three texts become equally confluent contributors. In doing so, Fletcher creates an intricate architecture of allusions that self-consciously and triumphantly bring to the fore multiple layers of dramatic *contaminatio*. The self-aware dimension of this artistic stunt is probably to be viewed as a nod to the sophisticated palates of those playgoers who were *au fait* with ancient Greek drama and probably relished feeling so. It is as though Fletcher were metaphorically nudging them, complacently asking: "Do ye see what I did there?" Here, like elsewhere in his canon, the impression is that Fletcher wants the play's mechanics and building blocks to be conspicuously on view: he wants his artfulness to be exhibited, not concealed.

The appropriation of the Euripidean motif in *Thierry and Theodoret*, however, serves another function in terms of the playwright's intended effect of the stage action on his audience. Fletcher had established himself as a successful playwright on the London scene by virtue of such influential tragicomedies as

Philaster (1609) and *A King and No King* (1611), both written with Francis Beaumont – and a tragic outcome averted thanks to a sudden reversal of fortune in the nick of time had become one of the hallmarks of his dramatic art and craft. As José A. Pérez Díez points out, Fletcher customarily "experiments with generic uncertainty", thereby exposing "the frail boundaries between genres", not only "nod[ding] to traditional generic constraints", but also bringing forward a "playful questioning of [generic] definitions" (2022, 5, 37). As it happens, Euripides is sometimes identified as the initiator of tragicomedy, and *Alcestis* itself has been frequently described as a tragicomedy rather than a tragedy because of the final reconciliation between Admetus and Alcestis.[9] (The same applies to the above-mentioned *Iphigenia in Aulis* because of the final divine rescue of the title character.) Fletcher appears to have been aware of this and to have teased the audience throughout the play with the prospect that tragedy might turn into tragicomedy. As Charles Squier observes,

> If Theodoret were to survive being stabbed, Brun[e]ha[u]t repent at the sight of Thierry's sleepless agony and produce an antidote, no harm would be done, least of all to the fabric of the play. Tragedy would become tragicomedy, but the essentials, the mood, the tone, and the dramatic feel of the play would not have been changed. (1986, 112)

The negative judgement that Squier passes on the play in his book is, in my view, largely unjustified, but he has a point in this case. Fletcher plays with the audience's expectations that things might somehow turn miraculously for the better, as his previous dramatic offerings had made them accustomed to with their sudden revelations and surprising twists of events, but tragicomedy never occurs in *Thierry and Theodoret.*

Hence, the powerful *coup de théâtre* that should have been achieved by the unveiling of the supposedly deceased wife turns out to be generically ineffective in *Thierry and Theodoret* because it fails to convert tragedy into tragicomedy as one may have expected:

9 On the links between this fact and early modern tragicomedy, see Dewar-Watson 2017.

while "the specter of Alcestis . . . loom[s] so large in [Shakespeare's] tragicomic imagination" (Pollard 2017, 178), when Fletcher goes back to Euripides in this play, he cannot ward off tragedy. No happy ending is in store for Thierry and Ordella. In this sense, their fate is closer to Lear and Cordelia's tragic one than Leontes and Hermione's or Admetus and Alcestis' unexpectedly happy one. Besides, the audience *know* all along that Ordella is alive, which inevitably lowers that potential for surprise of which Shakespeare's romance and Euripides' tragicomedy both take advantage.

As I argue elsewhere, it is a typical trait of Fletcher's dramaturgy "to look at everything that has to do with classical antiquity with a measure of detachment, suspicion, and scepticism, as though the classical past was no longer able to provide viable models and examples" (2022, 9). In this case, I believe that Fletcher treats a very influential classical theatregram with characteristic scepticism and irreverence by emptying it of its genre-changing power. The prospect of tragicomedy is suggested but averted; Fletcher teases the Greek precedent and deflates it; romance tries to intrude in tragedy but is effaced, blocked out by the death of the newlyweds. In a different context, Lucy Munro has called attention to how *Thierry and Theodoret* presents, in regard to its "odd, unclimactic fashion" of dramatising death, especially the death of Theodoret, "an offhand, even satiric treatment of generic convention, in which an expected response is shut off through disjunctions of narrative and tone", thus "steering their spectators in alternative directions" (2017, 269). The same has been observed by Fredson Bowers as concerns the play's misleading deployment of elements typical of the sub-genre of revenge tragedy. Bowers (1940, 168) observes that *Thierry and Theodoret* features "[t]raditional characters of revenge tragedy", and that "situations are begun which would normally lead to revenge as the motivation for the future course of the action, and then nothing happens". Bowers also helpfully singles out a telling example:

> considerable pains have been taken to prepare the audience for Memberge in the role of the revenger for her own slain father [i.e. Theodoret]. But after her first furious demand to Thierry for vengeance, a scene in which she seems willing to contemplate incest with him if it will procure revenge, she does not appear again

> until it is time to stand mute beside the bed of the dying Thierry and receive Martel as a husband. (169)

Fletcher's treatment of the Euripidean model in the final scene of the play then appears to be the culmination of this strategy, a conscious effort systematically to defy the expectations of the audience in terms of genre and theatrical conventions.

That this is a deliberate move on Fletcher and his collaborators' part is more fully borne out by their using the trope of the veiled woman apparently returning from death once more in *The Knight of Malta* – this time to fully tragicomic extent. Although there can be no absolute certainty about how the two plays relate in date, on balance *The Knight of Malta* is likely to have been written after *Thierry and Theodoret* (see Wiggins, #1848 and #1870). In this case, the reunion scene between the old Spaniard Gomera and his lost wife Oriana – who wakes up Juliet-like in a crypt in which she had been laid after being secretly poisoned by the evil knight Montferrat's Moorish maid Abdella with "a sleeping potion / . . . of sufficient strength / So to bind up her senses that no sign / Of life appeared in her" (*Knight of Malta*, 4.1.117-20) – recalls that between Admetus and Alcestis, as already remarked in passing by John Genest as early as the first half of the nineteenth century (1832, 273; see also Pearse 1973, 171n20, 189), as well as that between Leontes and Hermione (Cartwright 1864, 89).[10] Again, given the unfamiliarity of this play with most readers, I feel it is helpful to quote from its final scene. After Miranda has ordered the guards to bring some captives onstage, he commends a lady to Gomera, which prompts the crucial exchange:

> VALETTA What countrywoman is she?
> MIRANDA Born a Greek.
> . . .
> GOMERA Excuse me, noble sir. Oh, think me not
> So dull a devil to forget the loss
> Of such a matchless wife as I possessed
> And ever to endure the sight of woman.
> . . .
> CASTRIOT We cannot force you, but we would persuade.

10 For a detailed synopsis of the play, see Wiggins (#1870).

GOMERA Beseech you, sir, no more. I am resolved
To forsake Malta, tread a pilgrimage
To fair Jerusalem for my lady's soul
And will not be diverted.
MIRANDA You must bear
This child along w'ye then. [*Shows the child.*]
GOMERA What child?
ALL How's this?
MIRANDA Nay then, Gomera, thou art injurious.
This child is thine, and this rejected lady
Thou hast as often known as thine own wife,
And this I'll make good on thee with my sword.
GOMERA . . .
Woman, unveil.
ORIANA Will you refuse me yet? [*Unveiling*]
GOMERA My wife?
VALETTA My sister?
GOMERA Somebody thank heaven:
I cannot speak.
ALL All praise be ever given!
(*Knight of Malta*, 5.2.101, 105-8, 119-28, 131-3)

This sequence rewrites the corresponding segment in the play's narrative source, namely the thirteenth "Questione d'amore" from Book 4 of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Filocolo* (Sherbo 1952), which Fletcher may have read in the 1567 English translation by H. G., probably Henry Grantham, as *A Pleasant Disport of Diverse Noble Personages*, reprinted as *Thirteen Most Pleasant and Delectable Questions* in 1571 and 1587 (Edwards 2006, 151). In Boccaccio's *questione*, a woman comes back from apparent death with a new-born child to the surprise of her husband, but she is not veiled. Apart from the veil, however, the passage from *The Knight of Malta* features other resemblances and points of contact with *Alcestis.*

Gomera, like Admetus, does not want to welcome the veiled woman brought into his house by another man, the virtuous knight Miranda, because he is still reeling under the loss of his wife; Oriana is described as an exceptionally virtuous woman and, as she is still veiled, Miranda informs Gomera that she was "Born a Greek", which appears to be a pointed reference to the Greek provenance

of the motif of the veiled woman, another of those self-conscious allusions that Fletcher and his collaborators may have inserted for the benefit of the most learned section of the audience. As Pearse remarks, Miranda's "act of restoration" of Oriana to her husband Gomera "completes Miranda's purification. In the spectacular grand finale, the wicked Mountferrat is ceremonially degraded from the Order while the angelic Miranda is formally initiated as a Knight of Malta. The play concludes with a double ceremony of expulsion and apotheosis; lust is expelled and chastity triumphs" (1973, 189).[11] In *The Knight of Malta*, then, Fletcher and his collaborators – act 5 is generally attributed to Field – reuse the structural trope of a grieving husband's acceptance of a veiled woman who turns out to be his allegedly dead wife to transform potential tragedy into tragicomedy, thus abiding by the original generic direction of the theatregram. The comparison between its two uses therefore brings into even starker relief the self-consciousness and dexterity of Fletcher's dramatic writing in the concluding segment of *Thierry and Theodoret.*

Conclusion

As I write elsewhere, "Fletcher's most intense and enduring literary interest seems to have lain in contemporary continental European writings, and even the choice of those Greek or Latin texts that he every now and then did mine for plot material would seem to signal some form of disregard for the texts that represented the golden age of classical literature and history" (2022, 32). In that context,

11 A veiled wife returning from presumed death also appears in Field's *The Triumph of Love* in *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One*, which probably predates (1613) both *Thierry and Theodoret* and *The Knight of Malta*. The situation in this play, however, is different from what occurs in either *Alcestis* or *The Winter's Tale*. The wife, Cornelia, does not really return from another place: she has been hiding all along in Milan, where the story is set, after the Duke, her husband, has been exiled by a usurping tyrant, and she only unveils after the rightful Duke has been restored on his throne. Hence, it is technically the husband who comes back rather than the wife. Besides, there is no third party involved in facilitating the recognition of Cornelia by the Duke: she acts on her own initiative.

I did not discuss the Euripidean presences analysed in this article in any detail, as I was interested in specific, recognizable *texts* that Fletcher seems to have read, and I was primarily focused on those classical writings that contributed to shaping Fletcher's conception of ancient Rome and history. The foregoing discussion of Fletcher's use of a characteristic Euripidean trope then adds to my findings and argument as put forward in *John Fletcher's Rome: Questioning the Classics* by confirming Fletcher's penchant for mixing the ancient and the contemporary together with his habit of playfully interacting with conventions and traditions. His fashioning of this originally Euripidean theatregram – which veritably became, primarily through Fletcher and his collaborators' responses to it, a theatregram on the English stage – in *Thierry and Theodoret* as a failed attempt at turning tragedy into tragicomedy proves to be in line with "Fletcher's sceptical outlook on classical models and his urge to call them into question" as it emerges from his canon, together with his typically "egalitarian or irreverent use of classical sources" (Lovascio 2022, 7, 181).

While discussing Fletcher's tragicomedies, Russ McDonald argues that a vital element of his dramaturgy was that he and his collaborators "set out to make their audience aware of their awareness of conventions . . . by identifying and exaggerating some of the topics and strategies of their contemporaries" (2003, 165), while Lee Bliss observes that Fletcher's tragicomedy often "draws attention to its artifice and to the playwrights' amused elaboration of a generic *topos*" (1986, 160). *Thierry and Theodoret* provides a spectacular instantiation of Fletcher's penchant for setting up a hugely eclectic dramaturgy oozing with virtuoso artfulness and a heightened sense of theatricality in its deliberate exposure of the layers of literary mediation and adaptation that contributed to Shakespeare's creation of the final segment of *The Winter's Tale*. In so doing, the play gratifies the playgoers' desire to be "in the know", while simultaneously teasing and defying their generic expectations by inhibiting the transition of tragedy into tragicomedy. True, in relying perhaps excessively on the arch self-consciousness and ironic strategies typical of Fletcherian drama, *Thierry and Theodoret* may not be among the most successful specimens of Fletcher's playwriting – and an excessive reliance "on a shared knowledge of . . . dramatic conventions" might have resulted

in making a portion of playgoers feel "disconcerted or left behind" (Munro 2017, 271) during the performance. Whether one likes the play or not, though, matters less than its elaborate theatrical adroitness, which is both its cipher and its mainstay. *Thierry and Theodoret* might be many things, but it is definitely not theatre for the uninitiated.

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Part 4
Generic Inflections

11

Tragedy, Persuasion, and the Humanist Daughter: Jane Lumley's *Iphigeneya*

Tom Bishop

Abstract

This essay situates Jane Lumley's English translation of the Euripides-Erasmus version of *Iphigeneia in Aulis* in relation to exemplars and explorations of 'tragedy' contemporary with Lumley's work, particularly attending to the varieties of text that named themselves "tragedies" around 1550. These include both popular and learned works in both English and classical languages. Using these orientation points, the article then seeks to illuminate the structure and rhetorical texture of Lumley's translation, arguing that its supposed shortcomings derive from a different conception of tragic action from the one that has dominated most critical evaluation of the work as a drama.

Keywords: Lady Lumley; *Iphigenia*; Euripides

This essay rehearses some information and speculations that bear on the networks, relations, and intentions of Lady Jane Fitzalan, also known as Jane, Lady Lumley, in translating "oute of Greake into Englisshe", as her surviving MS puts it, "The Tragedie of Euripides called Iphigeneia".[1] Fitzalan/Lumley's translation is usually described as some combination of "the first translation of one of Euripides' plays into English, and also the earliest piece of extant English drama by a woman" (Hodgson-Wright 2004). It is less usually remarked, but surely also significant, that it *may* be the earliest recorded drama written in English that the writer names unequivocally a tragedy, asserting for the first time, with Euripides' authority, a specifically dramatic form in English.[2] Despite this pioneering, Lumley's play continues to be overlooked. Her work

1 This is the spelling of the title character's name in Lumley's titles. In Euripides it is "Iphigeneia" but in Latin "Iphigenia", as in Erasmus and modern editions such as the Loeb. Lumley's spelling varies throughout the MS, but "Iphigeneya" dominates the headings of her MS pages, suggesting acquaintance with the Greek text.

2 See note 7, below.

receives, for instance, no mention in the 2012 *Oxford Handbook of Tudor Drama*, edited by Thomas Betteridge and Greg Walker. And though Howard Norland devotes a whole section of his *Drama in Early Tudor Britain 1485-1558* to "The Emergence of Tragedy" and a whole chapter (21) to Thomas Watson's *Absalom*, and even discusses the influence of Erasmus's translation of Euripides' *Iphigeneia*, he fails to mention Lumley even once.[3]

When it is recognised, Lumley's translation has been rightly noted for its pioneering place in English Renaissance humanist letters. But that place has not always been clearly understood. Assimilated into the later history of English *drama*, Lumley's work tends to look simple, pale, and awkward – a sort of blind alley, closed off from the vigorous infusions of popular dramaturgy visible the following decade in such works as *Gorboduc* of 1561 and *Jocasta* of 1566. But resisting such teleologies, staying with the chronologically local and the occasions of Lumley's work, suggests Lumley was pursuing a different line of tragic writing within humanist rhetoric – one that used drama not for blood, dumb-shows, and noise, but for argumentation, debate, and dialogic discourse. To the end of this line of writing, she moved Euripides' play away from imitative personation and closer to Erasmus' colloquies and Isocrates' orations, which likewise concern themselves less with *pathos,* than with *peithō* or Persuasion.[4] Lumley may also, as I will conclude by suggesting, have had very specific personal motives for choosing this play, and for translating it as she did – motives of an individual kind that illuminate even the 'errors' she is supposed to have made, and that suggest, in turn, her awareness of the stakes of translation itself for a girl of her age, background, class, and prospects as an early modern *female* subject.[5]

3 Nor does Norland correct the omission in his later 2009 volume despite Lumley's higher profile in more recent years, though he again mentions Watson and Christopherson (22).

4 As an orator and a giver of advice to princes, of course, Isocrates took Persuasion as a central concern. On Euripides and *peithō*, see below.

5 On "girl" and "girlhood" as categories of analysis, see Williams 2023. Williams discusses Lumley on pp. 115-23.

To be fair, it is difficult to be certain of Lumley's absolute primacy as a tragic dramatist.[6] Writings calling themselves "tragedies" there were in plenty, and had been for a long time. Chaucer called his *Troylus and Crisseyde* "litel myne tragedye" (V.1786) and compiled a long series of "tragedies" in his "Monk's Tale", a compositional strategy Lydgate continued relentlessly in his own *Fall of Princes* (1431-1438), based on Boccaccio, which was, in turn, the ancestor of the 1559 *Mirror for Magistrates.* Likewise responsive to "Bochas", Sir David Lindsay wrote a poem of "The tragical death of David Beaton, Bishop of Saints Andrews" which appeared in London under that title around 1548, near the time of Lumley's work. Many prose and verse accounts and histories of the early Tudor period presented themselves as "tragedies" in this sense, as a quick search in EEBO confirms.

That "tragedy" as a standard term for a certain kind of narrative had acquired circulation and a fashionable charge in the mid-century is particularly suggested by the printed history of Lydgate's immense poem. When Richard Pynson first printed it, in 1494 (STC 3175), the work was called "the boke calledde Iohn bochas descriuinge the falle of princis", a title it basically retained in Pynson's 1527 reprint (STC 3176). But Tottell's iteration of 1554 renamed it as "A treatise excellent and compe[n]dious, shewing and declaring, in maner of tragedye, the falles of sondry most notable princes" (STC 3177). And John Wayland, in the same year, went even further, trumpeting it as "The tragedies, gathered by Ihon Bochas, of

6 The term "tragedy" is notoriously flexible in sixteenth-century England. See Pincombe 2010, 3-16. Review of the surviving copies and traces of dramatic works listed in Wiggins and Richardson 2012 shows this flux clearly and there were likely more works of which no trace has survived. So for instance *1 and 2 De Christi Passione* by John Bale is described by him in his catalogues as a comedy (W&R #21; 1535) and Nicholas Grimald's Latin play *Christus redivivus* (W&R #91; ca 1541, printed 1543) is on its title page a *comoedia tragica sacra,* in its dedication a *tragica comoedia* and called "cometragicum" in Bale's surviving MS version of his *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae.* A "commoedia" at this date, of course, could simply designate "a play" regardless of its action. Relevant entries in W&R vol. 1 are 25, 29, 59, 76, 78, 85, 93, 99, 114, 120, 130, 157, 181, 186, 195, and 202 (most are in Latin and/or do not survive).

all such princes as fell from theyr estates throughe the mutability of fortune since the creacion of Adam, vntil his time" (STC 3178). The expanding remit of tragedy as a selling-point is clear.

Meanwhile, original plays in classical languages, written in England and designating themselves tragedies, were also being produced around the mid-century date at which Lumley was working. From Cambridge, Thomas Watson's Latin *Absalom* (1535-1545) and John Christopherson's *Jephthah* (ca. 1544), both survive. More of them below. In English, the prolific John Bale seems to have tried out calling various of his dramatic works "tragedies", though not consistently. The title page of a 1538 Bale publication announces *A Tragedy or Interlude manifesting the chief promises of God unto man*, a combination of terms he uses again at the work's conclusion. Another 1538 Bale publication, though called "*A Comedy concerning three laws of Nature, Moses, and Christ*" on its title-page, has its villain, Infidelity, complain that "Companions I want to begin this tragedie" at line 1425, which seems rather late in the piece to begin. Striking in both cases, though, is Bale's equivocation about the name to be attached to his work – tragedy, interlude, comedy, are more or less interchangeable.[7] But Bale is also happy to call other men's works "tragedies", as he does when in "the opening" to his polemical *A mystery of iniquity contained within the heretical genealogy of Ponce Pantolabus* (Geneva 1545; STC) he refers somewhat scornfully to his opponent's work as "his tragedy" (B1*r*).

It is worth pushing a little further on the network of deployments of the term "tragedy" that can be traced in particular through a group of humanist scholars to be found in the years from about 1535 to 1550 at Cambridge – and in particular at St John's College, and Queens' College where, in May of 1549, Henry, Lord Maltravers, Jane

7 Bale's own best candidate for the rubric of "tragedy", at least by later lights, his play of *King John* – twice performed under different monarchs (in 1538 and again in 1560) but never published in the period – is not described as a tragedy, nor does Bale so describe it in his list of his works in his printed *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae* (1556), where it appears as *De Joanne Anglorum rege* among 22 works "in idiomate materno, commoedias sub vario metrorum genere" (704). https://books.google.co.nz/books?redir_esc=y&id=3BtPAAAAcAAJ&q=Baleus#v=snippet&q=Baleus&f=false

Fitzalan's younger brother, and John Lumley, her future husband, both matriculated as undergraduates.[8] At Queens' these scholars included Thomas Smith and his student, John Ponet; at St John's, John Cheke, Thomas Watson, Roger Ascham, John Christopherson and, later, Thomas Hoby, who was also Cheke's student. In the later 1530s, Smith, Ponet and Cheke in particular were leaders of a movement to reform the teaching and pronunciation of Greek at Cambridge, which saw considerable success, despite earning them the ire of Chancellor Stephen Gardiner, wary of innovation even in Greek phonetics.[9] In later years, less happily, this interlocking group were to polarise strikingly around questions of religion. Smith became one of Somerset's secretaries under Edward, and Cheke, rising from a post as Edward's tutor, drafted the letters and memoranda from the Council attempting to install Jane Grey as Queen.[10] Ascham, who tutored Elizabeth, tried to steer an eirenic course, without much success of any kind. Ponet was Professor of Greek from 1539, Cranmer's chaplain by 1545, and Bishop of Winchester from 1551, after the ejection of Gardiner from the same see. Watson and Christopherson, meanwhile, went the other way. Watson became Master of St John's, as Christopherson later was of Trinity. They are mildly described by *DNB* as among "the leading 'conservative humanists' who worked in and round St John's at this time".[11] But both became less mild under Mary, after suffering their own deprivations – Watson became Bishop of Lincoln and died at Wisbech Castle in 1584, after decades of house-arrest. Christopherson was confessor to Queen Mary, preached, as Bishop

8 John Lumley's distant ancestor, Marmaduke Lumley, Bishop of Lincoln, gave Queens' College, Cambridge a major benefaction of £220 in 1450. Possibly this connection was the reason for Lumley's choice, though there is no evidence his father or grandfather attended Cambridge. See Searle 1867, vol. 1, 61.

9 Smith became the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge under Gardiner in 1543, so the damage cannot have been lasting.

10 Under Elizabeth, Smith was variously a diplomat, ambassador, Privy Councillor, colonialist, and author of the important political treatise, *De Republica Anglorum* (1583).

11 *DNB Online, s.v.* "John Christopherson", entry by Jonathan Wright (accessed 5 July 2021).

of Chichester, an unrepentantly Romanist sermon at Paul's Cross ten days after Elizabeth's accession, and died a month later. Both were involved in Marian visitations at their alma mater in 1557, including assisting at the exhumation and burning of the bodies of Martin Bucer and Paul Fagius.[12]

Tragedy was a preoccupying subject for all these humanist scholars. Some versions were clearly developed from and sought ancient precedents. Watson's Latin *Absalon* (ca. 1540; lauded by Ascham in a nostalgic moment in *The Scholemaster*) is a fully dramatic Biblical-Senecan work in orotund verse. F.S. Boas lamented its "tasteless rhetoric and monotonous versification" but they are entirely of a piece with its aims and genealogy.[13] Christopherson's *Jephthah* (ca. 1544) is an even more radical experiment: it was written first in Greek and then in Latin, and the Greek version shows clear signs of both close study of and an attempt to imitate Greek dramatic style, structure and language.[14] Christopherson himself, in a Latin dedicatory letter of one MS of the play (now at St. John's) to Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of Durham, specifically discusses Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* as his principal exemplar. Boas, again, comments that "the study of his Euripidean model is evident in Christopherson's general handing of his theme. It has the flexibility and breadth of Greek, as contrasted with Senecan, methods".[15] Christopherson was still at Cambridge when Fitzalan and Lumley were undergraduates.[16]

12 See, among other sources, Searle, *A History of the Queens' College.*

13 Boas 1914, 64. Boas decides the play cannot, for this reason, be by Watson, but John Hazel Smith (1964) later showed indisputably that it was.

14 The Greek version exists in two MSS at Cambridge – Trinity o.1.37 and St John's 24.H.19; the Latin version survives in Bodleian MS Tanner 466. See Boas 1914, 42-62, and Streufert 2008. On Iphigeneia as a figure on which Biblical drama, and especially dramas of Jephthah, were built, see Debora Shuger's chapter "Iphigenia in Israel", in Shuger 1994, 128-66.

15 Boas 1914, 49. The Latin passage addressed to Tunstall is especially revealing of contemporary ideas of tragedy.

16 Christopherson remembered his occupation with tragedy. Rehearsing the disorders of Jack Cade's attack on London in *An exhortation to all menne to take hede and beware of rebellion* (1554), he lamented "what a cruel wretche was he, y^t^ had bene ye cause of suche a cruell tragedy?" (C.c.7*v*).

Two other exemplars of what might count as tragedy among this group of scholars are more various, and therefore perhaps more illuminating. In 1549, while Cranmer's chaplain, Ponet published a translation of a lost Latin work by the Italian Protestant exile Bernardino Ochino, who in 1547 had moved from Augsburg, ahead of imperial forces, to England, where Edward gave him a prebend at Canterbury Cathedral and a pension. Ponet's translation was titled *A tragoedie or Dialoge of the vnjuste vsurped primacie of the Bishop of Rome, and of all the iust abolishyng of the same* (1549). It is a remarkable work, and perhaps once an important one.[17] It consists of a series of nine sequenced dialogues, imagined as a vast historical narrative stretching from about 600 BCE to the present and encompassing the Devil's construction of the Papacy as his worldly vicariate, with the eventual defeat of this endeavour – under Christ's sponsorship – by Henry VIII, Cranmer, and Edward VI. Each scene – from the opening council in Hell (triumphantly reprised in scene six) to the final resolution in scene nine by Edward and "The Lorde Protectour" (so in the headnote, but called "Counsell" in the dialogue) to "dooe oure dylygence . . . to put a waye all suche thynges as maye bee a hynderaunce to the goinge forwarde of the Gospell" (Cc.5*v*) – works through some key moment in the arc of a narrative with something of the scope of Bale's dramas or Foxe's later *Acts and Monuments.*[18] It is, moreover, clear that, though their central intent is polemic argumentation against Papal Tyranny, sometimes conducted at great length, as in scene five, these are to be imagined as real scenic units, even though they have no stage directions or other dramatic apparatus. In the first dialogue, Lucifer addresses a crowd of devils as "My deare faithful brethren, and most enttierly beloued frendes" (A3*v*), and Beelzebub replies chorically on their collective behalf. In the second, Master Sapience departs the

17 For an extended account of the work's scope and place in Edwardian politics, see Alford 2002, 101-16. The work was issued again later the same year (STC 18771), suggesting it found a readership.

18 It is possible that the two councils in Hell (and one in Heaven) may be among the exemplars for Milton's similar scenes in Hell in Book 2 and Book 10 of *Paradise Lost.* But it is not clear whether Milton, an Italophile English Protestant, was aware of Ochino's polemics (and there is a cognate scene in Tasso). See Hanford 1921, and Hill 1977, 286-7.

scene, leaving Pope Boniface to reflect alone ("Sence I disclosed my mynde to Doctor Sapiens, I haue been wonderfully troubled", D2*v*), to return again after consulting "longer then either of *vs* bothe did suppose" (D3*v*) with the Emperor Phocas. In fact, the dialogues are semi-dramatised disputative units not unlike, and surely modelled on, classical and humanist dialogues, such as those by Cicero, Lucian or Erasmus, strung together into the larger narrative of a polemical history ending in godly English triumph. That such a format could advertise itself, in large letters, as "A tragoedie" tells us much about the scope of that term around 1550.[19]

The other tragical work relevant to this discussion no longer survives directly. In 1550, Thomas Hoby, John Cheke's ex-student, was travelling in Continental Europe (where he was later to meet his old teacher again). He kept a detailed diary of his travels, and records there that in the latter part of that year, while in Augsburg at the Emperor's court, he translated Francesco Negri's polemic-allegorical tragedy *Libero Arbitrio* of 1546,[20] dedicating his translation to the Marquess of Northampton, William Parr, Edward VI's Lord Great Chamberlain.[21] Hoby's translation is lost, but two points about it stand out for our purposes, which can be surmised

19 In exile under Mary, Ponet recalled his translation in *An apologie fully aunsvveringe by Scriptures and aunceant doctors, a blasphemose book gatherid by D. Steph. Gardiner . . .* , commenting that "The Genealogy of popry is not vnknowen to the world & that it might the better be knowe[n] I turned a tragedy into the Englishe to[n]ge which was first writte[n] by the excelle[n] t learned father *Bernhardinus Ochinus . . .*" (1556, 119-20; H4*r*-*v*). This is followed by a brief summary of the work.

20 See Powell 1902, 63. A second edition of Negri's play is dated 1550 on its title page but was actually published in 1551, according to its modern editors, so Hoby most likely worked from a 1546 copy. See Negri 2014, 13. The first edition, printed in Basel, featured only the author's initials, and Hoby mentions no name, merely referring to "the Tragedie of Free Will". Negri's play was again translated and this time published by Henry Cheke, John Cheke's son, under the title *Freewyl* (London: Richard Jugge, 1572 or 1573; STC 18419). Whether Henry Cheke was aware of Hoby's translation is unknown.

21 By May of the following year, 1551, Hoby was a member of Northampton's diplomatic train on an embassy to France, so presumably the dedication was acceptable.

from the Italian text. First, it was most likely in prose, like Negri's play; and second, with characters ranging from "Fabius of Ostia, a pilgrim" to "King Free Will" and "Human Discourse, his secretary" to "The Angel Raphael" and "Justifying Grace", it was much more like Ponet's dialogue-drama, or one of Bale's polemic pieces, or indeed like the MS interlude *Respublica* of 1553, than like any sort of work following classical example. Introducing its modern edition, Francesco Mattei describes the work as "una quasi-tragedia. O una tragedia quasi-commedia" and remarks that "Si tratta di uno scritto che esula decisamente dai canoni classici della tragedia e che si tiene lontano dai modelli allora dominanti" (Negri 2014, 9; "We have to do with a work that keeps decidedly clear of classical canons of tragedy and holds itself far from the then-dominant models").

Tragedy then, around 1550, was a remarkably flexible category, whose plasticity was also in active circulation and discussion, and could be exemplified in a striking variety of ways. This elasticity included a central commitment to discussion, enquiry and argumentation whose best realisation was not performance but deliberative reflection that might guide action in some future moment.[22] In this light, the particular choices that Jane Fitzalan/Lumley made in her pioneering work on Euripides are quite explicable, if none the less bold. Several points of linkage with the foregoing are worth making. First, it is clear from the work of Jaime Goodrich and Carla Suthren that, in addition to any discussion or influence she may have had from her brother, Henry, or his college friend, John Lumley, Jane was following broadly the same educational programme as they and her sister were, as also was Princess Elizabeth, whom Roger Ascham was tutoring at just this time (1548-1550).[23] Ascham's lectures at Cambridge had focused on Isocrates; now both Elizabeth and Jane were translating

22 For an extended discussion of wider theoretical argument bearing on tragedy around 1550, the moment of Lumley's work, see Leo 2019, esp. chapter 1, 3-41. Lumley was Catholic, but many of these attitudes crossed the sectarian divide.

23 Goodrich 2012; Suthren 2020, esp. 75. It is not known who tutored the Arundel children. Sarah Gwyneth Ross suggests it may have been the Italian humanist, Francesco Ubaldini, however this is uncertain (2009, 85-7). On the educational programme and achievements of the Arundel children, together with an assessment of Lumley's Euripides within it, see Ellis 2008.

Isocrates: the MS that contains *Iphigeneya* also contains her Latin translations of selected orations.[24] John Christopherson had cited Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* as his principal model of Greek tragedy; now Jane was translating that same play.[25] Jaime Goodrich skilfully relates both these translations to a humanist educational programme centred around issues of counsel and commonwealth – the very issues that would later centre Smith's great treatise *De Republica Anglorum.*

More significantly, the principal and, to us, very striking changes and interventions that Lumley made in her Euripides translation are very much in line with the wider understanding of what might constitute "tragedy" around 1550 that is outlined above.[26] What Lumley did, in effect, was to produce a streamlined and focused discourse that operates very much like Ponet's version of Ochino, that is, as topical dialogues, organised less for stageability or theatrical effect than as a series of disputatious conversations setting out positions and arguing possible courses of action around the overarching question "What must be done to serve best the cause of Greece?" As a result, Lumley's version of Euripides is less a family or mythological drama than a political enquiry that revolves in particular around the key term "counsel".[27]

24 Greek scholarship also seems to have had a well-established place around Queen Mary, including among her women. Both Margaret Cooke (Francis Bacon's aunt and the fourth of the famous Cooke sisters) and Mary Bassett (Margaret Roper's daughter) the translator of Eusebius and other works, were among her ladies-in-waiting. George Etheridge presented a Homeric pastiche poem on 'Wyatt's Conspriacy' to her, and John Morwen a set of saints' lives from Greek. On Greek in Tudor England in general, see the fine overview by Micha Lazarus at the British Library website: http://hellenic-institute.uk/research/etheridge/Lazarus/Tudor-Greek.html

25 By the testimony of Horace Walpole centuries later, Elizabeth also translated "a play of Euripides, likewise into Latin" but nothing survives and what play it was and if/when she did so is not known. See Walpole, *A Catalogue of the Royal and Noble Authors of England* (second edition, 1759), vol. 1, 31; W&R #181.

26 On issues of translation by women in relation to their sources, see especially Demers 2005. Early modern ideas and attitudes to English translation are extensively documented in Rhodes *et al* 2013.

27 On a later reader of tragedy who adopted much the same stance and owed his hermeneutics to a similar humanist background as Lumley, see the

To the above end, Lumley made a number of crucial adjustments to Euripides, excising or neglecting some aspects of his play and clarifying others.[28] She cut all the choral odes, with their weight of mythographic background and theological invocation. Rather than being incompetent to translate them, as some early critics asserted, she more likely found them a distracting irrelevance to her purpose.[29] She downgraded the details of pagan prophecy and religion, and in several cases moved her play's language closer to a contemporary Christianity. She also ignored the verse medium of the original, and of Erasmus' translation, and cast her work in a clean-limbed, simple and direct prose, producing a style of discourse more like a sustained humanist dialogue than a tragic drama.

Certain aspects of Euripides' play were simply not of interest to her, and in particular, dramatic ones. Despite some claims that the translation may have been performed, the MS version that we have is not very stageable and has several lapses in stage-effect and in continuity that are, on the other hand, irrelevant to a debate-centred work.[30] One involves a matter of logistics. In Euripides' play, Clytemnestra and Achilles learn of Agamemnon's plan to sacrifice his daughter from an elderly slave (855-94). The two discuss how to respond to this news, then leave the stage during a choral ode (1036-97). Clytemnestra then returns, meeting Agamemnon, and Iphigenia's entrance shortly after (1120) makes it clear that her mother has, in the interim and offstage, revealed her father's designs on her life. This makes clear dramatic sense, but Lumley's

excellent discussion of Gabriel Harvey in Demetriou 2021.

28 A good short account of Lumley's work in the history of translating Greek drama in English is given in Walton 2006, 28-33. Though Walton repeatedly calls Lumley "Jane", his summary is that her work "has intrinsic worth and displays a sense of decided dramatic form which is all hers" (28). No further English translation of Greek drama survives before 1649.

29 Unlike today, Greek tragic choruses were not especially admired in the sixteenth century. Erasmus, in his own translation of Euripides, complained that they were "*ineptissime*" in striving for novelty and "*verborum miracula*". See Walton 2006, 30 and the note on 247. Erasmus himself treated them more freely in his Latin translation of *Iphigeneia* than he had in his earlier *Hecuba*.

30 For argument about possible performance, see the case made by Wynne-Davies 2008.

excision of the intervening choral ode ignores it and, as a result, Iphigenia arrives on stage aware she is destined for sacrifice, with no mechanism to how she has learned enough to lament "Alas, how shoulde I suffer this troble" (624). The problem is immediately obvious to anyone attempting to stage the work as an interaction of persons in space, but of little interest to a conception that focuses on verbal argument and appeal.

The same is true of the handling of the baby Orestes. In Euripides' play, the presence of the infant in the party from Argos is central to the ironies that cluster around the action, and Erasmus in the "Argumentum" he composed for the play (none survives in Greek) took care to mention "Oreste infante", which Lumley translates as "young Orestes her brother".[31] When the weeping Iphigenia is called out onto stage, Clytemnestra in Greek and Latin makes it clear as she summons her that she is to bring with her the baby Orestes: "χὐπὸ τοῖς πέπλοις ἄγε/ λαβοῦσ᾽ Ὀρέστην, σὸν κασίγνητον, τέκνον" (1118-20); "ac fratrem sinu / Gestans Orestem pariter adporta tuum" ("and bring also your brother Orestes, carrying him in your garments").[32] Lumley, however, omits this, and merely indicates Orestes' relevance in a general way: "but goo your waies daughter with your father, and take with you your brother Orestes" (621-2). Diana Purkiss, in her edition of the play, is forced to clarify by adding the stage direction "Enter Iphigeneia and an attendant carrying Orestes"[33] (619) – but her very need to do this indicates Lumley's lack of interest in such details, immediately obvious to anyone thinking about or working with the MS as an *action* rather than a set of speeches. In her later kneeling scene of supplication to her father, Lumley's Iphigeneya says that to compound her failing appeal she "will call hether my yonge brother Orestes, for I know he will be sorye to see his sister slayne" (710-11), as though Orestes has somehow left the stage or never entered. In Euripides and Erasmus, there is no indication that she has ceased to hold him

31 Erasmus' translation is cited from the bilingual edition of 1524 (Basel), which is without line numbers.

32 The Greek text of Euripides is cited from Kovacs 2002.

33 Purkiss has the silent attendant remove the child after fourteen lines to explain Iphigenia's later remark.

throughout, and she specifically offers his infant silence as a mute appeal to her father, a strikingly pathetic piece of stage business. Later on, at the play's end, as she bids a last farewell to her brother, both Euripides and Erasmus have Iphigenia refer to an Orestes who is clearly present (1450: Ὀρέστην . . . τόνδε / hunc . . . Orestem). But Lumley's text is again vague about his whereabouts, and as a result Purkiss's edition has to insert an attendant to carry the child on and then immediately off again four lines later (866, 870), which is awkward.

My point is not to find fault with Lumley's dramaturgy, but to argue that dramaturgy is precisely *not* what she is interested in – a silent figure of staged infant pathos is not part of her calculation in the work. That Lumley's true interest is rather in the mechanics of *argument* and of position-taking in the play is further visible in a notable feature of her style. Throughout her translation, characters position themselves in argumentation, draw attention to their contributions, and attach themselves to a point at issue by the repeated use of 'asseverative' words such as "truly", "surely", and "indeed".[34] An extreme but exemplary exchange is:

> CLYTEMNESTRA But will ther come any bodie hether to sleye hir?
> ACHILLES Yea truly Ulisses will be heare anone withe a greate companie of men to take her awaie.
> CLYTEMNESTRA Is he commanded to do so, or dothe he it but of his owne heade?
> ACHILLES No truly he is not commanded.
> CLYTEMNESTRA Alas then he hath taken uppon him a wicked dede, seinge he will defile him selfe withe the daunger and deathe of my daughter.
> ACHILLES Truly, but I will not suffer him.
> (780-9)

Over and over, speakers present themselves, sometimes trivially, sometimes more materially, with such phatic gestures. It becomes, indeed, a marked tic of Lumley's style in the work. This has two possible, and related explanations. The first is linguistic – Lumley is translating and often also imitating the contours of Greek rhetoric,

34 "Truly" occurs 51 times, "surely" 23 times, and "indeed" 19 times.

which is richer in such positioning particles than either Latin or English. It is a signal feature of Greek syntax that it includes a great deal of enclitic and adverbial gesturing of just this kind, through particles such as μεν, δε, γε, -περ, -τοι and so on.[35] Some of these appear in Erasmus, but in lesser numbers since Latin has fewer. Lumley also positions them in her own sentences in much the way they would be deployed in Greek (she was, after all a translator of Isocrates), sometimes where they occur in Euripides (and not in Erasmus), but also sometimes on her own.

So, for instance, at line 305 of the Greek text, the Old Man says καλόν γε μοι τοὔνειδος ἐξωνείδισας, which Erasmus has in Latin as "Mihi exprobasti proprum honestum scilicet" and Lumley as "Truly you have objected to me a good reproche" (139) where "scilicet " and "truly" do duty for the Greek γε. But at line 517 of the Greek text, Menelaus says τὸ ποῖον; οὔτοι χρὴ λίαν ταρβεῖν ὄχλον which Erasmus translates "Quid hoc? timere non decet turbam nimis" ("What is that? It is not fitting to fear the mob overmuch"), omitting the Greek -τοι enclitic. Lumley however renders the line "You oughte not trulie to feare so moche the hooste" (346), where "not trulie" exactly renders "᾿ουτοι". Examples could easily be multiplied.[36]

The philological point (which incidentally suggests an attentiveness to the Greek text, or at least to Greek rhetoric, previously denied by some critics) supports and is supported by a rhetorical one, since Greek particles are intimate contributors to the positionality and gesturality of Greek rhetoric.[37] By using equivalents in English,

35 Sometimes sentence connectives function in this way also. Denniston 1996 includes ἀλλά and γάρ.

36 See for instance, Lumley's translations of the Greek at lines 366 and 373. This suggests that Lumley, while she may not have worked at all points from a Greek text (her confusion about Clytemnestra's childbearing, Walton points out, is "a mistake which would have been impossible to make had she been working from the Greek"; 2006, 32), was very much aware of Greek rhetorical patterns in Euripides where she felt they mattered.

37 On the question of Lumley's use of a Greek text, see also Suthren 2021 (however, Suthren's remarks on the Greek-Latin texts Lumley used, 81-4, are likely incorrect, since there is evidence she used an earlier edition of Erasmus). For further discussion of the question, see my "Dating Jane Lumley", forthcoming.

Lumley is buttressing and communicating her play's close adherence to Greek canons of argumentative exchange. Speakers entering into a debate or announcing themselves take up the moment and "inflect" themselves into it, drawing attention to their engagement. That this style is a deliberate marker of debate and dialogue in relation to the momentum of a specifically "tragic" discourse in Lumley is especially suggested by the similarity of these rhetorical gestures to those made in Ponet's "tragoedie or dialogue" version of Ochino, in which similar sentences are prominent, such as:

> THE PEOPLE So that if he cōpel me to his wickednes, and commaunde me to beleue his heresies before he be deposed of hys popshipe, I must obey by youre iudgemēt. Surely it is handsomly counselled of you. (F.4.*v*)
>
> BEELZE[BUB] Surely the churches of Christ wyll neuer so take it, thoughe oure churches so doe. (S.2.*v*)
>
> COUNSELL . . . Trulye all doctrine that is necessarye for saluacyon is playne and cleare yf we darken it not with the darkenes of mannes inuentions.
>
> (Cc.5.*v*)

These cumulative features of style in her text suggest that Lumley's working sense of "tragedy" in her translation was less dramatic than deliberative and dialogic, in line with a prominent understanding of the term in her day which has since been largely displaced by a dramatic tradition that was not yet cemented when she was writing. It also tends to confirm that Lumley's intention in her work was not for it to be presented on the stage but for reading and considering, at most by small groups.[38]

In effect the play could be seen as a series of debates over who offers the best counsel to advance the interests of the Greek host in the patriotic project of the Trojan war, a purpose for which the choral odes, and verse itself, are irrelevant. Such a context for Lumley's work bears further on another of the key terms in her version of *Iphigenia*: "counsel".[39] The latter occurs twelve times

38 See the arguments around the issue of "closet" drama in Straznicky 2009, esp. Ch. 2 on Lumley.

39 On "counsel" in Lumley's translation, and its relation to her Isocrates,

in the play's action (and four further times in the "Argument"), sometimes in direct response to the original, but in other, significant cases glossing or adding a specific emphasis where there was none. The balance of these uses is also significant: the first four in the play belong to Menelaus in the opening scenes, as he resumes the history of debate in the Greek camp and gives advice to Agamemnon. The final uses of the word, however are all from or relate to Iphigenia, who emerges at the play's end emboldened as the triumphant exponent of the winning counsel for Greece: that of her own death in support of her country's "commodity". That we are to understand this as a triumph of *counsel* is made clear in the chiming of the word across her last scenes, and in her emergence with a rhetoric of enhanced authority over those around her:

> Iphigeneia Be of good comforte mother I praie you, and folowe my councell, and do not teare your clothes so.
> Clytemnestra Howe can I do otherwise, seinge I shall loose you?
> Iphigeneia I praie you mother, studie not to save my life, for I shall get you moche honor by my deathe.
> Clytemnestra What shall not I lament your deathe?
> councell No truly you oughte not, seinge that I shall bothe be sacrificed to the goddess Dyana and also save Grece.
> Clytemnestra Well I will folowe your cownsell daughter, seinge you have spoken so well.
> (848-57)

It is significant of Lumley's intentions here that there are no Greek or Latin equivalents for her deployment of the word "counsel" to frame this passage. The choice of this word to thread her scene on is hers alone.[40]

see also Goodrich 2012, esp. 110-12. On "counsel" as a key term of political theory in the period, and especially in humanist discourse, see Guy 1995; Rose 2011; Paul 2020.

40 In the first line, the Greek simply instructs Clytemnestra to "do as I say" (ταδε δε μοι πιθου, 1435), for which Erasmus gives an extended periphrasis. In the latter line, 1445, Clytemnestra simply says she will obey because "you are speaking well" (λεγεις γαρ ευ); Erasmus gives "ipsa dixisti probe" ("You have spoken these things rightly"). An interesting detail is Iphigeneia's conflated command to her mother not to "tear your clothes so" – in Euripides

The commitment to "counsel" is deeply bound up with the interest in *peithō* or Persuasion, noted earlier as central to the tradition of Isocratic and humanist rhetoric in which Jane Lumley was trained. It is, of course, not lacking in Euripides either, since Greek tragedy – and that of Euripides in particular – is filled with scenes of argument and debate. In the middle of the above final scene between Iphigeneia and Clytemnestra, πιθοῦ (1435) and πείσομαι (1445; both forms of πείθω) mean, respectively, "be persuaded" and "I shall be persuaded". The issue of whether Iphigeneia can get her mother to accept her advice is key here to the sense of the younger woman's emergence as a bearer of authority. The first, imperative is hers and respondent, future passive, her mother's. For Lumley this is clearly a key moment of her design, and she reinforces the semantic content in each case from "persuade" to 'follow my/your counsel'. It is perhaps also significant here for the force of Iphigeneia's particular counsel that Lumley's translation moves the reference to her intention to act in the general interest to "save Grece" from its original place at 1446 to a position *before* Clytemnestra owns herself persuaded, so that it becomes part of her daughter's winning argument.[41] This is part of a general pattern in Lumley's translation which moves tragedy away from what we, and later decades, might approve as dramatic, and towards Isocratean rhetoric and the preoccupations of humanist training of the mid-century.

But for whom was this all this exploration of counsel intended exactly? For young humanist scholars like Jane's brother or his friend, her husband, a vocation as counsellor of state was inevitable. But for Jane Fitzalan/Lumley and her sister, the way was shut. Critics have proposed various purposes, beyond that of an exercise, for Lumley's extensive and unusual labour on Euripides' play. Several have asserted that Lumley's translation was written "for" her father,

Iphigeneia requests her not to tear her hair or wear black *in future*: μήτ᾽ οὖν γε τὸν σὸν πλόκαμον ἐκτέμῃς τριχός, / μήτ᾽ ἀμφὶ σῶμα μέλανας ἀμπίσχῃ πέπλους (1437-8; Erasmus: "Ne tu capillis igitur evulsis comam / Laniaris, aut pullos amictus sumpseris").

41 The Greek text, and Erasmus's translation both follow the received order of these lines, with the reference to Ἑλλάδος / Graecia (1446) *after* λέγεις γὰρ εὖ / dixisti probe (1445). I am grateful to Bill Barnes for this point.

one even asserting it was "at his behest".[42] But the evidence for this is equivocal at best. The MS in which it survives, into which Lumley seems to have recopied all her works, also contains the Isocrates translations, which are prefaced to her father and were clearly written (but not therefore necessarily copied) for his eyes. The Euripides, however, which comes after, has no such preface or dedication, but begins baldly with a simple title. Commentators have also connected the choice of play with the imprisonment and later execution, on 12 February, 1554, of Lumley's cousin, Lady Jane Dudley (more usually known as Lady Jane Grey). This is an exciting prospect, but unfortunately there is no good evidence for it, and the likelihoods are equivocal. Though both circumstances involve young women going to their deaths, it is not easy to imagine Catholic Jane Lumley regarding her cousin as dying for her country's "commodity", since that would involve seeing Northumberland as essentially right to have opposed Queen Mary, whose coronation Jane attended. But perhaps the relevant focus was simply "young women exploited for their father's advantage" regardless of religion. On the other hand, there was no shortage of women threatened with death for their politics in these years, including Mary Tudor herself, defiant and in considerable danger throughout precisely the years in which Lumley was most likely to be translating.

Still other readers have emphasised the networked character of Lumley's activity as translator, downplaying any sense of her work as rehearsing an individual voice or project. Marion Wynne-Davies emphasised her contribution to the cultural and political capital of the Arundel family, while Alexandra Day has stressed the "multiple collaborative contexts" of Lumley's work, alongside that of her siblings, even while acknowledging the risk of "overdetermining the purpose and outcome of literary, and indeed cultural, activity." (2017, 127). [43]

42 Jane Stevenson claims that Lumley "wrote entirely for their father" and that her translations were done "at [her father's] behest" (2015, 136). Ellis merely claims they were done "for" Arundel (p. 60), which is demonstrable for most, though not, in fact, for *Iphigeneia*. Lumley continued to be remembered as a signally learned woman into the seventeenth century (Ross 2009,128-9).

43 Most of Day's attention, however, is devoted to the Arundel children's

What view Jane Lumley may herself have had about her work as translator and counsellor is likely impossible to recover, even supposing that view was coherently formed and stable. But a suggestive hint about the tensions involved in her position as one aristocratic daughter offering up an image of another in circumstances at once similar and radically different is offered by an odd detail of that translation itself in its account of the play's concluding event, where Iphigenia at the altar is at the last minute miraculously replaced, so we are told, by a deer. In Erasmus and Euripides both, the deer surrogate is very clearly female, a "cerva" or "élaphos gàr aspaírous'" (1587) – a female victim dedicated to Artemis to whom it is being sacrified. In English this would properly be a doe or hind. But in Lumley it is a "hart", a male deer, and has also acquired the immaculate colour "white". This may possibly have to do with an association of Lumley's between Iphigeneia's sacrifice and that of Christ, though the latter is not anywhere else in mainstream Christian iconography represented by a *hart*, being normally imagined as a lamb. The change of gender, however, just as striking, may also have to do with a registration by Lumley of the several costs of doing business with the masculine world of national "commodity" for which her meticulous humanist education has prepared her without giving her any place. The male and dying deer may in this way be a figure for the fate of a girl adept in and trained for, that is *translated into,* a world of male language and action at once available to and withheld from her, except at a price figured both as regendering and as death. Lumley confronting at once Euripides and her destiny both translates and is herself translated, but also wrenches the intersection of these two translations away from her text by an act of mistranslation that points to the route along which her own voice and her own being, in being translated, are also stricken with a particular and fatal silence. In her own words, her figure for her several translations appears as "a white hart lying before the altar, struggling for life".

collective work on their Isocrates and Erasmus texts, much easier to integrate into networks of gift and self-performance, with comparatively little attention to the Euripides translation. See Wynne-Davies 2007, Ch. 4.

Early readers of Lumley's translation tended to condescend to or mock it for various failures – of erudition, of dramaturgy, of tact.[44] But it is easy to criticise something for not being what it has not yet learned to become. Nor does it help to wrench what it is to make it better fit some later version. Better to remain aware that literary kinds are always in negotiation, and never more so than when they are being remade for a variety of purposes at the same time. Though there is much about its first resonances that we cannot now recover, Jane Lumley's translation of Euripides *Iphigeneia in Aulis* is best understood in relation to some of the things English tragedy *might* have been, and might still have become, around 1550 when she wrote it. If now it looks stranded and unproductive to us, that simply means we know where the history of the reception of classical tragedy in early modern England actually went. That Lumley did not know does not mean we should assume her work was not doing coherent and carefully judged work in its own moment.

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44 See, for instance, the dismissive remarks of Crane 1944.

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12

Unwritten Laws and Natural Law in Watson's *Antigone**

Gherardo Ugolini

Abstract

Thomas Watson's *Antigone* takes up the theme of the 'unwritten laws' present in the Sophoclean drama in the form of the 'laws of nature' and makes 'nature' a red thread in his translation-reworking of the Greek model. The natural law interpretation of Antigone's laws has a long history that can be traced back to Aristotle (*Rhetoric*, Book I). In Sophocles' play there is no reference to the fact that the protagonist of the play claims the rightness of her conduct by invoking nature and its laws. Watson's reference point for his interpretation is probably the Latin version of *Antigone* by Thomas Naogeorgius (Basel 1558), who in a margin note explains the syntagm *àpgrapta nòmima* as "haud scriptas" or "naturae et cordibus inscriptas, non tabulis aut chartis". The theme of nature and natural law is prominent in Watson's interpretation, especially in the paratexts accompanying his *Antigone* edition, mainly in the second *Argumentum* and in the pomps, where nature is understood as the *trait d'union* between human and divine law.

Keywords: Thomas Watson; Antigone; Sophocles

The subject of this essay concerns an aspect of Sophocles' *Antigone* (staged in the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens in 442 BC)[1] which is

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1 The source is the *Hypothesis* of Aristophanes of Byzantium (*TrGF* 4 T 25) in which it is mentioned that in 441 BC Sophocles was elected strategus following his success with *Antigone* (φασὶ δὲ τὸν Σοφοκλέα ἠξιῶσθαι τῆς ἐν Σάμωι στρατηγίας εὐδοκιμήσαντα ἐν τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῆς Ἀντιγόνης, "It is said that Sophocles, as a result of the fame he had earned through his staging of *Antigone*, was deemed worthy of the office of strategus in the action against

fundamental for both a better understanding of the play and its reception in the Renaissance and beyond. It is a theme that can be defined as 'juridical' as it concerns the contrast between the so-called "unwritten laws" (ἄγραπτα νόμιμα, 454-5) of Antigone and the law of Creon, that is, the "edict" (κήρυγμα) the new king of Thebes pronounces at the beginning of the play forbidding the burial of Polynices's body, traitor to the homeland. The focal point of the clash occurs in the Sophoclean text within the second episode, at 448ff. It is what Guido Paduano has called the "ideological centre of the tragedy".[2]

It is appropriate to start from this crucial passage in order to verify how Thomas Watson renders the Sophoclean lines in his 1581 Latin version of *Antigone*, showing a particular attention to the 'juridical' dimension of the ancient Greek drama.[3] Regrettably, it is not possible to say with certainty which Greek edition of Sophocles the English poet and playwright had in front of him. By his time, several editions of Sophocles' tragedies had already been published and many of them had been repeatedly reprinted: the Aldine *editio princeps* of 1502 (edited by Marco Musuro), the edition published by Adrien Turnèbe in 1553 (based on the *recensio* of Demetrius Triclinius), Henry Estienne's 1567 edition (including Joachim Camerarius' commentary on the Theban dramas, already published in 1534 and 1556), Willem Canter's edition published in Antwerp

Samos"). The proposal to postpone the staging of *Antigone* to 438 B.C., after the expedition against Samos, has had little follow up, as the story of the play would be polemically allusive to Pericles' violent repression of the Samian rebels (Lewis 1988).

2 Paduano 1982, 284. All quotations from Sophocles's *Antigone* are taken from Pearson 1955. Translation by Jebb 1891.

3 Watson's *Sophoclis Antigone* was printed in a quarto edition in London by John Wolfe in 1581. It is plausible to assume that Watson's text was intended for an academic performance at Oxford, where Watson was studying in the late 1570s. There is no certainty, however, as to when it might have been staged (maybe even before the printed publication) and how it might have been performed (cf. on these issues Smith 1988, 225; Sutton 1996, 1, 3f.). The interest in the 'juridical' topic of *Antigone* must be connected with his academic education: he had studied law at the College of Douai and then perfected his studies at the Inns of Court or Oxford (Alhiyari 2006, 40; Hirrel 2014, 196).

in 1579.[4] In addition, there were numerous Latin translations of *Antigone* circulating in Europe (such as Hervet 1541, Gabia 1543, Winsheim 1546, Rataller 1550, 1570, Lalemant 1557, Naogeorgus 1558, Estienne 1567, Baïf 1573) that Watson may have consulted.[5]

In any case, these are the lines in Watson's Latin version (1581, 29):

> Antigone Novi: quid impediret? Obscurum nihil.
> Creon Atque etiam eas es ausa leges transgredi?
> Antigone Eas bonus nunquam rogauit Iuppiter,
> Nec inferum iustitia Diuorum comes;
> Qui iura ferre semper hominibus solent.
> Nec tantum ego tua habuisse rebar ponderis
> Aedicta, ut illa cordibus, cum sis homo,
> Natura quae sculpsit, refigere valeas.
> Non dudum et hodie iura diuorum vigent,
> Sed semper horum incognita est aeternitas:
> Quae dum violo viri tyrannidem timens,
> Diis nolo sana criminis paenas dare.

If we compare this passage (448-60) with modern editions of Sophocle's play (here e.g. Pearson 1955), we may notice how precise and faithful to the Greek original Watson's translation is:

> Αν. ᾔδη· τί δ' οὐκ ἔμελλον; ἐμφανῆ γὰρ ἦν
> Κρ. καὶ δῆτ' ἐτόλμας τούσδ' ὑπερβαίνειν νόμους;
> Αν. οὐ γάρ τί μοι Ζεὺς ἦν ὁ κηρύξας τάδε,
> οὐδ' ἡ ξύνοικος τῶν κάτω θεῶν Δίκη·
> τοιύσδ' ἐν ἀνθρώποισιν ὥρισαν νόμους·
> οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ᾠόμην τὰ σὰ
> κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν
> νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν.
> οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
> ζῇ ταῦτα, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου 'φάνη.
> τούτων ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔμελλον, ἀνδρὸς οὐδενὸς

4 On early printed editions of Sophocles' text cf. Borza 2007, 13-113.

5 On Renaissance translations of Greek tragedies cf. Pigman 1980; Norton 1984; Worth-Stylianou 1999; Borza 2007, 117-261; Braden 2010; Borza 2013; Rhodes-Kendal-Wilson 2013; Miola 2014; Pollard 2017, 233-87.

φρόνημα δείσασ', ἐν θεοῖσι τὴν δίκην
δώσειν·
(448-60)

[ANTIGONE I knew it. How could I not? It was public. // CREON And even so you dared overstep that law? // ANTIGONE Yes, since it was not Zeus that published me that edict, and since not of that kind are the laws which Justice who dwells with the gods below established among men. Nor did I think that your decrees were of such force, that a mortal could override the unwritten and unfailing statutes given us by the gods. For their life is not of today or yesterday, but for all time, and no man knows when they were first put forth. Not for fear of any man's pride was I about to owe a penalty to the gods for breaking these.]

In particular, the characteristics that the Sophoclean Antigone assigns to her laws are all neatly stated:
- they are firm and unshakeable;
- they are of divine origin, associated with Zeus ("bonus Iuppiter"), and whoever contravenes them pays a penalty before the gods ("criminis poenas dare");
- they are extremely ancient, in fact so ancient that the memory of their origin has been lost;
- they are eternal, not of today or yesterday, but valid for all time ("Non dudum et hodie iura diuorum vigent, Sed semper horum incognita est aeternitas");
- they are closely connected with the burial of the dead; they are associated with Dike who dwells with the underworld gods ("inferum iustitia Diuorum comes").

What Watson curiously leaves out is their being unwritten. Antigone calls her ἄγραπτα νόμιμα (454-5), "unwritten laws", but in Watson there is no trace of it, while the emphasis is placed on their derivation from nature: "Nec tantum ego tua habuisse rebar ponderis / Aedicta, ut illa cordibus, cum sis homo, / Natura quae sculpsit, refigere valeas" ("And I did not think your edicts had such importance, you being a man, that you could abrogate what nature has carved in hearts").[6] Antigone's emphatic reference nature's

6 To indicate Creon's "edict" or "proclamation" (κήρυγμα), Watson uses

engraving the laws in men's hearts is a fresh addition by Watson to the Sophoclean text; an addition symptomatic of a peculiar interpretation of this play.

This is not the place where to discuss whether Antigone's use of "unwritten laws" refers to an actual legal concept or simply to moral principles of universal value. Much has been said and written on this subject.[7] What seems to me more interesting in this context is to explore how, in the reception of Sophocles' play, at least in Watson's own reinterpretation of it, the concept of nature, and therefore of 'natural law', is being superimposed on the play where in Sophocles it was completely absent. Never does the protagonist of Sophocles' tragedy claim the rightness of her conduct by invoking nature and its laws. If we consider the occurrences in the play of the term φύσις, we notice that they are very few, none in lines spoken by Antigone and, in any case, they bear an absolutely generic meaning.[8] On the contrary, Antigone explicitly appeals to the gods and, even in the last line she utters on stage before being taken away by the guards (943), she defends her actions by saying that she has only "honoured piety" (τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσασα).

How is it that Antigone, from being a supporter of sacred laws, becomes a champion of natural law? The origin of this interpretation, which turns Antigone into the symbol of a naturalistic vision of law opposing universal and immutable rules of conduct based on nature to the positive law of Creon cannot be found in Sophocles' play, but in Aristotle's first book of the *Rhetoric*. That is where

the Latin term *edictum* in the singular (8 and 27) or *aedicta* in the plural (455). If not otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

7 See e.g. Hirzel 1900; Ehrenberg 1954; Mette 1956; Ostwald 1969; Ostwald 1973; Cerri 1979; Hedrick 1994; Gehrke 2000; Thomas 2001; Cerri 2010; Ugolini 2011; Stolfi 2014; Pepe 2017; Ugolini 2021.

8 Cf. Soph. *Ant.* 345 where the chorus refers to the "marine lineage of the sea" (πόντου τ' εἰναλίαν φύσιν); 653, where Creon speaks of "blood relatives by birth" (ἐγγενῆ φύσει), and 727, where Creon alludes to the young age of his son Aemon (πρὸς ἀνδρὸς τηλικοῦδε τὴν φύσιν). It is also worth noting that in the (almost certainly interpolated) finale of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, Antigone says she opposes the burial ban solely out of love for her brother and does not mention the divine laws (1026-41). Also in Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, Antigone does not invoke divine laws to support her opposition to Creon's decision.

traditional interpretations assigning legal-philosophical meanings to the Sophoclean text come from. Aristotle, while illustrating judicial discourse and the rhetorical models to be used in courts to defend or accuse a defendant, draws a classification of the different types of acts of injustice (ἀδικήματα) that can be performed (against the law or people, voluntarily or involuntarily, etc.). And he writes (*Rh.* I 13, 1373b1-11):[9]

> Τὰ δ' ἀδικήματα πάντα καὶ τὰ δικαιώματα διέλωμεν ἀρξάμενοι πρῶτον ἐντεῦθεν. ὥρισται δὴ τὰ δίκαια καὶ τὰ ἄδικα πρός τε νόμους δύο καὶ πρὸς οὕς ἐστι διχῶς. λέγω δὲ νόμον τὸν μὲν ἴδιον, τὸν δὲ κοινόν, ἴδιον μὲν τὸν ἑκάστοις ὡρισμένον πρὸς αὑτούς, καὶ τοῦτον τὸν μὲν ἄγραφον, τὸν δὲ γεγραμμένον, κοινὸν δὲ τὸν κατὰ φύσιν. ἔστι γάρ τι ὃ μαντεύονται πάντες, φύσει κοινὸν δίκαιον καὶ ἄδικον, κἂν μηδεμία κοινωνία πρὸς ἀλλήλους ᾖ μηδὲ συνθήκη, οἷον καὶ ἡ Σοφοκλέους Ἀντιγόνη φαίνεται λέγουσα, ὅτι δίκαιον ἀπειρημένου θάψαι τὸν Πολυνείκη, ὡς φύσει ὂν τοῦτο δίκαιον·
>
> οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ' ἀεί ποτε
> ζῇ τοῦτο, κοὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐξ ὅτου φάνη·
>
> [Let us now classify just and unjust actions generally, starting from what follows. Justice and injustice have been defined in reference to laws and persons in two ways. Now there are two kinds of laws, particular and general. By *particular laws* I mean those established by each people in reference to themselves, which again are divided into written and unwritten; by *general laws* I mean those based upon nature (κοινὸν δὲ τὸν κατὰ φύσιν). In fact, there is a general idea of just and unjust in accordance with nature, as all men in a manner divine, even if there is neither communication nor agreement between them. This is what Antigone in Sophocles evidently means, when she declares that it is just, though forbidden, to bury Polynices, as being naturally just (ὡς φύσει ὂν τοῦτο δίκαιον): "For neither to-day nor yesterday, but from all eternity, / these statutes live and no man knoweth whence they came." (*Ant.* 456-7)]

The explicit reference to Sophocles' tragedy and the quotation of two lines from it suggest that *Antigone* had already become canonical in the fourth century BCE. But the essential point is

9 Cited in the edition by Ross 1959. Trans. by Freese 1926. Emphasis mine.

the distinction made by Aristotle between two types of law: *idios nomos* and *koinòs nomos*. The former is the "particular law" that each community defines for itself and that can be partially written and partially unwritten. The *koinòs nomos*, or the "common law", is instead identified with natural law (κατὰ φύσιν), which is universal and always "unwritten".[10]

The sense of Aristotle's words is reinforced by another passage that follows shortly after the one just quoted in the first book of the *Rhetoric*, which contains a second quotation from Sophocles' *Antigone*. There Aristotle discusses how to use the laws during the prosecution or the defence in a court case and when it is preferable to use written or common law. In his discussion, he further specifies the concept of "unwritten laws" by emphasising not only their quality as "common" and "natural" laws, but also their immutability in the course of time (*Rh.* I 15, 1, 1375a27-b2):

> φανερὸν γὰρ ὅτι, ἐὰν μὲν ἐναντίος ᾖ ὁ γεγραμμένος τῷ πράγματι, τῷ κοινῷ χρηστέον καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικεστέροις καὶ δικαιοτέροις. καὶ ὅτι τὸ "γνώμῃ τῇ ἀρίστῃ" τοῦτ᾽ ἐστίν, τὸ μὴ παντελῶς χρῆσθαι τοῖς γεγραμμένοις. καὶ ὅτι τὸ μὲν ἐπιεικὲς ἀεὶ μένει καὶ οὐδέποτε μεταβάλλει, οὐδ᾽ ὁ κοινός (κατὰ φύσιν γάρ ἐστιν), οἱ δὲ γεγραμμένοι πολλάκις, ὅθεν εἴρηται τὰ ἐν τῇ Σοφοκλέους Ἀντιγόνῃ· ἀπολογεῖται γὰρ ὅτι ἔθαψε παρὰ τὸν τοῦ Κρέοντος νόμον, ἀλλ᾽ οὐ παρὰ τὸν ἄγραφον,
>
> οὐ γάρ τι νῦν γε κἀχθές, ἀλλ᾽ ἀεί ποτε . . .
> ταῦτ᾽ οὖν ἐγὼ οὐκ ἔμελλον ἀνδρὸς οὐδενός . . .
>
> [For it is evident that, if the written law is counter to our case, we must have recourse to the general law and equity, as more in accordance with justice; and we must argue that, when the dicast takes an oath to decide to the best of his judgement, he means that he will not abide rigorously by the written laws; that equity is ever constant and never changes, even as the general law, which is based

10 Cf. also the passage from *Rh.* I 10, 1368b8-9, where Aristotle similarly distinguishes between unwritten "common" law "around which there seems to be agreement by all" and written "particular" law that underlies the political life of organised communities (λέγω δὲ ἴδιον μὲν καθ᾽ ὃν γεγραμμένον πολιτεύονται, κοινὸν δὲ ὅσα ἄγραφα παρὰ πᾶσιν ὁμολογεῖσθαι δοκεῖ).

> on nature, whereas the written laws often vary. This is why Antigone in Sophocles justifies herself for having buried Polynices contrary to the law of Creon, but not contrary to the unwritten law: "For this law is not of now or yesterday, but is eternal . . . / this I was not likely [to infringe through fear of the pride] of any man." (*Ant.*, 456-8)]

Of course, Aristotle had behind him a long tradition of critical thinking on the *nomos*/*physis* relation, especially in the sphere of sophistry, which claimed the superiority of natural law as eternal over positive law, considered to be contingent and the result of conventions.[11] But what is most interesting for the present discussion is that in both passages of the *Rhetoric* Aristotle quotes lines from *Antigone*, thus welding together the theoretical reflection on this issue and Sophocle's tragedy. Aristotle interprets Antigone's 'unwritten laws' as the 'laws of nature' as opposed to the positive laws that communities establish for their own functioning. We are

11 The first who theorised that "the just and the shameful are such not by nature, but by nomos" (καὶ τὸ δίκαιον εἶναι καὶ τὸ αἰσχρὸν οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ νόμωι) seems to have been Archelaus, a disciple of Anaxagoras and contemporary of Pericles (DK 60 A 1 = Diog. Laert. II 16). The clearest formulation of the antithesis is that of Antiphon: "mostly what is right according to law is in conflict with nature" (τὰ πολλὰ τῶν κατὰ νόμον δικαίων πολεμίως τῆι φύσει κεῖται, DK 87 B 44a col. 2). On the conceptual pair law/nature in the debate of the fifth century BC, cf. the extensive analysis by Heinimann 1945 and Hoffmann 1997, 368-83. If the equation "unwritten laws" = laws of nature as opposed to the (written) laws of the city is valid, then the position expressed by Antigone in Sophocles' drama can be compared to the theories of certain Sophists such as Hippias and Antiphon, who devalued the *nomoi* as mere human conventions to which they contrasted the force of nature. Moreover, the law of nature was mostly invoked to assert the right of the stronger, as the Athenians do against the Melians according to the dialogue reconstructed by Thucydides (Thuc. V, 105: ἡγούμεθα γὰρ τό τε θεῖον δόξῃ τὸ ἀνθρώπειόν τε σαφῶς διὰ παντὸς ὑπὸ φύσεως ἀναγκαίας, οὗ ἂν κρατῇ, ἄρχειν· καὶ ἡμεῖς οὔτε θέντες τὸν νόμον οὔτε κειμένῳ πρῶτοι χρησάμενοι, ὄντα δὲ παραλαβόντες καὶ ἐσόμενον ἐς αἰεὶ καταλείψοντες χρώμεθα αὐτῷ, "Not only among men, as is well known, but, as far as is known, also among the gods, a necessary and natural impulse impels you to dominate over the one you can overpower. This law was not established by us, nor were we the first to make use of it; we received it when it was already there and in our turn we will hand it over to those who will come after, and it will have eternal value"); cf. also Canfora 2006.

faced with a powerful resemantisation of the concept of ἄγραπτα νόμιμα, absorbed and filtered through Aristotelian theoretical categories, which transform it into something functional to his own discourse.[12] Moreover, Aristotle removes from the context of Sophocles' tragedy the religious-sacral dimension that was instead fundamental for Antigone and the characterisation of her unwritten laws. The conflict between two opposite concepts of law postulated by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* is the starting point for the centuries-old interpretative tradition that considers Sophocles' drama on the basis of the contrast between, on the one hand, the stable and deep-seated law of natural ties (embodied by Antigone) and, on the other, the artificial and changeable public law of the State (embodied by Creon). It is the contrast between *genos* and *polis*, or between *ius* and *lex*, or other equivalent or related terms.[13]

But how does Thomas Watson come to an understanding of religious-sacral "unwritten laws" as "natural laws"? An indication that seems to me especially revealing can be found in a note in the margin of the Latin translation of Thomas Naogeorgius (1508-1563), the German humanist, Lutheran pastor, Latin dramatist, and Protestant reformer who translated the whole of Sophocles.[14] In his translation (a work that Watson surely knew) of the corresponding passage from Antigone, next to the phrase *haud scriptas* he notes: "naturae et cordibus inscriptas, non tabulis aut chartis" ("laws inscribed in nature and hearts, not on tablets or paper"; Naogeorgus 1558, 222. Cf. Fig. 1).

12 The Aristotelian interpretation is echoed, for example, in the scholiastic tradition: cf. schol. *Ant.* 450: θέλει δὲ εἰπεῖν ὅτι ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως δίκαιον ἥγημαι θάπτειν τὸν ἀδελφὸν ("he means: I consider it right according to nature to bury his brother"). Cf. Papageorgius 1888, 24.

13 In early modern England, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* was one of the most widely read texts in the Aristotelian corpus along with the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Turner 2006, 86-97), and it is likely that Watson was familiar with it. On the reception of Aristotle in early modern Europe, cf. Green 1998. On the history of the concept of 'natural law' in reference to Sophocles' *Antigone*, cf. Burns 2002.

14 On the figure of Naogeorgus (the real name is Thomas Kirchmeyer) cf. Wiener 1907; Theobald 1908; Theobald 1931. Certainly, Naogeorgus' translation greatly influenced Watson, but it is wrong to think of Watson's as a mere "retranslation" of Naogeorgus' text (Alhiyari 2006, 61).

In fact, if one looks at Watson's translation carefully, one finds that, apart from the crucial passage just quoted, it shows no particular emphasis on nature and natural law. It would be incorrect to define his translation-adaptation as a reinterpretation of it in the key of natural law. However, it is in the paratexts that accompany his *Antigone* that we find various and pressing references to this interpretative perspective. I refer especially to the second of the play's two *Argumenta*. The first *Argumentum* (Watson 1585, 13), a succinct, traditional prose piece summarising the plot, is followed by a second one (14-16) which Watson imagines pronounced by Nature herself ("Natura argumentum fabulae hic iterum retexit iambico trimetro"; "At this point Nature reveals the second argument of the play in iambic trimeters"). Here Sophocles has nothing to do with it, it is not a translation from Greek, but pure mythopoesis. Nature presents herself directly, speaking in the first person (through the rhetorical figure of prosopopoeia) as the "sublime mistress of the world" ("mundi domina sublimis"), "instigator of healthy life" ("Vitaeque rectrix integrae"), "generatrix of things" ("et rerum parens"). Not only does nature proclaim herself as the pivot of the entire universe ("Vigent et extant omnia officio meo"; "Everything exists and prospers by my doing") and as inimitable by human arts, but she also proclaims herself to be the "pillar of equity" ("Sum aequi columna") and the "foundation of law and laws" ("iuris et legum basis") (14). The *Argumentum* therefore states the principle that, in order to be happy, one must rely entirely on the guidance of nature and live according to her rules, and it also points out the dangers arising when one no longer respects them. The lines connecting the initial theoretical presentation and the concrete situation of Antigone are worth quoting in full (ibid.):

> Vis esse felix? Vive Natura duce.
> Tanta est potestas nostra. Sed spernor tamen,
> Measque leges plurimi frangunt mali
> Periit sacratum iuris humani decus,
> Pietas, pudorque, ac exulat mundo fides.

> [Do you want to be happy? Live with nature as your guide. / Our power is very great. Yet I am despised, / Many evil men break my

> laws. / The sacred honour of human right is perished, / Pity, shame and trust are banished from the world.]

Of course, the "plurimi mali" ("many evil men") who despise nature and break her laws are the rulers of Thebes, in this case Creon. But it is interesting to observe how in the quoted lines a symbolic association is established between nature and positive values such as *decus, pietas, pudor* and *fides*, at the same time suggesting the perfect overlapping of natural law and human law (*ius humanum*).

In short, the entire story of the Labdacid saga is revisited in the light of a natural law perspective, whereby the faults committed by the Theban rulers, for which they had to pay the price, are interpreted as a crime committed against nature ("Quod praemonenti non mihi fecit malum?"; "What evil has she not done to me, who had warned him?"). Oedipus with his nefarious actions (incest with his mother, generation of incestuous children, self-blinding) has already broken the laws of nature ("Impunis autem iura non laesit mea"; "he has broken my laws but not with impunity"). Jocasta commits suicide by rejecting her own nature ("naturae suae / Invidit"). Eteocles breaks the pact of alternation with his brother Polynices and this breach too is understood as an act carried out in contempt of nature ("Meum ius temnit"; "he despises my right"). Polynices' waging war against his own city, is seen as an act that "breaks every law" ("Ius omne frangens"), both natural and positive.[15]

Finally, let us turn to Polynices' *ataphia*, i.e. Creon's order to leave his body unburied for the animals to feed on it, which is the real key issue in Antigone's argument. In the second *Argumentum*, Watson mentions it in two lines: "Iamque insepultus alter, eiectus feris, / Fit praeda canibus, vulturi obscaeno, et lupis" (15; "And now the other, unburied, exposed to the ferocious beasts, / Becomes prey to dogs, obscene vultures and wolves"); and then he adds the following comment in the margin: "*Here <Nature> comes to the theme of the present play*"). There follows his summary of the essential themes of the plot: Antigone's rebellion, her attempt to bury her brother, Ismene's reluctance to join her, the punishment

15 All quotations refer to the second *Argumentum* of Watson's *Antigone* (Watson 1585, 14-15).

provided by "the laws of the country" ("patriae legibus"), i.e. "the king's decrees" ("regis iussa"), in short, positive law, and finally the punishment of Creon, struck down because he did not care for the blood of his family, or for his children, his wife, Tiresias, the city ("Nec sanguinis, nec liberum, nec coniugis, / Nec vatis aequum praedicantis publice, / Nec civitatis curam habens"; "Caring neither for the lineage, nor the children, nor the spouse, / Nor the prophet who preaches in public what is right, / Nor the city."; 15).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this *Argumentum* is that it presents Creon's experience of the final catastrophe (the death of his son and wife, his immense grief) as a punitive action carried out by Nature herself ("iras meas / Sentiet acerbas. Namque luctu flebili / Replebo, et omnem clade confundam domum"; "he will feel my bitter wrath. I will fill him with tears of pain, overturning his whole house with disaster"; 15-16).

It is unknown what the actual function was of such *Argumenta*, whether they were recited before the performance of the play, for instance, or whether they served purely as textual aids. But Watson's *Argumentum* has the flavour of a *parabasis* (unthinkable in an ancient Greek tragedy), a text with a programmatic message offering the reader/viewer, even before the drama begins, not only an essential presentation and/or recapitulation of the events, but also, and especially, a key for their interpretation in the light of the role of nature and the violation of her rules. The last lines in which Nature addresses the audience directly are revealing in this sense (16):

> Vos ergo, famuli, discite ex tantis malis
> Quam sit salubre iura Naturae sequi.
> Invita si sim, rite procedet nihil.
>
> [So you, my servants, learn from such great evils / how healthy it is to follow the laws of nature. / If I am unwilling, nothing will proceed properly.]

Also in the other paratexts of Watson's *Antigone*, namely in the four *Pomps* (allegorical processions) and the four *Themes* (short choral songs full of moral sentences) the concept of nature and natural law can again be found. There nature acts as a *trait d'union* between

natural law and divine law, and in Watson's vision all characters make mistakes. Even Antigone is found guilty of breaking the laws of the country by her stubbornness in not wanting to give up her private pain for the public good. Nature condemns her thus: "Sed misera nondum cernit, affectum rudem / Debere patriae legibus locum dare" ("But the wretched woman does not see that raw emotion / Should give way to the laws of a country").[16]

There remain many open questions to which I have no definite answer. The main one is why a sixteenth-century English poet such as Thomas Watson approached Sophocles' *Antigone* in a 'natural law' key. Apart from the fact that Watson had studied law at Oxford (in the title page he describes himself as "iuris utriusque studiosus", i.e. of both branches of law, canonical and civil[17]), what could have been the purpose of such an interpretation? And above all, how does his Latin *Antigone* relate to the European reception of Sophocles' play from the angle of natural law? Apart from his possible reliance on Thomas Naogeorgius, the various Renaissance translators, revisers and commentators do not seem to have especially emphasised the legal theme by interpreting the text as a clash between natural law (Antigone) and positive law (Creon).

If we consider the many Latin and vernacular versions as well as the dramaturgical remakes, we can see that the theme of Antigone's 'unwritten laws' is never expressed in terms of natural law. Antigone's laws are often endowed, if at all, with Christian meanings. This is the case, for example, of the French poetic translation (in rhymed decasyllables) by Calvy de La Fontaine (1542), where Antigone's laws, defined "les justes loix des Dieux" ("the just laws of the Gods"), are issued from a "haulte deité" ("high deity"), not from Zeus/Jupiter, and are associated not with

16 Watson 1581, 15. The only figure endowed with positive qualities seems to be "the meek Ismene" ("mitis Ismene"), as she is defined in the Fourth Pomp (61). With her virtues (piety, obedience, reasonableness) she indicates the right behaviour to follow and shows us "the form of a quiet life" ("vitae quietae formam tradens") (66).

17 For the importance of the legal context cf. in particular Spinelli's analysis of Watsonis use of the contrast between Antigone and Ismene to represent not only opposing models of femininity, but also opposing, yet equally valid models of understanding citizenship (2021).

Dike but with "charité" ("charity"), a notion completely foreign to pagan spirituality.[18] But even earlier, Luigi Alamanni's *Tragedia di Antigone* (published in Lyon in 1533, but probably composed in 1522) emphasised the sacral dimension of Antigone's laws, which are called "i santi alti decreti" ("the holy high decrees") and "le sante usanze" ("the holy customs"; Alamanni 1533, 156). No reference to nature is found in the Latin versions by Gentien Hervet (1541), Giovan Battista Gabia (1543), Georges Rataller (1550) ("perennia Deorum iura"), Jehan Lalemant (1557) ("sanctissimas leges").

The only reference to the theme of nature, albeit barely hinted at – apart from the aforementioned commentary by Thomas Naogeorgus – is to be found in Robert Garnier's play *Antigone ou la piété* of 1580, thus chronologically contemporary with Watson's *Antigone*, an original rewriting in French of the Sophoclean play, in which the ethical-legal dimension appears as an important component against the background of the contrasts between Catholics and Protestants. Antigone is essentially portrayed as the incarnation of filial *pietas*. In the scene of her confrontation with Creon, Antigone contrasts the tyrant's orders with "l'ordonnance de Dieu, qui est nostre grand *Roy*" ("the orders of God who is our great king", 1807). She refers to Christian ethical-religious principles and not immediately to natural law concepts. However, at a certain point she also states the following (1832-4):

> Quoy? eussé-je, Creon, violentant nature, souffert mon propre frere estre des Loups pasture Faute de l'inhumer, com il est ordonné? (Garnier 1580, 30).
>
> [What? If I, Creon, violating nature, had allowed my brother to be pastured by wolves for not burying him, as has been ordered?]

18 Calvy de la Fontaine 2000, 40 (745, 749, 756). For a comprehensive analysis of the *Antigones* of sixteenth-century France, cf. Mastroianni 2004, and Mastroianni 2015. More generally on the reinterpretations of *Antigone* in the early modern age, cf. Miola 2014. The passage on 'unwritten laws' lends itself particularly well to rewritings from a Christianising perspective (Mastroianni 2004, 40-9). On the meaning of *charitè* in this context, to be related, on the one hand, to Antigone's φιλία, and, on the other hand, to the biblical notion of ἀγάπη-*caritas*, see M. Mastroianni's commentary in Calvy de la Fontaine 2000, 133f.

The phrase "violentant nature" ("violating nature") is revealing of a vision that makes Christian theology coincide tout court with natural law. Moreover, Garnier's Antigone adds that "the divine sacred precepts by nature are imprinted in our hearts" ("des Dieux les preceptes sacrez naturelement sont en nos coeurs encrez"). In other words, this Antigone suggests that human laws are by nature modelled on divine ones, and the heart is the place where divine law is internalised. This is not so much a naturalist view as a Christian theological perspective whereby divine law, once inscribed within the heart, becomes the law of nature.[19] The consonance of this passage by Garnier with that of Watson quoted at the outset ("Aedicta, ut illa cordibus, cum sis homo, / Natura quae sculpsit, refigere valeas") is redolent with imagery from the Old and New Testament. It is true that in Garnier's work the focus remains on the contrast between the 'laws of the tyrant' and the 'laws of God', with an emphasis placed on the intrinsic evil of tyranny. And it is true that also in Watson the perspective of the naturalness of laws is developed more in the paratexts than in the drama. But the coincidence seems to me indicative of a line of interpretation that in the late sixteenth century must have been particularly attractive in various contexts of European culture.

One last consideration, to conclude: there is another edition that is important for the reception history of the Sophoclean text as well as of the tragedy *Antigone* and therefore needs to be mentioned for the influence it may have had on Garnier's and Watson's reworkings. It is the Latin edition of Sophocles edited by the humanist Veit Winsheim and his master Philip Melanchthon, published in 1546, the so-called 'Sophocles of Wittenberg', which was sent as a gift to King Edward VI of England within weeks of

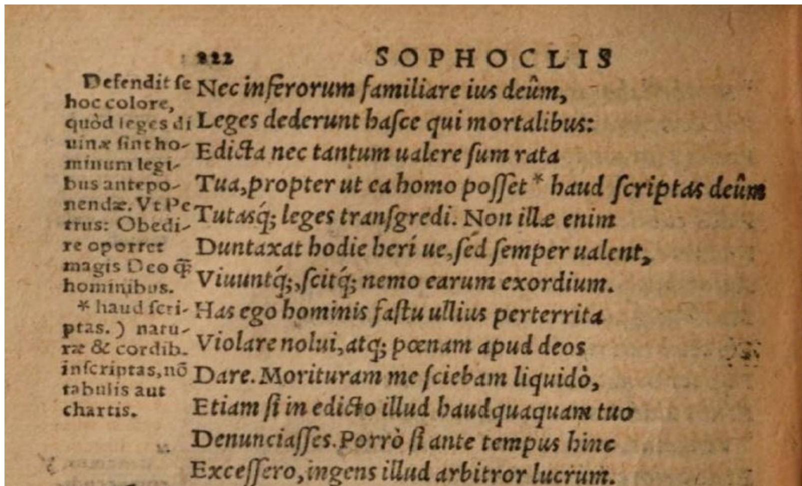
19 Cf. also 1876, where Antigone exclaims: "Mail la loy de nature et des Dieux est plus forte" ("But the law of nature and the Gods is stronger"), suggesting an absolute coincidence between a divine and naturalistic perspective. "Recalling arguments of the jurist and political philosopher Jean Bodin, Antigone the intellectual joins the current debate on the nature of sovereignty, the duties of monarchs, and the rights of citizens" (Miola 2014, 236). On the 'political' aspects of Garnier's theatre, cf. Jondorf 1969. On the concept of 'natural law' in the English Renaissance in general, see White 1996.

his coronation.[20] Micha Lazarus has shown how this edition helped shape the reception of Greek tragedy as well as reflection on ideas of the tragic throughout the sixteenth century by presenting an innovative picture of Sophocles, in which the political dimension is reconciled with Reformation politics and Christian theology (Lazarus 2020). From the perspective of Melanchthon and his pupil Winsheim, Greek tragedies teach us to reflect on the moral responsibility of the characters and to curb harmful passions for fear of God's punitive justice. In the specific case of Antigone, Melanchthon's interpretation is based on the one hand, on the rebuke of Antigone for disobeying authority, and, on the other hand, on the need for Creon to pay the price for his immoderate cruelty and stubbornness (Lurie 2012, 444). The real crucial question the play raises is whether religion and piety should be obeyed even when magistrates or tyrants forbid it.[21] The translation and the short preface never mention the opposition between 'natural law' and 'state law', but in a printed annotation in the left margin, close to the lines in which Antigone appeals to the unwritten laws, we read the following annotation (Winsheim 1546, 201) (Fig. 2): "Defensio sive confirmatio: meum hoc factum habet mandatum divinum, et est consentaneum legi naturae." ("Defence or confirmation: this act of mine has a divine command, and is in accordance with the law of nature"). The gloss, which can undoubtedly be attributed to Melanchthon, proposes a paraphrase of the position taken by Antigone in her dispute with Creon and makes the 'unwritten laws' coincide with the 'laws of nature' ("legi naturae"), according to the

20 Winsheim 1546. The edition bears Winsheim's name, but the translations are generally attributed to Melanchthon. On the authorship of the translations and the collaboration between Melanchthon and Winsheim, see Lurie 2012, 442-4; Lazarus 2020, 36-51.

21 "In Antigone praecipua quaestio est, utrum religioni et pietati obediendum est, etiamsi id tyranni vel magistratus prohibeant . . .[D]um altera ex sororibus Ismene disputat de magnitudine periculi, et de obedientia erga magistratus, altera Antigone de pietate debita, et de religione" ("In *Antigone* the major question is whether one should obey religion and piety, even if this is forbidden by sovereigns or magistrates . . . Of the two sisters, Ismene discusses the greatness of the danger and the obedience towards magistrates, whereas Antigone discusses due piety and religion", Winsheim, 1546, sig. O1*r*).

Aristotelian paradigm in the *Rhetoric* we examined earlier.[22] For chronological reasons, it is plausible to assume that this 1546 note is at the origin of the quite similar one found in Naogeorgus (1558), and that it somehow oriented Thomas Watson's rendering (1581), by which Antigone's laws become without mediation laws "that nature has carved in the hearts" ("illa cordibus . . . / Natura quae sculpsit").



222 SOPHOCLIS

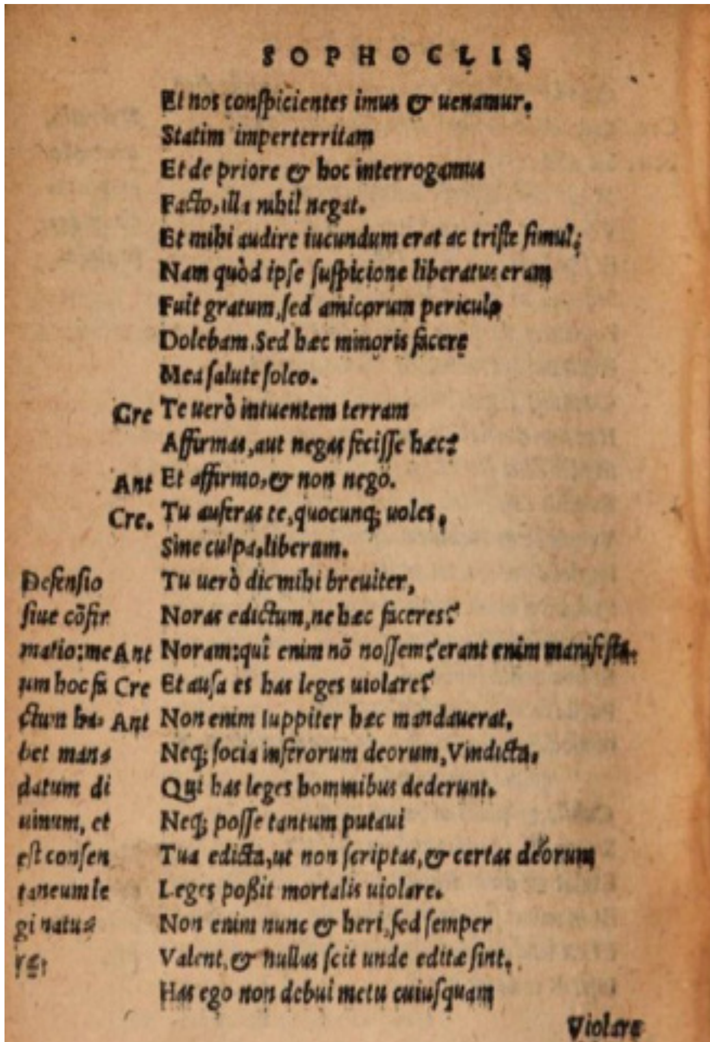
Defendit se hoc colore, quòd leges diuinæ sint hominum legibus anteponendæ. Vt Petrus: Obedire oportet magis Deo q̃ hominibus.

* haud scriptas.) naturæ & cordib. inscriptas, nõ tabulis aut chartis.

Nec inferorum familiare ius deûm,
Leges dederunt hasce qui mortalibus:
Edicta nec tantum ualere sum rata
Tua, propter ut ea homo posset * haud scriptas deûm
Tutasq; leges transgredi. Non illæ enim
Duntaxat hodie heri ue, sed semper ualent,
Viuuntq;, scitq; nemo earum exordium.
Has ego hominis fastu ullius perterrita
Violare nolui, atq; pœnam apud deos
Dare. Morituram me sciebam liquidò,
Etiam si in edicto illud haudquaquam tuo
Denunciasses. Porrò si ante tempus hinc
Excessero, ingens illud arbitror lucrum.

Fig. 1:
Sophoclis Tragoediae septem, Latino carmine redditae, et annotationibus illustratae, per Thomam Naogeorgum Straubingensem, Basileae: Per Ioannem Oporinum, 1558, 222.

22 Melanchthon, in fact, had in mind the interpretation of Antigone's laws as laws of nature as expounded by Aristotle in his Rhetoric, although in the printed note the reference to Aristotle was removed. This is evident from Melanchthon's own handwritten notes. In one of his personal copies of the Rhetoric, for example, he comments on the quotation from Antigone by identifying "a distinction between natural law and positive law" ("discrimen iuris naturae & iuris positiui"), from which he derives the principle that "the law of nature is immutable" ("ius naturae est immutabile"). Cf. Lazarus (forthcoming).



SOPHOCLIS

Et nos conspicientes imus & uenamur.
Statim imperterritam
Et de priore & hoc interrogamus
Facto, illa nihil negat.
Et mihi audire iucundum erat ac triste simul;
Nam quòd ipse suspicione liberatus eram
Fuit gratum, sed amicorum periculo
Dolebam. Sed haec minoris facere
Mea salute soleo.
Cre Te uerò intuentem terram
Affirmas, aut negas fecisse haec?
Ant Et affirmo, & non nego.
Cre. Tu auferas te, quocunq; uoles,
Sine culpa, liberam.
Tu uerò dic mihi breuiter,
Noras edictum, ne haec faceres?
Ant Noram: qui enim nō nossem? erant enim manifesta.
Cre Et ausa es has leges uiolare?
Ant Non enim Iuppiter haec mandauerat,
Neq; socia inferorum deorum, Vindicta,
Qui has leges hominibus dederunt.
Neq; posse tantum putaui
Tua edicta, ut non scriptas, & certas deorum
Leges posset mortalis uiolare.
Non enim nunc & heri, sed semper
Valent, & nullus scit unde editae sint.
Has ego non debui metu cuiusquam

Violare

Defensio siue cōfirmatio: meum hoc factum habet mandatum diuinum, et est consentaneum legi naturae.

Fig. 2:
Interpretatio Tragoediarum Sophoclis: Ad Utilitatem Iuventutis, Quae Studiosa Est Graecae Lingua edita a Vito Winshemio, Francoforti: Petrus Brubachius, 1546, 201.

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13

Much Ado about Greek tragedy? Shakespeare, Euripides, and the *histoire tragique**

Tania Demetriou

Abstract

This article approaches the relation between Shakespeare and Greek tragedy by looking at one of the main known sources for the Claudio-Hero plot of *Much Ado about Nothing*, Matteo Bandello's novella of "Timbreo and Fenicia", and its French rewriting by François de Belleforest. It considers the generic implications of the transition from novella to *histoire tragique*, in light of the French rewritings' key role in the reception of 'Bandello' in England. After exploring certain intersections between the early modern reception of Greek tragedy and the project of the *histoires tragiques*, it looks closely at the notable presence of Euripides in "Timbrée et Fénicie". It concludes by arguing that, out of all the proposed sources of *Much Ado*, Belleforest's rewriting of this tale is the one most likely to have led Shakespeare to Euripides' *Alcestis*, which it re-proposes as an intertext in the ending of *Much Ado*. This layering of texts seems to have resonated with the playwright for over a decade, since, in *The Winter's Tale*, he is thought to have returned not only to the same moment from *Alcestis*, but also to the same story in 'Bandello'.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Euripides; Matteo Bandello; François de Belleforest; *histoire tragique*; translation; *Much Ado about Nothing*; *The Winter's Tale*

*This essay is for my mother, Vania Demetriou (1947-2022), with all my love – "alas! one cannot so easily come and go in the boat of the Stygian ferryman . . ."

Shakespeare's plays are quoted from the third Arden edition; unless otherwise specified, classical texts are quoted from the online Loeb Classical Library, accessed 4.7.2023, except for Greek dramatic fragments, which are quoted from TrGF; the abbreviation Stob. refers to Stobaeus, 1884-1912. Contractions in early modern printed sources have been silently expanded. All translations are mine. I am grateful to Silvia Bigliazzi, Raphael Lyne, Yves Peyré, and Matthew Reynolds for their comments.

Much Ado, Bandello's Novella, and Belleforest's *Histoire tragique*

The eighteenth and final story in the Third Volume of François de Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* is that of Timbrée de Cardonne and Fénicie Lionati of Messina and is translated out of the twenty-second novella in Matteo Bandello's *Prima parte delle novelle*. Of the two, Bandello is deemed by editorial convention a likelier 'source' for the story of Claudio and Hero in Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing*. Sheldon Zitner, for example, argues in his Oxford Classics edition of the play that "Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques*, [were] probably not of much use"; Bandello was accessible enough to Shakespeare, since he "was familiar with John Florio's English-Italian dictionaries" and "Bandello's Italian prose is hardly insuperable for a competent Latinist" (Shakespeare 1993, 6). Likewise, the recently updated introduction for the Cambridge Shakespeare simply states this as the *communis opinio*: "it seems most likely that Shakespeare was working from the Italian rather than the French – unless he had some other source no longer known to us." (Shakespeare 2018, 1). In the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, Anna Pruitt seems to allow for access through the French when she mentions parenthetically that Belleforest had translated this story, before describing Bandello and Ariosto as "Shakespeare's two primary sources" (Shakespeare et al. 2017, 1.999). All these editors approach the question as a matter of linguistic access: Belleforest might or need not have been consulted to mediate the Italian. More carefully, Claire McEachern, though only discussing Bandello in detail, notes that Belleforest's version contained "the standard homiletic and rhetorical flourishes" (Shakespeare 2016, 8-9) and does not give a verdict one way or the other. My interest in this essay is in these embellishments and whether they can add a valuable "flourish" to what we know about Shakespeare and Euripides.

There is, in fact, no sound historical reason for privileging Bandello over Belleforest as potential Shakespearean reading matter, and Shakespeareans writing on the novella have tended to diverge from the editors on this matter.[1] In England, French

1 E.g. Mussio 2000; Walter 2014, 96; Hutson 1994, 253.

had unparalleled primacy among the modern languages, both as a reading language and as a 'vehicular' language for translation (Demetriou and Tomlinson 2015, 3-6). Shakespeare certainly read English Bandellos done from the French, and the 'French scenes' in *Henry V* – dated to 1599, like *Much Ado* – leave no doubt that he also had French competence.[2] There is one persuasive indication that he read Bandello's "Uno schiavo battuto", a source for *Titus Andronicus*, in the Second Volume of Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* ("Un esclaue battue") and that the French wording stayed with him (Porter 1996). The story of Hamlet in Belleforest's Fifth Volume – where the material does not come from Bandello – is the account that "stands in the closest known relation to Shakespeare's play" (Maxwell 2004, 554) and it is likely that he also worked with Montaigne in French for the same play (see Nicholson 2020). On the other hand, no one seems to have produced any evidence that Shakespeare went to Bandello *rather than* Belleforest when there was a choice. Indeed, scholars working on the playwright's Italian reading see the issue very differently. Jason Lawrence's probing study of Shakespeare's Italian learning concludes that "the evidence seems to argue for a simultaneous acquaintance with accounts in various languages of the same story" and this chimes with "the language-learning techniques of the time, which actively promote just this kind of comparative parallel reading" (Lawrence 2005, 135). If attentive engagement with parallel versions was a premise of Shakespeare's acquisition of modern languages, it was also germane to compositional practices in the early modern theatres, even more, it would appear, than we have appreciated. In his groundbreaking recent book, Holger Schott Syme makes a persuasive case for not taking the Stationers' Company, which treated a single title as subsuming different works on the same subject matter, as a guide to the playhouses' practice in this respect. Instead, it is probable that "the coexistence of closely related plays in multiple companies' repertories" (Syme 2023, 49) was the order of the day, but, with many of these playtexts being lost, theatre history has tended to conflate titles into single works. Syme's revisionist proposal has considerable implications for how we imagine the playwriting process. On the

2 See e.g. Steinsaltz 2002; Montgomery 2016, 33-47.

one hand, dramatists are likely to have seen their writing as close kin to Belleforest's elaborate reworkings of Bandello's versions; on the other, they must have read not only "analogically" (Miola 2000, 4), i.e. across multiple sources on the same material, but also with a special attunement to variations between them. Indeed, to return to *Much Ado*, John Kerrigan has elegantly shown that it is the way the play is "caught up in" a whole "matrix of stories" that seems most generative of Shakespeare's originality: "plumed with many birds' feathers", it continues the multiplicatory workings of this "matrix", sometimes "clon[ing] out of its own materials", elsewhere featuring "redundancies that lead nowhere but are trailed in the variant co-texts" (Kerrigan 2018, 39). The contention of this essay is that it is worth singling out Belleforest's *histoire tragique* within this generative "matrix" and asking whether it could have offered itself to the playwright as something to think with.

The persistent editorial habit of mentioning Belleforest but focussing on Bandello has its roots in Geoffrey Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources*. In his introduction to this play's sources, Bullough referred to Belleforest and acknowledged that Shakespeare was "acquainted with the work of . . . [both] Bandello and Belleforest" (1958, 67). But he translated only Bandello's story, reflecting his sense that its "conception" is closer to Shakespeare's than that of the "didactic" Belleforest (73). The long shadow of Bullough's impressionistic appraisal of what might have influenced Shakespeare lingers over modern editions. So does his 'either/or' view of influence. This jars with the mediated workings of reception in general, but it is particularly contentious given the facts of these two authors' transmission in early modern England, which call for viewing the European "work" that was Bandello as "consist[ing] of the originary text and . . . its translations together" (Reynolds et al. 2023, 777).[3] For, as Adelin Charles Fiorato writes, whereas in Italy, "the success of the *Novelle* was as immediate as it was ephemeral" (Fiorato 1979, 619), in France, through the rewritings of Belleforest and his predecessor, Pierre Boaistuau, they became a long-standing "best seller" (623), and it was this celebrity that made them a

3 Cp. Reynolds et al. 2023, 777: "A world work consists of the originary text and all its translations together."

European phenomenon. Outside Italy, the reception of Bandello was completely intertwined with the French 'Bandel'. In England, translations of Bandello were mediated by the French rewritings, sometimes based entirely on them, sometimes mingling the two, always reflecting the popularity individual tales had achieved through circulation in French.[4] When English writers spoke of 'Bandello', they were often referring to Boaistuau and Belleforest (see Maslen 1997, 92n, 99n). What is important here is not just that reading these reworkings was culturally widespread, but that reading Bandello at all was enmeshed with what the French *histoires tragiques* had made of his Italian *novelle*. This is evident not least in the generic designation of the stories in English. English Bandellos advertise themselves on their title-pages as purveyors of "tragicall histories", 'tragicall matters", "tragicall discourses", or "tragicall tales", even when their authors are not obviously working from Boaistuau or Belleforest.[5] And after the first wave of translations from Bandello, such descriptors become applied to Englishings of tales from other authors, such as Boccaccio, Jacques Yver, or Fiorentino, who had not directly presented their work thus.[6] The question I am interested in here is whether this strong identification of the novella genre as 'tragic' interacted with the reception of Greek tragedy in a manner that could have been consequential for Shakespeare and *Much Ado*.

The story of Timbreo and Fenicia relates the "diverse accidents of fortune that came about" ("Varii e fortunevoli accidenti che avvennero", Bandello 2008, 272) before the protagonists could be married, to wit, the slandering of the chaste Hero-figure, Fenicia, and her supposed death. In Belleforest's version, when Timbrée falls in love with Fénicie, she is "still very young, being no older than

4 In Tomita 2009, of the 19 titles of books that include translations by Bandello, nine (§§ 14, 29, 33, 36, 38, 89, 94, 110, 241) definitely involve interaction with the French, and the remaining ones (§§ 54, 57, 72,7 9, 86, 96, 109, 118, 158, 234) are of tales that had circulated in French. (All the tales translated by Belleforest are listed in Sturel 1918, 57-9). See also the outline of the "mainly bibliographical" Chapter I in Pruvost 1937, 11-12.

5 Tomita 2009, §§ 14, 36, 36, 38, 79, 86, 89, 158. On the "tragical history" / "tragical tale" as a Tudor genre, see Gibson 2009.

6 Tomita 2009, §§ 167, 243 (Boccaccio); § 94 (Yver); § 235 (Fiorentino).

fourteen to fifteen years of age" ("encor de fort bas aage, comme celle qui ne passoit pas guere plus que de quatorze à quinze ans", Belleforest 1569, 477*r*).[7] She is eighteen by the story's conclusion. With her chastity vindicated, she is reunited with Timbrée, but initially, he believes she has died and that he has just been engaged to someone from her family circle:

> Fenicie deuint grande, & refaitte, & fort gentille, ayant l'an 18 de son aage: & ayant changé presque de toutes façons de faire, . . . quant bien on ne l'eust tenue pour morte, encore ne l'eust on pas recognue de prime face pour celle Fenicie iadis accordee au conte. (Belleforest 1569, 507*r*)

> [Fénicie, now eighteen years of age, had grown, and become more refined, and very courteous, and having changed in almost every way . . . even if she had not been thought to be dead, one would have not recognised her at first sight as the Fénicie who had once been given to the count.]

This timeframe makes Timbrée's non-recognition of her as his new bride considerably more realistic than in Bandello, whose Fenicia is sixteen at the start, and, a year later, she has changed "beyond all belief" ("oltra ogni credenza", Bandello 2008, 291) so that Timbreo is completely convinced he has married "a certain Lucilla" ("una Lucilla", 293). In another sense, however, Belleforest's temporal reframing gives the tale a more extraordinary tone: Timbrée subjects himself to years, rather than months, of sorrowful penitence, celibacy, and proving of his reparative alliance-for-life to Fénicie's family; and Fénicie spends all that time living obscurely in her aunt's house "in the country" ("aux champs", Belleforest 1569, 500*r*, 507*r*, 508*r*). These lovers bear out indeed the lesson Belleforest adds to the narrative, as those present at the resolution acknowledge:

7 Belleforest reprises Bandello's formulation: "diuers & estranges accidens qui aduindrent" (Belleforest 1569, 475*r*). The Third Volume first appeared as Belleforest 1568. I have not been able to use first editions of any of Belleforest's volumes, but details will be supplied in the notes from the "Chronological bibliography" in Simonin 1992, 233-312. On the Turin editions of the *histoires tragiques*, see Gorris Camos 2018.

> que la varieté de fortune est admirable, & les cas & succez des hommes pleins de grand incertitude, de malheurs, & angoisses, & que les plaisirs sont achetez au pris d'vn long trauail, & non sans sentir mille incommoditez auant qu'on en iouisse. (Belleforest 1569, 512*r*)
>
> [that the changefulness of fortune is wondrous, and the circumstances and events in the lives of men full of great uncertainty, misfortunes, and sorrows, and that pleasures are purchased at the expense of long travails, and not without the experience of a thousand trials before one can enjoy them.]

Undoubtedly "homiletic", this "flourish" accords with a multitude of other changes, tonal and factual, that concertedly endow Bandello's love story with an overt tragic gravitas. Shakespeare did not follow Belleforest's dilated timeframe in *Much Ado*: on the contrary, he radically shrank Bandello's temporality, so that the entire story unfolds over a matter of days, making necessary the device of the "masked" (5.4.12) Hero at the end. But he was not done with the tale of Fenicia when he finished *Much Ado*. Critics have persuasively argued that this story, which likens its heroine to a statue when she is thought dead and secludes her in the care of a distinctly proactive aunt until the time is ripe for reunion, strongly resonates in *The Winter's Tale*, with its "preserved" (5.3.127) Hermione, presented to her husband as a "statue . . . in the keeping of Paulina" in "that removed house" (5.2.102-3, 115).[8] Hermione has to wait not one or four, but sixteen years. If "Shakespeare [read] Greene's *Pandosto* with a strong sense of unfinished business in Bandello's story"

8 See Mueller 1994, who sees Shakespeare's reading of this tale as "a remarkably consequential event in the playwright's career" (290). He was the first to draw attention to the importance of the "marble statue" (300) in the story. Bandello says "perdendo subito il nativo colore più a una statua di marmo che a creatura rassembrava" (2008, 280); Belleforest reuses the comparison at the corresponding moment ("elle tomba du haut de soy toute esuanouye, & si descoulouree & amortie qu'vn marbre n'est pas plus pasle ny froid", 1569, 497*r*), and also anticipates it when Fénicie is traduced: "le plus asseuré des trois demeura immobile comme vne statue" (496*r*). Mussio 2000 adds a revealing amount of suggestive detail to the parallels between the tale and *The Winter's Tale*, including Paulina's "clear" derivation from Fenicia/Fénicie's aunt (221-4).

(Mueller 1994, 300), the "wide gap" (4.1.7) of time introduced by Belleforest may have had something to do with it.

Another addition by Belleforest, an internal reflection on the tale's tragic morphology, could have made a contribution to Shakespeare's long experimentation with tragicomic genres. Like Bandello's Girondo, Belleforest's Geronde, the penitent traducer of Fénicie, proposes to her sister at the conclusion of the events; but Geronde takes this step upon "seeing that everything was well, and that the tragedy had turned comic, and sorrow had been transformed into rejoicing and delight" ("voyant toutes choses en bon estat, & que la tragedie estoit deuenue comique, & le dueil conuerty en lyesse, & resiouissance", Belleforest 1569, 511*v*). Belleforest's reflection here opens a window onto a larger phenomenon. As Michel Simonin was the first to show, such use of theatrical language is entirely typical of Belleforest's additions to the narratives, and an important characteristic of his contribution to the European 'Bandello'.[9] The generically conscious intervention of Bandello's translators was an important element in the novella's mediation of dramatic ideas from the continent to English theatre. Bandello himself had offered his stories to readers with a highly inclusive attitude to genre. Fiorato observes that "comic themes, a facet of [what Bandello calls] 'the infinite variety of events' run through the collection, alternating with tragic stories" (Bandello 2002, 28); in fact, comic and jocular tales predominate in the collection as a whole, though unevenly distributed across the four volumes (ibid.). But Boaistuau, who is credited with the "invention of the term [*histoire tragique*]" (Simonin 1982, 471), crafted the first collection of French translations from Bandello in a "single hue" (Cremona 2019, 75). That is to say, he chose six stories on the misfortunes of love, all of them ending in calamity, "except for the first and the last" (76). Belleforest followed in his footsteps in this respect, and even echoed this generic bookending in his first "Continuation des

9 Simonin 1982, 465, more accessible in Simonin 2004, 27-45. I have not been able to consult Simonin's unpublished thesis, defended in 1985 at the *Université de Paris XII-Val de Marne*, where he developed this point fully. See also Campangne 2006, 793 and Arnould 2011, 79, 76.

histoires tragiques".[10] Introducing its final tale, that of Dom Diego and Ginevra, he wrote: "the tragic incidents of human misfortunes" ("les tragiques euenemens des malheurs humains"), which bring bitterness, have "beneath the bark of their aloe, a honey sweeter than sweetness itself" ("sous l'escorce de cest aloez vn miel plus doux que la mesme douceur"); but as there is a time and a place for everything, "just as I started my book with a comic story, I end it with a tragicomedy" ("ainsi que i'ay commence mon discours par vne histoire comique, i'en face la fin auec vne tragicomedie", Boaistuau and de Belleforest 1567, 257*r*). It was via Belleforest's rendition that this tale became very popular in England,[11] and many of its readers would have also engaged with the translator's meditation on the emotions and gains of tragedy as a mode, and noted his term "tragicomedy". The fact, then, that a tale with a "comic" issue concludes the Third Volume as well was not a casual choice, and it alerts us to something important: English readers of 'Bandello' absorbed these stories at once influenced by the generic filter of their selective French rewritings, and orientated by them towards an awareness of the tragic and tragicomic affordances of the discursive forms they were reading. Within this context, it is possible to imagine the generically self-conscious touch in "Timbrée et Fénicie" about "the tragedy" turning "comic" rippling through Shakespeare's powerful imaginative encounter with the story across a decade.

Belleforest and Greek Tragedy

Belleforest's imitation of the structure of Boaistuau's collection, and his theoretical articulation of its implications for genre, are characteristic of his 'continuation' practice. Boaistuau's blueprint, according to Robert Carr, was a tragic modulation of the "traditional form" of the short story, with the addition of "a more probing psychological inquiry", an "enlarge[ment of] the scope of the form beyond . . . anecdotal amusement", and the enabling of "the

10 The first edition, Belleforest 1559, was published together with Boaistuau's *histoires*.

11 English versions of it appeared in Tomita 2009 §§ 36, 38, 86, 96, 234.

narrative to serve as its own expression of an implicit doctrinal attitude" (Carr 1979, 35-6). Belleforest took all this further and made it wholly explicit. Boaistuau eliminated Bandello's jocular tales and included only two happily ending stories among six; Belleforest's "Continuation" changed the proportion to two among twelve, and the comic and tragicomic element progressively disappeared across the hundred or so stories that he would offer in the years to come. Where Boaistuau had accommodated Bandello's objective of readerly pleasure among his stated aims, Belleforest's paratexts focussed on the *histoires tragiques*' capacity to "serve the public" ("seruir au publique", Belleforest 1566, 5*r*) by offering "examples" ("exemples", 6*v*, 7*r*) that would reform contemporary morals.[12] Chiming with this edifying intent, Belleforest brought a distinct narratorial attitude to the genre, his notorious, tireless "homiletic" penchant for discoursing on the ethical and existential implications of the situations at hand, deriving "from the experience narrated . . . pronouncements of general value, with an avowedly edifying purpose" (Arnould 2011, 79). This was the didacticism that made Bullough oust Belleforest from the canon of possible Shakespeare sources. Importantly, this sermonising impulse was part and parcel of Belleforest's idea of the 'tragic', which was shared by the less flamboyantly edifying Boaistuau (Carr 1979), and linked to "the conception, going back to the ancients, and after them the Church Fathers, of spectacle and of the theatre of the world" (Simonin's doctoral thesis, quoted in Campangne 2006, 791). Belleforest's "homiletic . . . flourishes" thus went together with his theatrical lexicon. In concert, they deepened the interaction between the novella and ideas of theatrical tragedy. This interaction was significant. As Hervé-Thomas Campangne says, Belleforest's stories were connected to early modern drama "en amont et en aval" (2006, 792), both indebted to and feeding into the contemporary stage in various ways. But in Belleforest's volumes, there also emerged a certain interplay between the *histoire tragique* and ancient dramatic tragedy, which, from a Shakespearean perspective at least, repays attention.

12 The quotations are from the dedication of the second volume, first published as Belleforest 1565.

In one sense, Greek tragedy was there at the very roots of the *histoire tragique*. Fiorato pauses over Bandello's translation of Euripides' *Hecuba* into Italian, complete by July 1539, as "an important moment which leads to the tragic novella" (1979, 442; see also Zaccaria 1982). The translation, situated in the context of a formative period in the development of Italian tragedy, can be said to signal what will become the *novelliere*'s preoccupation with certain tragic subjects: the individual's need to submit to ethical, political, or theological imperatives, and the tyranny of irrational passions that lead to horrible crimes and their chastisement by the universe (Fiorato 1979, 441-4). It is the stories in this 'tragic' key that will captivate his European translators and readers. Bandello's volumes, however, did nothing to present his project as affiliated with ancient tragedy, and Julius Caesar Scaliger, in his numerous encomiastic epigrams to Bandello, never paralleled him to the tragedians of antiquity.[13] In contrast, when Belleforest, who had been a collaborator on Boaistuau's *histoires tragiques*, celebrated that volume, the parallel with ancient tragedy suggested itself: in the ambit of "la Tragedie" (Boaistuau 1559, sig. yiiii*r*), he wrote, Boaistuau's "prose" surpassed the priceless "saincts vers" ("holy verses") of the Greeks and Latins.[14] What he meant probably included, but went well beyond dramatic tragedy, judging from the dedication of his own Third Volume of *histoires tragiques* nine years later. Here, Belleforest defended the discourse of love in his stories. To those who accused him of "tickl[ing]" ("chatouiller", 1569, sig. *3*v*) the younger sort with the jollity of Bandello's amorous tales, he replied that his own pictures of love were about "virtue alone" ("la seule vertu", sig. *4*r*). If he spoke of love, he did so "as a good surgeon, of some putrefaction and impostume" ("tout ainsi qu'vn bon chirurgien, de quelque putrefaction & apostume", sig. *3*v*), aiming to remove the "corruption" of amorous passion "either with fire, or with the violence of a corrosive incision" ("ou auec le feu, ou auec la violence de quelque corrosiue incision"), surgical metaphors which invite comparison with the action of tragic *catharsis* as some

13 These epigrams are quoted in Fiorato 1967, 380-1.

14 Belleforest's collaboration is attested in Boaistuau 1559, sig. *iiii*r*, and discussed in Simonin 1992, 51-2.

contemporary Aristotelians were beginning to describe it.[15] When Belleforest goes on to reflect on ancient precedents for writing about the calamities of those who love irrationally, he leans on a variety of authorities, including the "grave philosopher" Plutarch in *The Dialogue of Love*, but also the poets and dramatists:

> Ie laisse les poëtes qui en on enrichy leurs liures, & fait resonner les Theatres du recit de telles occurrences, soit à la comédie, ou parmy la tristesse d'vne sanglante Tragedie, comme de celle de Didon desesperee en Virgile, d'vne Phillis, & Medee en Ouide . . . (*4*r*)
>
> [Not mentioning the poets who have enriched their books, and made their Theatres resound with the relation of such events, whether in comedy, or through the sadness of a bloody tragedy, like that of the desperate Dido in Virgil, or of a Phyllis or Medea in Ovid . . .]

Belleforest's list of models is highly eclectic with respect to forms and media, ranging from "books" to "Theatres", and from the "bloody Tragedy" of Dido in Virgil's epic, to that of Phyllis in Ovid's *Heroides*, and his Medea, in a reference which could point to the *Metamorphoses*, the *Heroides*, or Ovid's lost tragedy for the stage. The amorous *histoire tragique* is defined as a discourse with a prestigious ancient lineage that crosscuts and transcends genres, is even, perhaps, itself a genre. Ancient dramatic tragedy is one of its ancient manifestations.

Elsewhere in the pages of this volume, it was presented as much more than that. If Belleforest lauded Boaistuau's prose histories by comparing them to the tragic poetry of the ancients, praise for his own narrations made the parallel more concrete. In a sonnet printed at the end of the Second Volume, Pierre Tamisier[16] declared that "the tragic Muse" (Belleforest 1566, sig. MMMvi*v*; "la Muse tragique") which had once decorated "the Athenian" ("l' Athenien") had undergone a Pythagorean transmigration and found a new dwelling: exchanging "the rhythm of verse, and its native Greek" ("la mesure

15 On early modern medical accounts of *catharsis*, see Dewar-Watson 2010, where Sidney is described as applying an anatomical take on Aristotle's concept, Dewar-Watson 2018, 94-116, and Hoxby 2015, 62-9.

16 On whom, see Simonin 1992, 79-80; Quenot 1979; Hutton 1946, 416-21 and Jeandet 1885, 298-304.

des vers / Et son Grec naturel") for "prose and French" ("La prose, & le François"), she made "a new Sophocles thunder with a novel grace" ("d'vne nouuelle grâce, / Vn Sophocle nouueau . . . bruire l'vnivers"). Belleforest was the new Sophocles, his tragic prose a metempsychosis of the tragic verse of Athens. The following year, Tamisier composed an Ode for the Third Volume, which returned to this parallel. "If the course of human life had not been enslaved to all kinds of ills" ("Si le cours de l'humaine uie / N'estoit à tous maulx asseruie"), he wrote, it would have been in vain that:

> . . . les Tragiques poëtes
> Eussent esté les interpretes,
> Sur theatres Grecz & Romains,
> De la disgrace des humains:
> En uain Sophocle & Euripide
> Eussent retué les Heros,
> Qui d'une estrange Atropos
> On senty le glaiue homicide:
> En uain, Belle-forest, aussy
> Imitant de Bandel la trace,
> Auec toutefois meilleur' grace,
> Auroit conceu mesme soucy.
> (Belleforest 1569, sig. Tt3*r*-*v*)
>
> [. . . the Tragic poets expounded how humans fall from grace in Greek and Roman theatres, in vain that Sophocles and Euripides put the heroes to death again, making them feel the murderous sword of a strange Atropos; and in vain, too, that Belleforest, imitating Bandello, but with more grace altogether, undertook the same.]

These often-reprinted liminary works glorify the *histoire tragique* by presenting it as a descendant of Greek tragedy.

Tamisier was not a Greek scholar, but he was interested in Greek poetry: two decades later, when his translations from the Greek Anthology and of the didactic verse of Pseudo-Phocylides and Pseudo-Pythagoras appeared, he made it clear that he had no Greek and was instead benefitting from "tant de doctes personnages qui les on mis en Latin" (Tamisier 1589, 6; "so many erudite figures who have rendered them into Latin"). He had also read other French

poets' translations from the Greek Anthology. He could easily have encountered the Greek tragedians via similar routes, for he lived precisely at the moment when Latin and vernacular versions of them became disseminated on a large scale.[17] The *histoire tragique* evolved in parallel with the discovery of Greek tragedy by a wider audience in France. This synchronicity is nicely illustrated by the fact that the Euripidean translations of George Buchanan – whom Belleforest just missed when he attended the Collège de Guyenne (Soubeille 2002, 372) – had been printed in Paris in 1544 and 1556, while the first complete translation of a Greek tragedian by a Frenchman, that of Sophocles by Jean Lalemant of Autun (near Tamisier's native Tournus), appeared in 1557, a mere two years before Boaistuau's *Histoires.*[18] Tristan Alonge has also recently argued that the evidence of translations into French, if printed and unpublished works are taken together, suggests a notable engagement with Greek tragedy as opposed to Seneca in the first half of the sixteenth century, which later becomes dampened under political and religious pressures (Alonge 2019). Whatever the well-connected Tamisier's exposure to these developments was, his paratexts show that it was possible to see the subject of "tragiques malheurs" treated in these stories as forming a continuum with the tragedies of Athens. And as Belleforest's project grew, the parallel became a *topos.* Jacques Moysson,[19] who had not used the conceit in his liminary poems for Belleforest's earlier volumes, did so in 1570, in his contribution to the first incarnation of the Fifth Volume of *Histoires tragiques* (the volume which included the story of Hamlet). An "Ode" addressed Belleforest once again as "ce Sophocle moderne" (Belleforest 2013, 735), and called upon "all tragic poets" ("tous chantres Tragiques") to cede to him "the laurel crown that lines your brows, and the cothurnus and the goat" ("Le tortiz, qui voz fronts cerne, / Et le Cothurne et le Bouc").[20] Moysson also cited Greek tragedies recently played on the French stage as works surpassed by Belleforest's tragic writings:

17 As demonstrated in Pollard 2017, 'Appendix 2' and 'Appendix 3'.

18 On Lalemant, see Mastroianni 2015.

19 On whom, see Simonin 1992, 80, 84-6.

20 The first edition of this material was in Belleforest 1570.

> On a veu la tragedie
> De la pauvre Iphigenie,
> Et la fureur d'Hecuba
> Et celle de la Colchide
> (733-4)

> [We have seen the tragedy of the poor Iphigenia, and the fury of Hecuba, and that of the woman from Colchis]

As Campangne notes in his edition, these references must be to performances of vernacular translations of Euripides: *Iphigenia in Aulis* by Thomas Sebillet (1549), *Hecuba* by Guillaume Bouchetel (1544), and *Medea* by La Péruse (1556). As such, they show clearly that the *topos* elaborated on in these liminary works marks an intersection between the development of the *histoire tragique* and the reception of Attic tragedy in sixteenth-century France and suggests the potential for fruitful interaction between the two.

Belleforest's narratives occasionally activated this potential. "Timbrée et Fénicie" is one such instance. Some of the translator's most elaborate expansions on Bandello come at the point when Timbrée, having failed in his protracted attempt to seduce his lower-status beloved, determines to marry her. Like Bandello, Belleforest describes Fénicie's delight and her thanks to God for rewarding her chastity. But where Bandello goes on to narrate the catastrophe of her slandering with a sentence-long preamble on the variability of fortune, Belleforest is in no such hurry. Instead, he becomes deeply interested in his heroine's devout response to the felicitous outcome:

> Ainsi elle bastissoit en son ame comme les choses humaines sont suiettes à changement, & toutesfois ne donnoit rien à la fortune, à fin de ne faillir, comme celle qui n'ignoroit point que ce que nous estimons auoir quelque puissance sur les occurrences humaines, n'est rien: ains s'il y a rien de bon, c'est Dieu qui l'octroye de sa grace, sans aucun nostre merite, ny par l'inclination des astres: & s'il y a de l'aduersité, aussi est ce le tout puissant qui nous punit par telles calamitez, à fin que ce chastiment nous face recognoistre sa iustice, misericorde, & toute puissance. (Belleforest 1569, 487*r*-*v*)

> [Thus she contemplated how the affairs of mortals are subject to change, and yet ascribed nothing to chance so as not to err, being not ignorant that what power we think we have over human events is nothing; on the contrary, if any good thing happens, it is God who grants it out of his grace, without any merit on our part, nor does it come about because of the inclination of the stars; and if there is adversity, again, it is the omnipotent who punishes us through such calamities, so that this punishment will make us acknowledge his justice, mercy, and omnipotence.]

A sermonising "flourish" if ever there was one, this will have been among the passages that made Charles Prouty dub Belleforest, in his study of the sources of *Much Ado*, "a second- or third-rate man who fancies himself as a literary figure and a philosopher" (1950, 29).[21] But third-rate or not, Belleforest's philosophising speaks to the contribution of tragedy to theological speculation in this period: as Russ Leo has shown, in the wake of the Reformation, tragedy became a resource for understanding providence and human and divine agencies (Leo 2019). Belleforest's counter-reformation moralisations can be seen as productively comparable to the probing of "tapestries of deed and fortune and judgment inaccessible to mortal view" (Lazarus 2020, 46) that other Christian humanists were finding in the tragedies of ancient Greece.

Such a comparison, moreover, becomes particularly pertinent as Belleforest goes on to refer to Euripides. Bandello prepares his readers for the reversal in the lovers' fortunes thus: "But fortune, that never ceases to hinder people's happiness, found a new way of impeding the marriage that was so desired on both sides. Listen how." ("Ma la fortuna, che mai non cessa l'altrui bene impedire, nuovo modo ritrovò di porre impedimento a così da tutte due le parti desiderate nozze. E udite come.", Bandello 2008, 274). Belleforest radically changes the tone of this comment:

> Mais la misère humaine, & le sort qui nous conduit ne cessant iamais d'empescher le bien d'autruy, ne faillit aussi à donner vn

21 For the record, Prouty did consider Belleforest both a likely direct source for Shakespeare's play, and an important influence on the ideological contours of the play. (Prouty 1941, 216; Prouty 1950, 30-2)

> terrible obstacle à ces nopces de chascun tant desirées: Car il n'y a homme, comme dit le Tragic Euripide, qui tost ou tard ne sente les assauts de fortune, qui luy malheurent sa vie, & n'est aucun qui iouisse d'vne perpetuelle felicité. [Marginal note:] *Euripide en la trag. Andromaché.* (Belleforest 1569, 487*v*)
>
> [But as human misfortune and fate that leads us never cease to hinder people's happiness, it did not fail to present a terrible impediment, too, to this marriage so desired by each party. For there is no person, as the tragedian Euripides says, who does not, sooner or later, feel the strokes of fortune bringing misery to their life, and no one enjoys a perpetual happiness. [Marginal note:] *Euripides in his tragedy Andromache.*]

His citation paraphrases Andromache's words to Menelaus at Eur. *Andr.* 462-3: εἰ δ᾽ ἐγὼ πράσσω κακῶς, / μηδὲν τόδ᾽ αὔχει· καὶ σὺ γὰρ πράξειας ἄν. ("if my fortune now is evil, do not make this your boast: yours may be so as well."). This was not a particularly famous tag: the lines do not appear to have been much cited by ancient authors, nor do they feature in Erasmus' *Adagia*, though other quotations from this speech appear there (1.8.38; 3.7.31). They did number among the many *sententiae* regularly marked up in printed editions of Euripides, including the three Latin translations of this play which had appeared since 1541.[22] But Belleforest seems to have come across them as a commonplace in Ioannes Stobaeus' *Anthology* (Stob. 4.48.8), which is divided into topics, and was translated into Latin by Conrad Gessner. First published in 1543 in a bilingual volume designed for versatility and easy finding, Gessner's Stobaeus was indexed with increasing fulsomeness in subsequent editions, and often reprinted, including in France.[23] This quote from the *Andromache* – a play with an intriguingly strong representation in the *Anthology* (Piccione 1994, 180-7) – is found in the section "Non

22 E.g. Euripides 1541, sig. B2*v*; Euripides 1558, 375; Euripides 1562, 255. They were also among the 54 extracts from *Andromache* in Neander's Euripidean 'aristology', accompanied by the comment: "Fortune is master over everyone . . . You, who are great today, tomorrow will be nobody." (Neander 1559, 128-9; "Fortuna omnium est domina . . . Qui hodie est magnus, cras nullus eris").

23 On the indexing of authors in Stobaeus, the first of its kind, see Blair 2016, 88-94.

esse gaudendum ob alienas calamitates" (Stobaeus 1543, 499; "One should not rejoice at the calamities that befall others"). A few pages earlier, in the section "Quot inconstans sit hominum prosperitas, cum fortuna facile mutetur in statum deteriorem" (486*r*-7*r*; "How inconstant human prosperity is, since good fortune easily turns into bad circumstance"), Belleforest would have found the locus from Herodotus that he follows up the reference to Euripides with:

> & c'est pourquoy les saiges anciens ont dit qu'il ne faut iamais estimer heureux vn homme auant qu'on aye veu l'accomplissement de sa vie, comme bien se souuint Crese se voyant sur le buscher prest à estre bruslé, & se souuenant des admonitions du Legislateur d'Athenes. [Marginal note:] *Herodote liu. I.* (Belleforest 1569, 487*v*)

> [This is also the reason the sages of antiquity said that one should never esteem a person blessed before seeing the conclusion of their life, as Croesus recalled indeed when he found himself at the stake about to be burned and remembering the advice of the Legislator of Athens. [Marginal note:] *Herodotus Book I.*]

Belleforest had read Herodotus, too (Sturel 1918, 80). But in Stob. 4.41.63, Solon's advice to Croesus "not [to] call a man blessed, but fortunate, before they have died" (Hdt, *Hist.* 1.32; πρὶν δ' ἄν τελευτήσῃ . . . μηδὲ καλέειν κω ὄλβιον, ἀλλ' εὐτυχέα), is contextualised among numerous iterations of the same idea in Greek authors. Belleforest is evidently aware of this context when he attributes the saw to "the sages of antiquity" in the plural. Significantly, two of the "sages" are Greek tragedians: so common is this reflection in tragedy, that Erasmus' adage "Finem vitae specta" (1.3.37; "Consider the end of life") extracted from Stobaeus Solon's warning to Croesus and juxtaposed it with five variations of it in works by Sophocles and Euripides. More broadly, as Belleforest leaved through this cluster of sections in Stobaeus' florilegium, dedicated to topics such as fortune deserved and undeserved, happenstance, sudden reversals in life for the better or the worse, and how one should react to them, he would have found that extracts from the Attic tragedians predominated.[24] His presentation of the turning point of his own

24 For an illuminating numerical comparison of quotations from Euripides in the different parts of Stobaeus, see Piccione 1994, 178.

narrative might thus be described as a reflection on the reversals of fate, which makes conscious use of those resources of Greek tragedy that had been made familiar to him through a sophisticated early modern culture of commonplacing the ancients.[25] Through Stobaeus' *Anthology*, he learns from the Greeks that tragedy can be a philosophical modality for "comprehending action" (Leo 2019, 6).

We know, finally, that Belleforest is paying privileged attention to the tragedians in Stobaeus, because, in his introduction to this same story, he meditates on the misfortune that is envy, largely by means of a long quotation from Euripides that he definitely found there. After explaining that the distinctive "vehemence" (Belleforest 1569, 473*v*) of the passion of envy comes from the fact that those in its grip find no happiness in the things they love, he says:

> C'est pourquoy Euripide dit, Quelle est la mere ou quel le pere qui a produit entre les hommes cest extreme malheur, & abhominable aduersité qu'on appelle enuie? Ou est-ce qu'elle habite, ne [*sic*] quelle partie du corps a elle saisie pour sa demeure? Combien il seroit penible, & de grand labeur aux medecins de chasser par breuuages, ou drogueries ceste humeur corrompue & [i]nuisible, veu que c'est la plus grande, & plus dangereuse de toutes les maladies, ausquelles les hommes sont suiets. [Marginal note:] *Euripide.* (Ibid.)
>
> [This is the reason Euripides says: "Who is the mother, or who is the father who gave birth to this extreme misery and loathed misfortune among people that we call envy? Where does it live, which part of the body has it made its dwelling in? How arduous and challenging would it be for doctors to expel this invisible, corrupt humour with potions or drugs, seeing as it is the greatest and most dangerous of all the illnesses to which humans are subject!" [Marginal note:] *Euripides.*]

All this is a translation, with considered minor tweaks, of a fragment from *Ino* (fr. 403 Kn.) for which our only source is Stob. 3.38.8. Gessner was not always able to decipher the names of lost plays in his manuscript of Stobaeus, and thus left some quotations, like this one, unassigned; hence Belleforest's marginal reference

25 On the privileged association between commonplacing and Greek tragedy in this period, see Suthren 2020.

simply to "Euripides".[26] The passage, describing the "malheur" (cp. fr. 403 Kn., 1: κακὸν) of jealousy, has an interesting resonance with Belleforest's paratexts to this volume, where, as we saw, he described his tragic stories as excising the "corruption" (sig. *3*v*) of love in his readers like a surgeon. He does indeed seem to have thought through Euripides' medical language carefully: where Euripides' speaker imagines doctors removing "envy" (2; φθόνον) by means of "incisions . . . or potions or drugs" (6; τομαῖς . . . ἢ ποτοῖς ἢ φαρμάκοις), Belleforest specifies, as Euripides does not, that the illness is an "humeur corrompue" and omits the surgical procedure that makes no sense in this context, and was the province of early modern "chirurgiens" rather than "medecins". But, fascinatingly, he seems to return to the metaphor of surgery and "incision[s]" (sig. *3*v*) when he considers the operation of his own stories on vehement passions that bring about calamity in his paratexts. Belleforest's language for what tragic stories do to their readers may or may not be indebted to an indirect transmission of Aristotle's tragic theory, but it is certainly indebted to the tragedian Euripides himself. The *histoire tragique*'s affiliation to Greek tragedy that hovers around Belleforest's volumes as a *topos* that might at first glance appear facile, seems to have yielded something considerably deeper and more active as he composed this story. And one result of this deeper something is that Bandello's story of Timbreo and Fenicia would have reached the hands of a reader like Shakespeare under the tutelage of Euripides.

Shakespeare and Belleforest's Euripides

Belleforest's reworkings alter the literary coordinates of Bandello's narratives: his *histoires tragiques* are not simply tonally distinct from Bandello's *novelle*, but throw out filaments of connection to very different literary referents through citations and mythical allusions (Sturel 1918, 82-3). When Bandello's Timbreo falls in love, "each day he was set on fire all the more, and the more he

26 Stobaeus 1543, 224; on Gessner and illegible names of plays, see Arnott 1967, 95.

saw [Fenicia], the greater the flame he felt inside him" ("ogni dì più s'accendeva, e quanto più spesso la mirava tanto più sentiva la fiamma sua farsi maggiore", Bandello 2008, 273). Belleforest's Timbrée, however, imbibes through his eyes the "poison of Love" ("venin d' Amour", Belleforest 1569, 477*r*) just "as Dido of old did whilst kissing Cupid, who had taken the face and semblance of little Ascanius of Troy" ("comme iadis Didon en baisant Cupidon qui auoit pris la face & semblance du petit Ascanie Troien"). Timbreo's story and his passions are situated firmly in an early modern mundanity; but Timbrée's (averted) tragedy of love borrows possibilities from that of Virgil's Dido, "kindle[d] . . . to madness", by a transformed Cupid, who "sen[t] the flame into her very marrow" ("furentem / incendat reginam atque ossibus implicet ignem", *Aen.* 1.659-60). Other stories in the Third Volume likewise find occasion to bring the worlds of Virgil, but also Ovid, Ariosto, Dante, and Homer into the orbit of the narrative. It is the same with Belleforest's allusions to the Greek tragedians that his eulogists likened him to. There are a handful of these in this volume, the majority of them to Euripides, and all traceable to Stobaeus.[27] Their distribution and Belleforest's citational handling of them tend to suggest that engagement with the tragedians via Stobaeus became increasingly purposeful in the course of this Third Volume.[28] This may be why "Timbrée et Fénicie",

27 Belleforest 1569, 77*r*: "*Sophocle*", i.e. Soph. fr. 941.15-17 Rd., from an unknown play, cp. Stob. 4.20a.6 (= Stobaeus 1543, 368*v*); Belleforest 1569, 110*v*: "*Euripide*", i.e. Eur. *Temenus*, fr. 745 Kn., cp. Stob. 4.10.3 (= Stobaeus 1543, 345*v*); Belleforest 1569, 227*v*: "*Sophocle*", in fact Eur. *Bellerophon*, fr. 297 Kn. and Eur. *Danae*, fr. 325.1 Kn., cp. Stob. 3.10.17-18 (= Stobaeus 1543, 102, where the first extract is attributed to Euripides and the second to Sophocles); Belleforest 1569, 259*r*: "*Euripide*", i.e. Eur. *Antiope* fr. 187 Kn., cp. Stob. 3.30.1 (= Stobaeus 1543, 206); Belleforest 1569, 377*v*: "*Euripide aux Phenisses*", in fact Eur. *Aeolus*, fr. 15.2 Kn., cp. Stob. 4.21a.1 (= Stobaeus 1534, 379*v*); Belleforest 1569, 387*r*: "*Euripide en ses suplians*", i.e. Eur. *Suppl.* 429-32, cp. Stob. 4.8.1 (= Stobaeus 1543, 337*v*).

28 Belleforest tends to highlight the 'tragic' provenance of his paraphrases and renditions of Euripides and Sophocles, but this begins with the second reference (introduced with "le grec faiseur de Tragedies, dit" (Belleforest 1569, 110*v*; "the Greek maker of Tragedies, says") and, like the citations themselves, settles into a habit by the second half of the book (where the citations are introduced with "le Tragique Grec dit"/ "le Grec Tragique dit" (e.g. 227*v*, 259*r*, 377*v*; "the Greek Tragedian says"). Increasing purposefulness would be

the final story, is the only one to include two such references, with their significant placing giving Euripides a notable prominence within it. And in this context, it requires no special "awak[ing]" of one's "faith" (*WT*, 5.3.95) in Shakespeare's independent investment in Greek tragedy, to imagine him turning from this specific story, to Euripides, in his known wont to "read associatively from text to text looking for connections" (Miola 2000, 4). This matters, because a flashpoint in the discussion of Shakespeare's contact with Greek tragedy has always been the proposal that the ending of *The Winter's Tale* carries the imprint of that of Euripides' *Alcestis*, and the same intertext has been proposed, more recently, for *Much Ado*.[29] If Shakespeare's 'Bandello' was, or was partly, that of Belleforest, it becomes easier to understand why the story of Timbreo and Fenicia and the ending of the *Alcestis* resonated together for the playwright over a decade.

We are back to Claudio's "masked" bride. In Bandello and Belleforest, the protagonist, having promised not to take a wife before Lionato has had the chance to suggest one, is taken to meet a certain Lucilla/Lucille. Struck by her beauty, he declares that his promise to be guided by his father-in-law *manqué* was not made in vain, and that he desires to marry this woman so long as she, too, consents. They proceed to formalise their union "dés à present" (Belleforest 1569, 508*v*) or "per parole di presente" (Bandello 2008, 293) before "a Doctor who was there" ("un dottore che ivi era", ibid.) in Bandello or "the priest" ("le prestre", Belleforest 1569, 508*v*) who is presently summoned in Belleforest. The identity of the woman, to whom the hero feels a mysterious attraction, will be revealed during the celebratory feast. Not so in Shakespeare's highly condensed concluding sequence, which also involves marriage before a friar and an echo of Timbreo's acceptance speech, but is centred around the "masked" Hero, and merges the moment of marriage with that of recognition:

a compelling context for the prominence of Euripides in the final *histoire*, and its reverberations in the volume's dedicatory epistle.

29 Mueller 1971, 230-1; Wilson 1984; Bate 1994; Louden 2007; Showerman 2007; Showerman 2009; Dewar-Watson 2009; Shakespeare 2010: 13-15; Pollard 2017, 171-204; Dewar-Watson 2018, 63-7; Suthren 2018. Accounts of earlier discussions are offered in Showerman 2007 and Dewar-Watson 2009.

CLAUDIO . . . Which is the lady I must seize upon?
ANTONIO This same is she, and I do give you her.
CLAUDIO Why, then she's mine. Sweet, let me see your face.
LEONATO No, that you shall not, till you take her hand
Before this friar and swear to marry her.
CLAUDIO Give me your hand: before this holy friar,
I am your husband, if you like of me.
HERO [*unmasks*] And when I lived, I was your other wife:
And when you loved, you were my other husband.
(5.4.53-61)

Shakespeare's compressed timeframe excluded the possibility of a heroine who matures beyond recognition, but he had other options. In an analogous play by Giambattista della Porta that also made the story unfold in a matter of days, for example, the hero is told that his beloved is still alive before seeing her (Della Porta 1980). But Shakespeare, as Tanya Pollard says, went for an "elaborate presentation of a veiled bride to the man responsible for her death" which "does not appear . . . in any of the play's . . . acknowledged sources", but strongly "suggests the similarly veiled presence of Euripides' [*Alcestis*]" (Pollard 2017, 174). Common to Euripides and Shakespeare, moreover, as Susanne Wofford observes, is not just the device of a veiled bride, but the very strangeness of the husband's being bound to accept an unknown new bride, in stark contrast to the narratives of Timbreo which go to great lengths to 'normalise' the event's emotional probability (Wofford 2018). It is also worth emphasising a point that comes through somewhat implicitly in Wofford's discussion, which is that this strangeness is the result of a strikingly similar dramaturgy, focussed on the symbolic gesture of "taking hands".[30] In *Much Ado*, Claudio is forced to commit to the marriage out of pure obligation, without seeing the stranger; only after he takes Hero's hand in front of the friar does Hero unmask and the awkwardness cede its place to wonder. In Euripides, Heracles pressures Admetus inappropriately to take the veiled female stranger into his house. What Heracles' proposal

30 On "taking hands" in early modern drama, see Karim-Cooper 2020, 53-4. On Shakespeare's debt to Euripides for the very different dramaturgy of the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*, see Suthren 2018, 199-224.

means is clear: he schools Admetus on the need to remarry, adding, perversely, that he wishes he could "bring your wife back to the light from the dead" (Eur. *Alcest.* 1073-4; σὴν / ἐς φῶς πορεῦσαι νερτέρων ἐκ δωμάτων / γυναῖκα) but cannot. He tells the unwilling Admetus that the woman is to be placed in his "hands" (χέρας, 1113) alone and persuades him grudgingly to receive her with his "right hand" (χειρὶ δεξιᾷ, 1115); Admetus' action of stretching out of his hand is focussed on in deictic language – "put out your hand" (προτεῖναι χεῖρα, 1117); "I am putting it out" (προτείνω, 1118) – and it is only once Admetus "ha[s] her" (ἐχεις; ἔχω, 1119), that she is revealed.[31] This is very close indeed, and it matters that the dramaturgy of the veil and its lifting was virtually the first thing anyone reading the *Alcestis* would have encountered, for it takes up a large part of the ancient *hypothesis*, or summary, which was invariably translated and printed with the drama.[32] After Pollard's trenchantly argued panorama of the evidence, the plausibility of Shakespeare's access to this play is not in question: "*Alcestis* was among the most popular Greek plays in the sixteenth century", not least because of a quality exemplified imprimis by this moment, namely its "generic complexity, especially in its ability to generate affective intensity through unexpected swerves of plot." (Pollard 2017, 179-80). But could Belleforest have taken him there?

Towards the end of the story, Belleforest adds another mythical reference to Bandello's narrative. At the feast that follows their marriage, with Timbreo sat next to the beautiful 'Lucilla', the narratively significant aunt in whose keeping Fenicia has been, asks him if he has been married before. This prompts him to talk about Fenicia, "whom I loved, and dead as she is, love more than I do myself" ("che amai, e così morta amo più che me stesso", Bandello 2008, 294). After making him tell the story, and reducing the whole company to tears, the aunt masterfully orchestrates their emotions to a climax with a final question, to be followed by the great reveal

31 All of these carried lucidly through in Latin translations of the play: see Euripides 1541, sig. Z7*r*; Euripides 1557, 24*v*; Euripides 1558, 353-4; Euripides 1562, 237.

32 Euripides 1541, sig. x*r*; Euripides 1557, 3*r*; Euripides 1558, 310; Euripides 1562, 216.

that will make the story "swerve" towards the comic: "if before this woman was given as wife to you, you could have brought back your beloved, what would you have done to be able to have her again, living?" ("se innanzi che questa qui vi fosse stata data per moglie vi avessi potuto suscitar la vostra innamorata, che avereste voi fatto per poterla riaver viva?", Bandello 2008, 295). Had it been possible to "recover" ("ricomperare", ibid.) her, Timbreo replies, he would have given up half his life, not to mention how much treasure. Belleforest evidently found this Timbreo somewhat lacking in vision in his response to the aunt's high-stakes rhetorical challenge. Redrafting the sequence, he helped his Timbrée out by changing the aunt's question slightly, to "what would you have been willing to do *and endure* to have her again still living?" ("qu'eussiez vous volu faire *& souffrir* pour la reuoir encore viue?", Belleforest 1569, 510*r*-*v*, my emphasis). Timbrée exclaims:

> O Dieu . . . que i'eusse voulu faire? non pas descendre seulement aux enfers, ainsi qu'on dit que feit Orphée pour rauoir son espouse, mais bien y combattre toutes les ombres malignes & l'en tirer à force, ainsi que chantent les fables auoir iadis esté fait par Hercule pour la recouurance de son grand amy Pyrithoé: Mais las! la barque du nautonier stigien ne se repasse point si legerement, & on ne regaigne point telles pertes auec l'effusion de ses thresors & richesses. (510*v*)
>
> [Oh God, what would I have been willing to do? Why, not only go down to hell, as they say Orpheus did to have his wife again, but indeed do battle there with all the evil shadows and get her out by force, as the fables tell was done of old by Hercules, for the recovery of his great friend Peirithous. But alas! One cannot so easily come and go in the boat of the Stygian ferryman, nor do we recover such losses by pouring treasures and riches.]

We are suddenly miles away from the mundanity of Bandello and in the realm of "classical myths of temporary death and rebirth" (Bate 1994, 79): the boat of Charon that rarely brings travellers the other way, the myth of Orpheus almost recovering his wife Eurydice from the dead, and the myth of Theseus willingly accompanying his great friend Peirithous to Hades, conflated with that of Heracles bringing Theseus back to earth, after battling with the terrible guardian of the

underworld, Cerberus.[33] It is a small step from here, as it is not from any of the other sources of *Much Ado*, to the highly celebrated myth of Alcestis brought back from the dead by Heracles.[34]

Shakespeare read the story of Timbreo and Fenicia with striking attention to some of its narrative detail. Borachio is a result of such generative attention. To put together the charade that will deceive Timbreo, Bandello's Girondo dresses up one of his servants in fine clothes, and "perfumes him with the sweetest smells" ("di soavissimi odori profumò", Bandello 2008, 277). Bandello continues: "The perfumed servant went, accompanied by . . ." ("Andò il profumato servidore di compagnia . . .", ibid.). A little later, when the deception is unfolding and Timbreo hears him name Fenicia as his lover, Bandello refers to him not as the servant, but simply as "the perfumed one who was dressed to look like a lover" ("il profumato in forma d'amante vestito", 278). Belleforest appreciated this witty touch. And as with all things, he elaborated on it. His Geronde not only dresses up his servant very finely but "perfumed and scented him like one of the most magnificent courtesans of Rome" ("le parfuma & musca comme vne courtisanne des plus magnifiques de Rome", Belleforest 1569, 492*r*). After this, "he who was leading the party, *the perfumed one*, and another went . . ." ("s'en allerent celuy qui dressoit la partie, & *le parfumé* & vn autre . . .", 492*r*, my emphasis). Most strikingly, at the climax of the deception, when Timbrée hears him name his lover as Fénicie, Belleforest calls him "Monsieur le Perfumé" (Belleforest 1569, 493*v*). Finally, since everything proliferates in his narrative, two additional occasions arise for the narrator to use the moniker "le parfumé" / "perfumé" (501*r*, 495*r*) again. A little sparkle in Bandello's narrative has metamorphosed into a prominent choice in Belleforest's version of the deception, which stands out all the more for its contrast to the narrator's general tonal seriousness. Now, Borachio is Shakespeare's corresponding figure in *Much Ado*. His name means 'drunk' in Spanish and he does indeed tell his story "like

33 On Peirithous, Theseus, and Heracles in the underworld, see e.g. Conti 1581, 133*r*-134*r*, 165*r*, 456*r*, 484*r*. Heracles was in fact unable to bring back Peirithous, but Belleforest was not alone in forgetting this (e.g. Ormerod 1606, 44).

34 An eye-opening account of the myth's circulation is given in Suthren 2018, 166-99.

a true drunkard" (3.3.101). But, riffing on the witticism he noticed in his sources, of turning satirical attribute into an onomastic, the dramatist was loath to cut off Borachio from his origins completely and made him be employed by the Lionati "for a perfumer" (1.3.54), "an occupational identity . . . increasingly associated with fraudulent diversions" (Dugan 2011, 79) at this time. There are, for the avoidance of doubt, no other perfumers in the Shakespeare corpus; nor are there any perfumers prior to Borachio in extant English drama (80). If Borachio's "labor of dispensing scented smoke is linked to other meaningful nothings in the play" (70), it is also itself a "meaningful nothing" playfully generated between the translations of the story at the centre of *Much Ado*.[35] Borachio the perfumer is, it seems to me, a good indication that Shakespeare read Belleforest's "Timbrée et Fénicie" and that he did so with great alertness.

As Colin Burrow has argued elsewhere in this volume, the question of the playwright's engagement with Greek tragedy has much to gain from seeing Shakespeare as a participant in the tradition of the European novella. I hope to have shown that the French *histoire tragique*, with its distinctive generic inflection, its strikingly self-conscious moments of reflection on genre, and its appreciable interaction with the discovery of the Greek tragedians in France, was particularly strongly poised to play an important role in that tangle of influences. This realisation underscores the value of considering Shakespeare's 'sources' in all their multilingual, transcultural, and translational complexity, and adds a "flourish" to the specific question of Shakespeare's engagement with the *Alcestis*. After reading "Timbrée et Fénicie", I argue, it is not just plausible, but probable that Shakespeare would turn to a play by Euripides on the myth of Alcestis, with his thoughts orientated towards how tragedies can "swerve" towards comedy. The "unfinished business" of this combined encounter would be taken up over a decade later.

35 Borachio's creation out of an epithet also bears a fascinating relation to the way his own drunken reference within the drama to the "deformed thief . . . fashion" (3.3.121) conjures that "virtual figure" that interests Kerrigan (2018, 32), the thief "Deformed", who "wears a key in his ear and a lock hanging by it" (5.1.298).

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14

Translating Greek History into Humanist Neo-Senecan Drama: William Alexander's *Croesus* (1604)

Janice Valls-Russell

Abstract

In 1604 William Alexander (1577-1640), the future First Earl of Stirling, published *Croesus*. He included this closet drama and three others – *Darius*, *Alexandraean Tragedy* and *Julius Caesar* – in a single volume in 1607. Entitled *The Monarchicke Tragedies* and dedicated to James I of England, the volume was reprinted in 1616. The four plays were published again in 1637 with non-dramatic writings under the title *Recreations with the Muses*. This essay focuses on *Croesus*, a rare instance of the dramatization of the Lydian king's fate in spite of what has been termed its 'tragic potential'. It examines how Alexander reworks material from Greek sources, principally Herodotus' *Histories*, Plutarch's *Life of Solon* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, to adapt the historians' prose accounts to a dramatic format in verse. In his expansion, reorganisation and generic restructuring of the source material, which was available in Latin and vernacular translation as well as in Greek editions, Alexander crafts what we might term a Greek Senecan tragedy à la française, with the absence of violent action on stage, unity of place, long speeches, choruses, a messenger and the addition of a female character. The article closes with a brief discussion of Pierre Mousson's *Croesus liberatus* (1621), which bears resemblances to Alexander's play.

Keywords: *Croesus*; William Alexander; closet drama; chorus; Pierre Mousson

"Those famous ruines of extended states"[1]

In 1604 William Alexander (1577-1640) – a Scottish poet and courtier who followed King James VI and I to London to become "gentleman of the Princes priuie chamber"[2] and future First Earl of Stirling – published *The Tragedie of Croesus*. The play appeared in

1 William Alexander, "To his Sacred Majestie", l. 98 (Kastner and Charlton 1921, 6).

2 That is how Alexander is presented on the title page of the 1607 edition of *The Monarchicke Tragedies*.

a volume entitled *The Monarchicke Tragedies*, with an earlier play, *The Tragedie of Darius*, and was bound in some copies with a poetic cycle, *Aurora*, and *A Paraenesis to the Prince*.[3] In 1607, Alexander published a new edition of *The Monarchicke Tragedies* as a cycle of four dramas: *Croesus*, *Darius*, *The Alexandraean Tragedy* and *Julius Caesar*. Dedicated to James, like the two previous editions, this volume was reprinted in 1616. The quartet was published again in 1637 in an elegant folio entitled *Recreations with the Muses*, now dedicated to Charles I, which included a selection of Alexander's poetic writings: *Paraenesis*; *Doomes-Day*, an 11,000-line religious epic inspired by Du Bartas's *Semaines*;[4] and the first book of *Jonathan*, "An heroicke Poeme intended".[5]

Alexander seems to have written, and he certainly published, *Croesus* after *Darius*, but the plays were printed in the chronological order of events. *Croesus* thus becomes to some extent a prequel to *Darius*, which leads into *The Alexandraean Tragedy*, with the Roman tragedy of *Julius Caesar* closing the cycle.[6] In his *Paraenesis to the Prince*, Alexander insists on the useful instruction to be derived from the glories and failings of ancient rulers, as if flagging by anticipation the didactic relevance of his incipient dramatic project, which combines cautionary tales and mirrors for princes. This message he also conveys in the dedicatory poem to Charles I that opens the folio volume *Recreation with the Muses*:

Then unto whom more justly could I give
Those famous ruines of extended states
(Which did the world of liberty deprive

3 *Darius* was first published in 1603 in Edinburgh by Robert Waldegrave and again, singly, in 1604. *A paraenesis to the Prince* was also published in a separate edition in 1604 in London by Richard Field. On the binding of Alexander's poetic writings with his plays, see Kastner and Charlton 1921 (vol. 1), cxciv-cxcvii; 1929 (vol. 2), xxix-xxxiii; and Mapstone 2007, 138.

4 An edition of the first four *Hours* (totalling twelve in the 1637 folio) was published in 1614, and a MS has been tentatively dated 1613.

5 That is how the poem is listed in the table of contents in the 1637 edition, sig. A3*r*.

6 The domination of Persian rule is the endpoint of *Croesus* and to some extent the starting point of *Darius*, after the death of Cyrus and unsuccessful rule of his son Cambyses (Mapstone 2007, 141).

> By force, or fraud, to reare Tyrannick seats)
> Then unto thee, who may and will not live
> Like those proud Monarchs borne to stormy fates?
> (Kastner and Charlton 1921, 97-102)

The overarching coherence emphasised by the title *Monarchicke Tragedies* and the context of publication account for a critical reception that has tended to focus on the tragedies at the expense of Alexander's other works.[7] Scholars such as Domenico Lovascio and Daniel Cadman have approached the plays from the perspective of their contribution to early modern debates about kingship and tyranny, legitimacy and usurpation, in the tradition of French humanist tragedy and British closet drama (Lovascio 2016; Cadman 2016). More specifically, discussions of *Croesus* have turned on the way the tragedy opposes contrasting visions of statecraft, Croesus' self-serving ambition and Cyrus' moderation and military skills: Cadman suggests that an astute reader tempted to associate James with Cyrus may simultaneously "observe various analogous character traits" (137) between James and Croesus, such as self-delusion and a propensity to let oneself be blinded by the flattery of those Alexander terms "Minions gallant" (*Croesus* 2827), as Croesus realises after his defeat at the hands of Cyrus.[8] This resonates with Alexander's advice to the Prince in *Paraenesis* on the importance of choosing one's counsellors wisely. *Croesus* has also been read against James's own writings on the monarchy, principally *Basilikon Doron*, attention being drawn to passages that concur with the King's own neo-Stoic vision of good governance: Astrid Stilma (2013) identifies James with the wise Solon, rather than the wilful Croesus. Solon's dismissal of Croesus' material wealth as illusory and his warnings against the uncertainties of personal and political fortune are initially shrugged off by the Lydian king, who belatedly discovers, after a number of setbacks, the truth of Solon's perceptiveness.

7 Peter Auger has carried out important work on Alexander's *Doomes-Day*: see for instance Auger 2010.

8 Unless otherwise indicated, all act, scene and line references to *Croesus* are to the 1637 edition edited by Kastner and Charlton (1921, 1929). Volume 1 contains the dramatic works, volume 2 the non-dramatic works.

Overall, discussion of *Croesus* has tended to focus on the play's didactic dimension and, consequently, on the two figures that dominate the opening and closing acts, respectively Solon and Cyrus. What I am interested in exploring here instead, is Alexander's dramatic craft and the writing techniques whereby he shapes his play from episodes in Greek history which he selects from Herodotus' *Histories* (1.6-92 on Croesus and 1.93-130 on Cyrus), Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (mainly Books 6 and 7) and Plutarch's "Life of Solon" (*Parallel Histories*). The attention with which Alexander prepared the successive editions of his work, and more especially the final one, carefully revising his own text well beyond a process of anglicization that erased Scottish terms and turns of phrase to appeal to English readers, suggests a literary commitment which some of his contemporaries, such as his friend William Drummond of Hawthornden, commended.

Splicing Greek "sundrye tales"

Herodotus, Plutarch and Xenophon were available in Greek as well as in Latin and vernacular translations, which included French and English. Herodotus' *Histories* was translated into: Latin by Lorenzo Valla (published in 1494; reprinted by Henri Estienne in 1566 with an introduction which is an apology for Herodotus [against Plutarch's attacks], and reprinted again by Henri II Estienne in 1592 with parallel Greek and Latin texts);[9] French by Saliat, the first three books appearing in 1552, all nine books in 1556; Italian; and, partially, in English, by "B. R.", possibly Barnaby Rich (Books 1 and 2 were published in 1584).[10] Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* was translated into Latin (1540), French (by Jacques de Vintimille, 1542) and English (by William Barker [Bercker], 1552 [Grogan 2007, 63], all 8 books, 1567). Plutarch's *Parallel Histories* was available in translations into Latin, French (Jacques Amyot, 1559), English (North's translation of Amyot, 1579). Several of those versions were

9 I shall be quoting from the 1584 Frankfurt edition.

10 See Francesco Dall'Olio's excellent survey, in his article published in this volume, of the expanding knowledge and availability of the *Histories* in Renaissance England and, consequently, their growing popularity.

available in Scottish libraries, such as those of William Drummond of Hawthornden and James, which the King inherited in part from his mother.[11] Alexander's various works show a knowledge of French and Latin, leaving it open whether he mastered Greek. As will appear, his writing technique carries distinct traces of near-direct echoes, but overall tends to reflect a wide-ranging knowledge, with stylistic effects and imagery which seem to have been harvested from memory rather than direct consultation of volumes around him. While further research is needed, this would, with caution, seem to confirm what L.E. Kastner and H.B. Charlton wrote almost a century ago in the introduction to volume 2 of their edition of *Recreations with the Muses*:

> his habitual manner of using information derived from reading is such that it is seldom possible to determine precisely what the immediate source was. His allusions are commonly prompted by memory, not adopted directly from a text under his eye. It is impossible, for instance, to be quite certain whether he read Greek or no, though he was certainly familiar with many Greek authors whose writings were accessible both in Greek and in Latin. Consequently, his works disclose the range of his knowledge rather than the catalogue of his library. (1929, x)

What is certain is that, when he came to writing *Croesus*, Alexander knew the various Greek narratives intimately – in translation if not in Greek. Leaving aside Croesus' accession to the throne and conquests as narrated in the first section of Book 1 of Herodotus, Alexander opens his play with Solon's visit to the Lydian court,

11 Herodotus may have been available to Alexander in translation. Drummond of Hawthornden had an Italian version (Mapstone, 2007, 141n38, citing MacDonald 1971, 218). James (when James VI) had a French version (Mapstone, 2007, 141n38, citing Warner 1893, xxxiv), as well as a second one which seems to have belonged to Mary (Warner 1893, lix), in addition to a Greek copy which seems to have belonged to Mary (Warner 1893, xliii). James had two copies of Amyot's translation of Plutarch (Warner 1893, xxxiv and xl). According to Warner, James also had several copies of Xenophon in Greek and Latin, and in French (Warner 1893, xxxix). James commissioned a new translation of Xenophon from Philemon Holland for Prince Henry, but it appeared in 1632, after the Prince's death and with a dedication to Charles instead, published by Holland's son Henry (Grogan 2007, 65-6).

before tracing the king's downward trajectory through the disastrous impact of his wealth- and power-driven *hubris* on his private and public life, to hint finally at a possible form of redemption when he recalls Solon's advice. Solon thus frames the play, as a character in the first two scenes of the play and as a philosopher remembered for his wisdom in act 5. Croesus' downfall is traced first through personal tragedy – a premonitory dream, followed by the death of his son (acts 3 and 4) – then on the political plane, with his misguided decision to fight the Persians, whereupon Alexander shifts the emphasis from Croesus to Cyrus (act 5).

Alexander structures the play by selecting and splicing material principally from his three Greek sources. Acts 1 and 2 stage Solon's visit to the court of Croesus, where, as reported by Herodotus (1.30-3), he relates the exemplary tales of those he considered the happiest of men: not Croesus, as the king expected, but Tellus of Athens, who fathered fine sons, all of whom survived, and died a noble death defending Athens on the battlefield; and Cleobis and Biton, who were so devoted to their mother that they yoked themselves to her cart to take her to the festival of Hera and died from the effort. Plutarch's "Life of Solon" also provides material for Solon's visit, his exchange with Croesus on whom he attempts to impress the illusion of wealth and power, his ensuing dialogue with Aesop, which Alexander expands into a whole scene, also drawing on material from Plutarch's "Life of Phocion" and "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend" (*Moralia*). Herodotus provides the main material (1.34-46) for acts 3 and 4, which foreground Croesus' role as father: his relationship with his two sons, Atis and his (unnamed) dumb brother; Croesus' premonitory dream about Atis;[12] Atis' marriage; Croesus' obsessive protection of Atis; the boar hunt and the accidental death of Atis at the hands of Adrastus, a stranger to whom Croesus had provided shelter; Adrastus' suicide. In act 5 the play switches from Croesus' palace to Cyrus' camp. Herodotus is once again the main source in act 5 scene 1 for the more sensational details of Cyrus' birth, his exposure, childhood, conquests and the role of Harpagus in saving the infant Cyrus from his grandfather Astyages (1.107-30). Xenophon provides the exemplary story of

12 I follow Alexander's spelling, rather than Atys.

Cyrus' ally Abradatas and his virtuous wife Panthea (*Cyr.* 6.1.45-50; 6.3.35-7; 6.4.2-11); the death of Abradatas (*Cyr.* 7.1.29-32); and the death of Panthea (*Cyr.* 7.3.1-16).[13] Switching back to Herodotus, Alexander ends the scene with Cyrus deciding to kill Croesus, who has been taken captive. In act 5 scene 2, Croesus' dumb son cries out to save his father (*Hist.*, 1.85). Herodotus also provides the account of Croesus' defeat and his death sentence on the pyre (1.86). As he prepares to die at the stake, Croesus remembers Solon's wisdom – and his regrets, overheard by Cyrus, save him from death (Hdt. *Hist.*, 1.86-7; Plu., "Solon"). This enables Croesus to spare his city from being totally plundered (Hdt. *Hist.*, 1.88-90).

Each in their way, Herodotus and Xenophon, like Plutarch, privilege a dynamic approach to writing history, through embedded narratives, dialogues, debates and reported speech. Their rhetoric plays on the heightening of expectations, and variations. Through such diversity of effects, the story of Croesus and more especially the account of his death, all combine to provide material that lends itself to dramatic transposition. Looking at Herodotus' version, scholars such as D.N. Levin (1960) and Bernard Laurot (1995) have drawn attention to the accumulation of private and public misfortunes that befall Croesus, in punishment, as Herodotus says, for "thinking that he was the happiest man in the world" even after Solon tried to make him see things otherwise.[14] This is translated by Valla as "sperans videlicet se inter homines beatissimum esse" (Herodotus/Valla 1584, "Clio Lib. 1" 11); and interpreted by "B. R." as: he "not mistrusting, but that the lotte would have fallen to hym selfe to have exceeded all others in blessedness" (1584, fol. 8*v*). More directly, Alexander's Croesus crows, "did you ever know / A man more blest then I in all respects?" (329-30). Suggesting that Herodotus could have been influenced by his exposure to dramatists during his stay in Athens, Laurot (1995, 101-3) reads in Herodotus' account of Croesus' private misfortunes – and the tragic triangulation of Croesus, Atis and Adrastus – echoes of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, with an opening scene of citizens supplicating the king to end the pestilence that is

13 References are to Xenophon 1914, in the Loeb Classical Library.

14 Unless otherwise indicated, as when I quote from Valla or "B. R.", references to Herodotus are to Waterfield's translation (Herodotus 1998).

destroying the city, and the Chorus' comment on Oedipus' reversal of fortune (1524-30), and *Antigone*, where Creon's lament that he has killed his son unwillingly is glossed by the Chorus' comment on wisdom and happiness (1339-53).[15] Adrastus' accidental killing of Atis, Laurot suggests, may recall Eurytion's similarly accidental death at the hands of Peleus during the hunt for the Calydonian boar, as told in the Meleager tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides (Laurot 1995, 102). One may go one step further and remember that Peleus' story is similar to that of Adrastus in that he is the unwilling author of two deaths: he kills his brother Phocus (accidentally or deliberately, according to different sources), flees, is purified by Eurytion, whom he accidentally kills (Apollod., *The Library* 3.12.6-7, 3.13.2; A.R., *Argonautica*, 1.90-3).[16]

Alert to the tragic potential of the Lydian king's trajectory, Alexander heightens effects by emphasising some events, drawing on all three historians or choosing between their various versions. Where Herodotus claims (1.95) to have sought – in "B. R."'s translation – "to set downe . . . a playne and euident truth" while knowing that accounts are "found to vary in three sundrye tales" (1584, fol. 32v), Alexander reassembles the "sundrye tales" of his three authors, respecting some narrative sequences and reorganising others. He introduces his reader/auditor/spectator[17] to Adrastus, the stranger who arrives at the Lydian court after accidentally killing his brother and is offered "Sanctuary" (1223) in the court of Croesus. A sense of impending danger is introduced by Adrastus' name and its possible association with Adrasteia, a byname for Nemesis (Dillery

15 All references to Sophocles are to Sophocles, 1924, in the Loeb Classical Library.

16 References are to Apollodorus 1921 and Apollonius Rhodius 2009, both in the Loeb Classical Library.

17 The attention Alexander paid to the publication of his plays, which he revised between editions, suggests a self-fashioning as an author. The appeal of the drama format does not necessarily signify that the plays were performed, nor does it exclude that possibility, even though no record of any performance seems to have been currently identified (Wiggins, 2011- [vol. 5], 95-7). As Silvia Bigliazzi reminds us in her introduction to "'Well staged Syllables': From Classical to Early Modern Metres in Drama", "the realm of early modern drama . . . does not always mean the stage" (Bigliazzi 2021a, 6).

2019, 34), the goddess of retribution,[18] as well as by the report of his unvoluntary killing of his own brother which caused him to flee his land and seek shelter at the court of Croesus; the premonitory tension further builds up when Croesus, having failed to persuade Atis to stay away from a hunt for a monstrous boar, asks Adrastus to watch over him. The reader expects the worst when, later, in a much-expanded sequence, Adrastus gives free rein to his sense of guilt and despair, before the "Chorus of some country-men", listed among "The Persons Names who Speake" (Kastner and Charlton 1921, 11) reveals the death of Atis, chorically leading into the voicing of his loss by Croesus: only then are the circumstances of the accidental death of Atis at Adrastus' hands revealed. The scene thus builds up a sense of dramatic tension and expectancy, which reaches a new climax when Adrastus' suicide is reported by the same Chorus (1567-78).

In act 5, Alexander draws on the episodes connected with Cyrus from Herodotus, whose account of his childhood he prefers to Xenophon's. Whereas Xenophon depicts a mutually affectionate, enriching relationship between Cyrus and his maternal grandfather Astyages, the latter, according to Herodotus, orders one of his trusted followers, Harpagus, to kill the infant at birth (1.108ff.); on discovering that he has disobeyed and spared young Cyrus, he has Harpagus' son killed and served to him at a banquet (1.119). Alexander once again rethreads the sequence, placing Harpagus' dramatic accounts of Cyrus' childhood and of his own son's death *before*, rather than *after*, Croesus' capture. Alexander then turns to Xenophon for another embedded story, the death of Cyrus' ally Abradatas (*Cyr.* 7.1.29-32) and the suicide of his loyal wife Panthea (*Cyr.* 7.3.1-16), which is narrated by Cyrus in two successive speeches, whereas they are separated by Croesus' capture in *Cyropaedia*. Alexander then reverts to Herodotus for the story of Croesus' capture, imminent death on the pyre and Cyrus' last-minute decision to spare him after hearing him invoke Solon.

18 Cooper's entry for Nemesis mentions that "She is called also Adrastia, of Adrastus, the king, that first constituted to hir a temple", and he also has a sub-entry for "Adrastia nemesis": "The euill lucke of Adrastus: which may be vsed where prowde men be beaten, and as wee say in Englishe, Pryde will haue a fall" (Cooper, 1578). I should like to thank Carla Suthren for drawing my attention to this.

This process of selection and reorganisation of sequences invites amplifications that underscore a didactic intentionality, offsetting Solon's cautionary advice, Croesus' destructive self-delusion and Cyrus' leadership, and build up a dramatic sense of pathos. Alexander's generic reprocessing of the Greek historical material reflects an ability to read, cull and create across sources. Such a favouring of multiple affiliations rather than a single, literary allegiance might have had a disenfranchising effect on the author, with the risk of disparateness or even of a Janus-like play gazing in two opposite directions through an unresolved tension between the equally strong figures of Croesus and Cyrus. Alexander, nevertheless, avoids this through a tightly controlled structuring of the play which he achieves by moulding the material into Senecan shape – a method he opts for with his other plays.

Senecan Trappings

Refashioning non-Senecan material to a Senecan "format", often with a didactic purpose, was not unusual at the time. Biblical stories like those of Jephthah and Mariam were moulded into a classical format recalling the tragedies of Euripides and Seneca by George Buchanan and Elizabeth Cary respectively five decades apart. Oriental tales received similar treatment in plays such as Fulke Greville's *Mustapha*. Alexander's approach similarly follows the model favoured by sixteenth-century French dramatists such as Robert Garnier, whose tragedies, translated into English, contributed to the shaping of the "overtly political, anti-court" plays (Sauer 2006, 84) which were representative of the closet drama associated with the Sidney-Pembroke circle (Phillips 1948-49; Lamb 1981). The "generic features include[d] the trappings of Italianate Senecanism" (Sauer 2006, 84) rather than the conventions of revenge tragedy that were so successful on the London stage and in France, where, alongside French humanist drama, a "théâtre de la cruauté" of French and Latin plays enjoyed a similar vogue before being quashed by neo-classical restraint (Biet 2006). Harpagus may be served his son at a banquet in *Croesus*, but this occurs at a safe, diachronic distance, mediated by a narrated episode in an

unperformed past. Alexander's *Croesus* is no *Titus Andronicus*.

Just as Biblical subjects could be refashioned to the format of classical drama, the matter of Greek histories could also be shaped into Senecan or neo-Senecan drama. Incompatible as the choice of the austere French humanist or closet drama formats might seem given the amplitude of Herodotus' and Xenophon's historical accounts, the stories (*logoi*) embedded within wider-ranging histories are sufficiently compact and self-contained to lend themselves to this processing, providing the play's characters in turn with material for speeches in which they may relate at length inset narratives which mirror features of the main dramatic action. Yet, it must be acknowledged that relatively few dramatists in France or Britain appear to have turned to those Greek historians: records exist of one or two lost university plays that were performed at St. John's College, Oxford in the 1560s and 1590s (Wiggins 2011- [vol. 2], 17-18). Other 'Persian plays' include: Thomas Preston's tragedy *Cambises* (printed 1569) and Richard Farrant's *The Warres of Cyrus* (printed 1594), discussed in this volume by Francesco Dall'Olio and the latter by Silvia Bigliazzi; Jacques de la Taille's *Daire et Alexandre* (1562, published 1573), which Alexander seems to have known when writing *Darius*; Guersens's *Panthée* (1571); Samuel Daniel's *Philotas* (1600-1604).

Alexander's hybridisation of the Greek historical sources through Seneca may be discerned in its main structuring features and the play's verse. Located in Sardis, the seat of Croesus' palace in the earlier scenes and the city conquered by Cyrus in the later ones, *Croesus* respects the Senecan unity of place. The tragedy is divided in 5 acts, each composed of one or two scenes featuring no more than two or three characters, with long speeches and occasional stichomythic exchanges; each act is rounded off with a chorus. Action occurs offstage and is reported by the characters or, occasionally, one of the play's two choruses ("Chorus of some country-men" and "Chorus of all the Lydians", both listed among "the Persons Names who Speake"). The Greek historians' prose is refashioned into alternately rhyming pentameters. Except for the choruses which intervene in a scene and speak in pentameters like the other characters, Alexander uses trimeters for the choruses which round off the scenes and offer a broader, more philosophical

comment on the action: the verse patterns, in 12-line stanzas, with ababcdcd rhymes and a rhyming pair of closing lines, and their visual layout, further emphasise the separate, dramatic function of these choruses, to which I shall be returning.[19]

Through Seneca, Alexander reaches back to the Greek dramatists. He draws on the conventions of supplication and lamentation that travelled from Greek drama and epic into Seneca and Virgil, for his innovative creation of the female character, Caelia, Atis' wife. The Greek texts merely refer to Atis' marriage and Ctesias, in the excerpts from his *Persica* bound with Valla's translation in the 1584 Frankfurt edition, refers to Atis' mother, who jumped to her death from the top of a wall on learning of his death (Herodotus/Valla 1584, "Ex Ctesiae Persicis" 562). But Alexander's Caelia, Andromache-like, tries – and fails – to persuade Atis to stay away from the boar-hunt (1261-84) and speaks a long complaint after her husband's death. The only female character in the play, she is confined to the conventional role of a loyal wife unwilling to survive the death of her husband; this role is taken up in the second half of the play by Panthea. Albeit not on stage, she is a powerful affective presence who seems to break out of Cyrus' narrative and challenge his ability to control events by committing suicide, in spite of his attempt to have "releev'd / [her] of a portion of her woes" (2415-16). The fate of Caelia is refracted in that of Panthea and their bereavement engages the two women in a silent dialogue across the play.

In addition to the structuring of the play and balance between characters and choruses, Alexander's expansions of the Greek narratives (the play totals 2972 lines) take two neo-Senecan directions, as in sixteenth-century French drama: an elevation of judgement, in keeping with the idea that theatre was meant to be instructive, and a heightening of pathos. Thus, Plutarch's brief reference to a conversation between Solon and Aesop after the unsuccessful meeting with Croesus is expanded into a complete scene (2.2) between the austere Athenian and the more pragmatic

19 For a wide-ranging exploration of the reception of classical meters by early modern English and Scottish translators and dramatists, see Bigliazzi 2021.

courtier. The scene combines lengthy dialogues and a stichomythic exchange modelled on Plutarch which begins as follows: "AESOPE Who come to Court, must with Kings faults comport. / SOLON Who come to Court should truth to Kings report" (503-18). The scene picks up and expands some of the arguments on self-delusion and flattery Solon had previously advanced in his conversation with Croesus and this continuity between the two scenes casts light on Alexander's writing technique: the Greek precedent seems to be echoed in the caution Atreus' assistant voices in Seneca's *Thyestes* – "When fear compels them to praise, fear also turns them into enemies. But one who seeks the tribute of sincere support will want praise from the heart rather than the tongue" (*Thy.* 207-10).[20] Reaching for Plutarch's "How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend", Alexander simultaneously turns from "The Life of Solon" to "The Life of Phocion": "They who do freely speake, no treason thinke, / One cannot both your friend and flatterer be" (*Croesus* 381-2) carries an echo of "Antipater . . . can not haue me his friende, and flatterer both" (Plu. 1579, 810). Alexander also found ready-made phrases in collections such as "Mimi publiani, that is to saye, quicke and sentenciouse verses or meters of PUBLIUS" [Publilius Syrus] which existed in various forms, including the collection Richard Taverner translated and appended to his collection of Erasmus' *Adages*:[21] one such instance is to be found in "Fortuna vitrea est, quae cum splendet, frangitur" (Erasmus 1539, C4*r*), which becomes: "Ah, ah, our lives are fraile, doe what we can, / And like the brittle glass, break whils't they glance" (363-4). This culling of phrases across a range of texts and genres (inevitably, Alexander also remembers

20 All references to Seneca's tragedies are to Seneca 2018, in the Loeb Classical Library. On the editions available in the Renaissance before 1661, see Ker and Winston (2012, 279-88), Bigliazzi (2021b, 149-50) and Valls-Russell (2020, 28).

21 Signatures for "Mimi Publiani" begin again at A1, after H8. The phrase was a popular one, to be found also, for instance, in Augustine, "ut vitrea laetitia comparetur fragiliter splendida, cui timeatur horribilius ne repente frangatur": "any joy they know is like the glitter of brittle glass, which inspires the fatal thought that it may suddenly be shattered" (Augustine 1957-1972, 4.3).

his Bible)[22] builds a rich fabric of sententiae which invite further quotation and application; materialised as such on the page with commonplace marks, they draw attention to the didactic purpose of Alexander's project and enhance its classical distinction.[23]

Such sententiae frequently round off individual histories, as when Solon's reference to the brittleness of Fortune expounds on his celebration of those "happy children", Cleobis and Biton and their "happy mother" (361, 359). Alert to the affective potential of the Greek stories, Alexander heightens their pathos by expanding expressions of fear, dread or guilt. His Croesus expresses the concern for Atis already voiced in Herodotus by relating in vivid detail a premonitory dream and by providing instructions to keep all sharp instruments out of his range. Similarly, Adrastus' guilt after accidentally killing Atis is couched in a long speech which plays out the imagery of horror one finds in plays such as Seneca's *Thyestes*, or spoken by the ghost of Thyestes in *Agamemnon*; equally, the Senecan vein seems to have been the obvious choice when it comes to recounting Harpagus' experience of being fed his own son, which evidently brings to mind both *Thyestes* and the ghost in *Agamemnon*. Some of Alexander's pentameters replicate the Senecan swift-paced sense of urgency with their cascades of monosyllabic nouns and verbs: "I burn'd, freez'd, doubted, hop'd, despair'd, liv'd, dy'd" (873) – see for instance *Medea*: "Nurse . . . haeret minatur aestuat queritur gemit" (390, "she hesitates, threatens, fumes, laments, groans"); and "Medea abdico eiuro abnuo" (507, "I disown them, forswear them, repudiate them"). The imagery conveys fated trajectories of characters being hurtled down labyrinths towards their inescapable doom:

Adrastus Can Heaven behold one stand to staine these times,
Yet to the Stygian streames not headlong hurld?
And can th'earth beare one burden'd with such crimes,

22 Solon's "Who think themselves most wise, are greatest fools" (297), signalled by commonplace marks, is a direct echo of Romans 1:22, "When they professed themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Geneva Bible).

23 On the use of printed commonplace marking and on how "these typographical symbols were 'translated' from classical works into English vernacular drama", see Carla Suthren (2020). The universal advice on which stanzas close in *Paraenesis* is similar to the sententiousness in *Croesus*.

> As may provoke the wrath of all the world?
> Why sends not Iove, to have my course confin'd,
> A death-denouncing flash of rumbling Thunder?
> Else (roaring terrour) clouds of circling winde,
> By violence to teare me all a sunder?
> What corner yet unknowne from men remoov'd,
> Both burn'd with rage and freezing in despayre,
> Shall I goe now possesse, to be approv'd,
> Where none but monsters like my self repaire?
>
> (1375-86)

Elsewhere, leaving it to the reader to recognise such patterns of Senecan rhetoric and imagery, Alexander "erases" acknowledgements of indebtedness that must have appeared as too explicit: a reference to the Scythian Shepheard who served the Medes "Thiestes courses", feeding parents on their "Infants flesh" in the 1607 edition, becomes "prodigious meats" (1716) in the 1637 edition.

This image resurfaces in expanded form in the later account of Astyages feeding Harpagus his son in punishment for not having carried out the king's orders to kill the infant Cyrus. This is one instance of the several replications of patterns and situations that resonate across the play: action and narratives of earlier events record losses of loved ones; Adrastus and Croesus express a parallel sense of guilt in act 4 scene 1; as Croesus and Harpagus discover, gods and tyrants strike at those they would punish through their children ("CROESUS . . . ah! They knew no death could grieve me soe", 1505); the "Sanctuary" offered to strangers by Croesus and, as he recalls, by his own father, anticipates Cyrus' reprieve of Croesus – who in turn urges clemency for his city. It is through the studied rhetorical effects of the characters' speeches that such affective echoes and connections solicit the imagination since nothing is enacted on stage. And yet, in the scene that follows the death of Atis, the action seems to burst out of the containing rhetoric through the momentary intrusion of the chorus. Most of the time, Alexander's chorus closes each act with a succession of rhyming stanzas in a pattern similar to that used by French humanist dramatists such as La Péruse (Caigny 2011, 130). Throughout the play, the chorus picks up and expands in lyrical terms the universalising judgements

provided in the sententiae, inviting contemplation of the fallibility and precariousness of human existence. At the end of act 1, for instance, the chorus is used to establish the causality Herodotus traces between Croesus' inability to heed Solon's advice and the troubles that ensue. The separate status of the choral ode, 'outside' the main dramatic framework, is signalled on the page, as mentioned earlier, by trimeter lines and visually reinforced by being printed in an italic font in the 1637 folio edition.

On occasion, though, the chorus also appears inside a scene, addressing other characters or commenting on words and action from within, speaking in pentameters that are not typographically differentiated from the rest of the dialogue. The "Chorus of country-men" interacts with Croesus in act 3 scene 2. By pleading with him to send them Atis to kill the boar, it acts not as a commentator but as the instrument of Fortune which drives the action forward. In act 4 scene 1, the chorus sees its role shift to that of witness even while remaining within the scene; it names what has remained unnamed, the young man's death, and goes on to describe Croesus' body language, his torn robes, the way he gazes from Adrastus to the corpse:

Chorus O how the king is mov'd at Atis death!
His face the portrait of a passion beares,
With bended eyes, crost armes, and quivering breath,
His princely Robe he desperately teares;
Loe, with a silent pittie-pleading looke,
Which shewes with sorrow mixt a high disdaine,
He (whilst his soule seemes to dissolve in smoke)
Straies twixt the corpes, and him who hath it slain.
(1427-34)

The evocative rhetoric composes a tableau set in an ambivalent space which it behoves the reader to locate: Croesus could actually be displaying his bereavement on stage or moving from the stage to the place off stage where one may imagine the body of Atis to be lying (the doubt resurfaces at line 1553). The effect is similar to the way the chorus and Theseus seem to be contemplating and describing in detail Hippolytus's dismembered body in Seneca's *Phaedra* (1244ff.).[24]

24 Like his *sententiae*, Seneca's choruses appealed greatly to early modern

Later in the same scene, the discovery that Atis has been killed by Adrastus leaves Croesus at a loss: "Croesus Is this? Is this?". The chorus completes the line: "He would say the reward" – that is to say "Is this the reward" for having sheltered Adrastus? (1446). And it is left to the chorus to describe Adrastus' suicide.

In act 5 scene 2 (2479-772) the chorus once again relinquishes its liminality to exchange, in its traditional classical role, with the Nuntius, speaking from the perspective of the Lydian people: "And is our Soveraigne slaine? . . . And must we yeeld to that proud Strangers will?" (2491, 2494). After the Nuntius' long account, the chorus concludes with lamentations:

> Chorus O wretched people! O unhappy King!
> Our joyes are spoyl'd, his happinesse expir'd,
> And no new chance can any comfort bring,
> Where destinies to ruine have conspir'd . . .
> (2765-8)

The interaction between the Nuntius and the chorus of all the Lydians recalls similar, briefer, Senecan moments, in *Medea*, when the chorus questions the messenger bringing the news of Creon and Creusa's deaths at the beginning of act 5 (879-87); and in *Phaedra*, when the chorus questions the Nurse in act 2 (358-9, 404-5). But then the chorus steps out of the action again and back into its liminal space, with a final choral ode which encapsulates the message of the play before elevating its gaze to offer a poetic, emblematic conceit. Introduced by a reminder that only the experience of reading "practis'd volumes penned by deeds" can teach us "How things below inconstant be" (2890-2), each of the stanzas is composed like an emblem, organised around a mythological or allegorical motif: the frosts that threaten the promises of April when Ceres ranges freely;[25] the vine rich in promise holding out hopes to Bacchus

English readers and dramatists, providing matter for learned phrases and meditative thought as well as models. His plays also provided dramatic structures and moments such as the one referred to here in *Phaedra*, which, incidentally, was one of Shakespeare's favourite plays, according to Burrow (2013, 178).

25 Alexander returns to Ceres and the uncertainty of "Husbands Hopes" as an image of spiritual rebirth in *Doomes-day*, "The fourth Houre", stanza 28, line 1 (Kastner 1929, 116).

which are destroyed by a storm; the race through a forest, where "brambles doe our steppes beguile", and "balles of gold" (2938, 2941), conflating memories of the myths of Daphne and Atalanta; the tragedy of Croesus, public and private, deprived of his wealth, son, and country; and, finally, the fate of "we the Lydians", who gave themselves a monarchy "but knew not how" (2964), and find themselves reduced to bondage. Each stanza ends with the line "No perfect blisse before the end", an inescapable, knell-like reminder of Solon's warning at the beginning of the play, "None can be throughly blest before the end" (394), which the chorus explicitly acknowledges in its closing lines: "O, it is true that *Solon* said! While as he yet doth breath extend, / No man is blest; behold the end" (2970-2). The repetitions and play on "blisse" and "blest" throughout that final choral ode follow a pattern similar to the repetitions Valla used in the account of Solon's meeting with Croesus to contrast their perceptions, opposing "beati . . . fortunati", "beatus . . . fortunatus" (Herodotus/Valla 1584, "Clio Lib. 1" 13); and the chorus thus picks up and expands Solon's closing line in his final address to Croesus, "Many are fortunate, but few are blest" (426), which recalls Valla's "prius tamẽ quàm ad obitum pervenerit, ne quaquam beatus apellandus, sed fortunatus" (Herodotus/Valla 1584, "Clio Lib. 1" 13).

Croesus' belated enlightenment is thus amplified by the chorus in its final lamentation, which also reads like an expansion of the final lines of Sophocles' chorus at the end of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, "So that one should wait to see the final day and should call none among mortals fortunate, till he has crossed the bourne of life without suffering grief" (1528-30). Here, indeed, is a tragic ending to a cautionary tale told by Greek historians and remoulded into a Senecan format which itself owes much to the Greek dramatists' models while drawing on a lyrical format that may be traced back to the poetry of the French Pléiade (Caigny 2011, 130-1). Yet the pathos one senses already in sections of the source texts, reworked by a rhetoric that borrows its tropes principally from Seneca, composes a network of affective echoes that complicates readings of Croesus. Gradually, a more complex figure emerges than the ruler single-mindedly intent on wealth and ambition who has travelled down through posterity. Alexander's play traces his journey from arrogant impatience at Solon's caution, through concern and grief

for his son, then a blind belief that conquests will offset his private loss, to last-minute clear-sightedness. His magnanimity towards Adrastus is the first step on the path to self-awareness and concern for his city, as if he were heeding Seneca's advice to Nero that a capacity for mercy signals the difference between a wise king and a tyrant (Clem. 1.11-12).[26]

This shift in the fate of a Midas-like Croesus, "that world-bewitched man / Who makes his gold his god" (167-8), and his gradual self-knowledge which finally makes "his judgement with his fortune eaven" (170) invite a tentative reassessment of the very format of the play. Greek in content, Senecan in structure, moral concerns and dramatic tone, the play is inflected on occasions with Ovidian and Petrarchan motifs (as in the account of the hunt for the boar and the love story Alexander attributes to Adrastus). The pathos of a fate like Panthea's owes at least as much to the sensibility of Ovid's *Heroides* as to Seneca's unrelenting drive of fate – and her death is a definitive rebuttal of Cyrus' "fine lesson in neo-Stoicism" (Mazouer 2002, 227, discussing Guersens's play).

"A Tragick entry to a Comicke end?"

So: is this play a tragedy, as indicated in the successive editions, or does this confluence of styles, contained within a structural formality, result in a more hybrid genre, some kind of austere tragicomedy? The fates that pursue Adrastus, driving him to love in vain and kill his brother by mistake before killing the son of his protector just as accidentally, certainly seem to cast him, as he acknowledges, as "a tragicke actor for a bloudy stage" (978). Albeit that he has lost his own son, Harpagus, in contrast, sees himself, he tells Cyrus, as "an actor in your Tragick-Comicke course" (2166): condemned to die as an infant (this should have been his "Tragedies last act", 2284), spared and humbly reared by a herdsman before being recognised as the heir to the throne and imposing himself as a conqueror, Cyrus admits to remembering little of his earlier years, and is eager to hear Harpagus "mixe . . . old griefes new joys among, /

26 References are to Seneca 1928, in the Loeb Classical Library.

And call afflicted infancy to minde" (2173-4): the affective elements of his biography, the tribute to the healing role of memory and the very act of reminiscing, meet the prerequisites of tragicomedy. Croesus too balances past loss against survival in bondage in terms of musings on dramatic genre, "As if misfortunes past had only been / A Tragick entry to a Comick end" (2863-4), the "Comick end" being here understood as a form of distancing, a philosophical becalming after the buffets of Fortune and self-induced blindness, which he seems to have attained. And he concludes with a resolve to cultivate neo-Stoic fortitude, balancing "pleasures past" and his "(now) hapless state":

> My memory to my distracted spright
> Of all my troubles shall present a scroule,
> Of which, while as th'accounts I go to cast,
> When numbring my misfortunes all of late,
> I will looke backe upon my pleasures past,
> And by them balance my (now) hapless state.
> (2883-8)

Whether a tragedy or an unsmiling tragicomedy in which Croesus' inglorious descent crosses Cyrus' heroic ascension, references to the dramatic genre suggest a shift away from an allegiance to any form of historical 'truth' or 'accuracy', the reliability of which Herodotus already queried by acknowledging that there existed multiple versions of the same story. Plutarch too recognised (in his account of Solon's life as in some of his other "lives") that one day some might legitimately question the veracity of what he writes – though not its fame or interest:

> And as for the meeting & talke betwext him & king *Croesus,* I know there are that by distãce of time will proue it but a fable, & deuised of pleasure: but for my parte I will not reiect, nor cõndemne so famous an historie, receiued & approued by so many graue testimonies. (Plu. trans. North 1579, 102)

Writing for a king who had undergone personal loss, with the deaths of two children between 1600 and 1602,[27] and entrusted with

27 Robert, the third son of James and Anne (18 January 1602 – 27 May 1602),

the task of counselling a young heir to the throne who would die in turn in 1612, Alexander chose from the Greek histories one of their memorable kings, whom he draped in Senecan robes and granted a very narrow window of ultimate redemption. In his play – as in his later religious epic, *Doomes-Daye*, where stanza 61 in "The Seventh Hour" recalls how Croesus was finally able "By misery to finde his folly mov'd, / When Fortune's dreames were vanish'd all away" (Kastner 1929, 216) – Alexander seems to resist the undertow of utter pessimism by favouring a degree of neo-Stoic humility achieved at the cost of personal loss and after a long journey, of the kind Shakespeare used to redeem a figure like Leontes in *The Winter's Tale.*

***Croesus liberatus*: a Coda**

Well-chronicled by the Greek historians, Croesus' reign and private misfortunes seem to have held singularly little appeal for early modern dramatists in Britain and France. While Alexander's play seems to be the only British, early modern attempt to dramatise the life of the Lydian king, no earlier or contemporary French tragedy centred on Croesus seems to have been recorded and later European instances seem almost as scant.[28] One exception is a college drama written in Latin, *Tragoedia Croesus liberatus*, by the French Jesuit author Pierre Mousson (Petrus Mussonius), for the Jesuit Collège Henri IV, at La Flèche, which was founded in 1603. Mousson published his *Croesus* in 1621 with what in many respects may be read as a sequel, *Tragoedia Cyrus Punitus*, and two

and Margaret, their second daughter (24 December 1598 – March 1600). Henry was born on 19 February 1594 and died on 6 November 1612.

28 The story of Croesus inspired two operas, one by Antonio Draghi on a libretto by Niccolo Manoto, another by Reinhard Keiser on a libretto by Lukas von Postel (based on Manoto's): the two operas were performed, respectively, in Vienna in 1678 and Hamburg in 1711. "Croesus", *Opéra baroque*, https://operabaroque.fr/KEISER_CROESUS.htm (accessed 27 December 2022). Rieks (2000, 90-1) notes that in 1680 Louis Ferrier staged his *Adraste* in Paris, for which he seemed to have a knowledge of Mousson's play and of an anonymous Jesuit play, *Adrastus* (1679).

other plays, *Pompeius Magnus* and *Darius Proditus* – all four having been written between 1606 and 1612 (Rieks 2000, 30). The title page indicates that they were written to be performed, or at the very least publicly read: "Dati in Theatrum Collegij Regij Henrici Magni". And the paratexts include a dedication "ad Actores meos" (Rieks 2000, 101). After an opening monologue by Croesus who congratulates himself on being the happiest of men, the play stages his encounter with Solon, who tells the two exemplary stories (Tellus of Athens; Cleobis and Biton). Croesus dismisses Solon (there is no exchange between Solon and Aesop). In act 2, Croesus has a prophetic dream about Atis whom he shelters from all dangers. Absyrtus seeks Croesus' protection, which the king grants him, having celebrated Atis' marriage. Act 3 has the countrymen ask for help to fight the boar. Croesus yields to Atis' request to lead the hunt and places him under Adrastus' protection. Act 4 opens with Atis' wife Ariena expressing her fears. Croesus learns of Atis' death and initially wishes to kill Adrastus. Ariena wishes she were dead too. Croesus spares Adrastus who kills himself. In a closing tableau, which brings together on stage the lamenting Ariena, Croesus and Cyaxares, Mousson indulges in what must have been perceived as a moment of dramatic sensationalism in the spirit of the "théâtre de la cruauté" by staging Adrastus' suicide. In act 5 Croesus turns his thoughts to military action. His dumb son warns him against a Persian attack. Cyrus condemns Croesus to death but then spares him after hearing him speak of Solon and the play ends on Cyrus ordering that the pyre be dismantled. Mousson leaves out Harpagus' account of Cyrus' childhood, which he uses in his Cyrus play. The tragedy, 1461 lines long, without choruses, is shorter than Alexander's.

What emerges from this brief summary is that the structure is tantalisingly similar to Alexander's play – ironically so when one considers that this play had a Jesuit educational agenda far removed from Alexander's humanist and protestant background. Educational approaches, though, were not dissimilar, and the Jesuit colleges were modelled on the humanist colleges such as the Collège de Guyenne, in Bordeaux (Rieks 2000, 23), where George Buchanan's students included Michel de Montaigne, who performed in his master's productions. Although structured very much as a neo-Senecan closet drama, Mousson's play provides grisly details of Atis' death, in the

best Senecan tradition.[29] Simultaneously, as the title indicates, his approach explores Croesus' journey towards redemption through self-knowledge, allowing, as in Alexander's play, for some form of final release. Rieks traces similarities and differences between Alexander's and Mousson's versions of Croesus and Darius, noting how some details were not in the Greek source texts (such as the role of Atis' wife, who is given lines to speak in the two versions of *Croesus*); he contends that the "congruence of themes, motifs, plot, characters and configurations cannot be fully accounted for by the exclusive use of Herodotus as a common source" (Rieks 2000, 90).

More cautiously, and even if Mousson knew Alexander's work, the proximity between the two plays may reflect not so much a direct debt as a convergence of sensibilities that owe much to the influence of Senecan drama, in the structuring of the plot and the addition of a female figure of lamentation, as well as to the dramatic potential of the *logoi* that break through generic constraints. Migrating from the world of histories to that of the theatre, the stories of Croesus, Atis, Adrastus and Harpagus form bridges between authors writing for different readerships and audiences in different languages and fashioned by different philosophical and religious mindframes. So doing, they move beyond the status of sources to become a paradigm of the resilience with which narratives from a distant elsewhere reinvent and actualise themselves.

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29 Rieks (2000, 54) suggests analogies with the following passages in Seneca: *Med.* 893-977, *Thy.* 176-204; *Phaedr.* 903-59.

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Part 5
Pastiche

15

"Is All Well Put Together In Every Part?": Assembling a Renaissance *Bacchae*

William N. West

Abstract

Euripides' *Bacchae* has often been identified as a representative exception among Greek tragedies – for the intensity of its pathos or its humour, the directness of its engagement with the cult of Dionysus or its destruction of it, for its metatheatricality or its influences on later examples of tragedy. But aside from its sometimes occulted presence in contemporary thought, *Bacchae* shows a particularly concrete and motivating absence: much of the play's climactic scene, in which his mother recognises the body of Pentheus by piecing it together, is missing from extant texts. In early printed editions, these lacunae (fail to) appear among lines "Is all well put together in every part?" and "You see how changed I am", which seem to comment on the philological and performative labour of reconstructing a body, a text, or a play. Twentieth-century editions of *Bacchae* supplement the received text with passages from *Christus Patiens*, a Byzantine cento of Euripidean and other passages patched into an account of the crucifixion, and so another way of actualising the play's thematics of fragmentation. Making *Bacchae* exemplary once again, I will explore both early modern toleration for incompleteness and the impulse to reconstruct what is missing in performance.

Keywords: *Bacchae*; *Christus Patiens*; Euripides; Classical receptions

The Greek tragedies one chooses to think with in part reflect, and perhaps also in part determine, what one expects, and what one gets, from both tragedy and literary history.[1] Different cultural moments have had different concepts of both, and have chosen

1 I wish to thank the generous first audience of these thoughts, at the 2022 conference on "Classical Receptions in Early Modern English Drama", hosted by the University of Verona and attended remotely from all over. I'm especially grateful to Silvia Bigliazzi, Tom Bishop, and Carla Suthren for their conversation.

It is no less emblematic that we look so consistently to Greek tragedies at all, but that is another question. Two books that both ground and explore this question, are Leonard 2015 and Halpern 2017.

different tragedies to explore their ideas – Aristotle's *Oedipus the King*; Hegel's *Antigone*, returning transformed in Judith Butler's or Bonnie Honig's *Antigones*; the Elizabethan *Hecuba*, as recent work by Tanya Pollard and others is showing us.[2] For much of the twentieth century, following in various ways Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), E.R. Dodds' *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), and The Performance Group's *Dionysus in '69* (1969), that exemplary tragedy was *Bacchae*.[3]

Much in keeping with the twentieth century's investments in both norms and violent extremes, Euripides' *Bacchae* has stood handily among Greek tragedies as a representative exception, often being called as witness for both sides of the question of what tragedy is. Depending on its reader, *Bacchae* is a benchmark for the intensity of its pathos or its offputting irony, for the overtness of its engagement with the cult of Dionysus or its undermining of it, for its unreadable but eminently performable ambivalence, perhaps above all for the searching way it seems to examine its own constitution, its often-cited metatheatricality.[4] Stephen Orgel has argued that although it "seems to have been practically unknown

2 Whether Oedipus the King was Aristotle's "favourite" tragedy, or conforms most closely to what he calls the "best kind of tragedy" (*Poetics* 13-14), is open to question, but Aristotle cites it more than any other tragedy and it seems to provide him with a kind of tacit norm for what tragedies are like, as for instance when he pairs it with the *Iliad* to contrast the difference in scope between epic and tragedy (*Poetics* 26). Hegel uses *Antigone* to frame the potential conflict between individual and universal claims (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 437, §§ 449-76); for returns to *Antigone*, see also Butler 2000 and Honig 2013. On Hecuba as emblematic tragedy for Elizabethans, Pollard 2017; for early modern Europeans more widely, Lupić 2018.

3 Nietzsche 1956; Dodds 2020. The final performances of the Performance Group's *Dionysus in 69* were filmed and edited by Brian De Palma (1969). On *Bacchae*'s rise, Mackay 2006, 71-5; on early modern *Bacchae*, see Orgel 2021, 64. According to Richard Seaford, the play was especially popular in antiquity as well (1996, 52-3); see also Perris and Mac Góráin 2019, 39-84.

4 The term *metatheatre* was invented to describe an early modern phenomenon of tragic exhaustion, in which the conventions of tragic drama have become so familiar that they no longer make any immediate claims on actors or audiences, a situation curiously like that played out in criticism of *Bacchae* between Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* and *Dionysus in '69*; Abel 1963.

to the Elizabethans", the play's frank violence and uninterpretable double vision parallel the aesthetics of much Elizabethan drama, but as "prototypical – not a source . . . an archetype." (Orgel, 64-5). Bruce Smith has called this kind of formal or thematic convergence *confluence* to distinguish it from the more direct contact or imitation of *influence* (1988, 6).

Aside from its occulted presence in early modern drama, *Bacchae* exhibits another particularly concrete and motivating absence. The surviving Byzantine manuscript of the end of the play has at least two significant lacunae in the climactic final scene. Necessarily these passages are also lacking from Renaissance editions of *Bacchae*. Twentieth-century editions of *Bacchae*, however, regularly supplemented the received text with passages from another play, *Khristos Paskhōn*, or *Christus Patiens*, the Suffering Christ or the Passion of Christ, adding what is now often picked out as *Bacchae*'s most distinctive, extraordinary scene of horror and self-examination, Agave's slow recognition that the mutilated body she proudly brandishes before her is that of her son Pentheus, whom she and the other Bacchantes have just butchered.[5] *Khristos Paskhōn*, the patching play, is itself a patchwork. It is a Byzantine cento compiled of lines taken from Greek tragedies and reassembled to tell the crucial Christian story of violence, grief, and recognition.[6] It was traditionally attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus, a classically-trained orator and Father of the Church of the fourth century CE, although most current scholarship assigns it to an unknown author in the twelfth century.[7]

5 *Khristos Paskhōn* was first proposed as a source for *Bacchae* by Kirchhoff 1853, who does not however include the lines in his 1855 edition. I did not consult other nineteenth-century editions. The editions of *Bacchae* of Gilbert Murray 1909; Dodds 1944; Diggle 1994; and Seaford 1996, all supplement their texts with lines from *Christus Patiens*, although not always the same ones.

6 Xanthaki-Karamanou (2022, 209-16) synthesizes the presence of *Christus Patiens* in the text of *Bacchae*. Pollman 2017 analyses how the *Christus Patiens* forcefully remakes *Bacchae* into a Christian tragedy.

7 For texts of *Khristos Paskhōn*/ *Christus Patiens* I have consulted *Sancti Gregori Nazanzeni Theologi Tragoedia, Christus Patiens* 1542, ed. Bladus; *Christus Patiens Tragoedia Christiana . . .* 1885, ed. Brambs; and de Nazianze 1969, ed. Tuilier. André Tuilier, the editor of the latest of these editions, controversially includes *Khristos Paskhōn* among Gregory of Nazianzen's works,

The *Bacchae* known in early modern Europe, then, differed materially from the play that has become emblematic for twentieth- and twenty-first-century audiences. Here I mean “materially” literally, to the (missing) letter(s). Without fully registering that it does so, the modern *Bacchae* reassimilates passages from a Byzantine cento that initially borrowed them and returns them to the play in which they originated: we obscure their absence. The Renaissance *Bacchae*, in contrast, did not preserve those passages in the pagan, Athenian play but elsewhere in a Christian, Byzantine one, and even more in an atmosphere: in some sense, early modern readers felt their presence. Smith’s concept of *confluence* is, I think, meant to be less direct and exacting than that of *influence*, but in the case of *Bacchae* it is materially more so. Here, I want to take this material confluence of *Bacchae* with *Khristos Paskhōn* – their physical conflation and flowing together – as my emblematic Greek tragedy for the Renaissance reception of antiquity, repeatedly appropriating and recontextualising favoured elements so that they acquire new resonances and new relations, and then carrying these with them as shadowy connotations as they are set into yet other contexts.

I will return to *Khristos Paskhōn* – *Bacchae* is great but *Khristos Paskhōn* is weird. What *Bacchae* did the Renaissance know, and how did it differ from modern editions? *Bacchae* survives in two fourteenth-century manuscripts from which all extant versions derive, Laurentianus Plutei 32.2, or L, in the Laurentian Library in Florence, and Palatinus Graecus 287, or P, in the Vatican Library.[8] Prior to being copied into these manuscripts, some text from *Bacchae* was lost. Roughly the second half of the play is physically and unmistakably missing from L; the text breaks off in mid-sentence at the end of a page. Since in the existing manuscript the text ends at the bottom of a recto, it looks as if it has been copied to accommodate this abrupt ending.

with which it seems to have circulated originally, and attributes it to him; I discuss this argument further below.

8 See the discussion of the text in Dodds 1960, liii-lix; Mason 1948. See also links to digital images of the manuscripts, L: http://mss.bmlonline.it/s.aspx?Id=AWOIex_hI1A4r7GxMH6w#/oro/175 and P: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pal.gr.287

P, then, is the relevant manuscript for the last scene of *Bacchae*. It is the only source for the text of the second half of the play, but in that part of the text, lacking in L, there are at least two lacunae of indeterminate length. As with the lost ending of L, these lacunae must have been missing from the copytext for P; P itself is not damaged where the line or lines are missing, making reconstruction of the length of the lacunae challenging. One lacuna occurs after 1300 and is marked by two consecutive lines assigned to Agave, which unexpectedly interrupt a stichomythia between Kadmos and Agave:

> ῆ πᾶν ἐν ἄρθροις συγκεκλῃμένον καλῶς;
> Πενθεῖ δὲ τί μέρος ἀφροσύνης προσῆκ᾽ ἐμῆς;
> (1300-1)

> [Has it all been fitted together decently in its joints?
> What part of my folly belonged to Pentheus?][9]

Each question fills a single line, as stichomythia would require. It thus seems fairly clear that there is a loss of at least one line. After these two lines, the play continues with a longer speech given to Kadmos. The other notable lacuna occurs after 1329, where there is a fairly obvious shift in both speaker and topic of discussion: before it, Agave is speaking about the trauma she has undergone; after it, Dionysus is pronouncing on the fate of Kadmos and his family:

> ὦ πάτερ, ὁρᾷς γὰρ τἄμ᾽ ὅσῳ μετεστράφη
> δράκων γενήσῃ μεταβαλών, δάμαρ τε σὴ
> ἐκθηριωθεῖσ᾽ ὄφεος ἀλλάξει τύπον,
> (1329-31)

> [O father, you see how much my fortunes have changed. You will change and become a snake, and your wife will change, made savage, into the form of a snake.]

There is a lexical and conceptual link between Agave's verb for her overwhelming recognition, μετεστράφη / *metestraphē* (1329;

9 Here and elsewhere except as noted, I use Diggle's text and Seaford's translation. In this passage I restore P's initial ῆ with no breathing diacritic. Diggle marks a lacuna of at least three lines, although of course its actual length is uncertain.

changed or turned around) in the earlier line and the participle μεταβαλών / *metabalōn* (1330; changing or being turned) for Kadmos' physical change in the later one. This establishes a strong thematic echo, maybe even a retrospective commentary on the alteration of the text, but as an explanation for the lacuna – as eyeskip, for instance – it is unlikely.

There may of course be other lacunae that escape notice, but because of their formal properties – interruption of stichomythia in the one, discontinuity of syntax in the other – those following 1300 and 1329 in particular are hard to overlook. Nevertheless, the Renaissance editions and translations I consulted mostly manage to overlook them.[10] They show no sign that anything might be missing or amiss, although some early editions fiddle with the text of the latter and apparently more significant lacuna to make the shift across the gap smoother, including simply omitting the semantically confusing 1330.

It is thus worth asking whether anybody in the Renaissance really noticed that *Bacchae* was at least partially dismembered and missing some of its parts. Some of the play's early modern editors try to correct the text, starting with Aldus' *editio princeps*, which suggests that they were not completely unaware that something was not right, but of course early editors often emended freely, and had to. Readers of printed editions could easily have breezed (or staggered) past these gaps, especially if, as Tom Bishop has argued, not everyone reading Greek texts was able to read them especially easily or well.[11] The presentation of the Greek text without marking lacunae, the absence of commentary to accompany them, and the cleaning-up of available Latin translations to make sense of the

10 I consulted the following editions: Aldus 1503; Hervagius 1537; Hervagius 1544; Hervagius 1551; Plantin 1571; Commelini 1597; Stephanus 1602. I also consulted Latin translations Oporinus 1550; Lucium 1562. I was guided by Pollard's indispensable list of editions of Greek (2017, Appendix 1, 232-41). Sincere thanks to the Yale University Beinecke Library, the Northwestern University McCormick Special Collections Library, and the Newberry Library in Chicago, for their help locating these copies.

11 Tom Bishop, in an unpublished talk, "Technologies of Reading; or, How Much Greek Does a Playwright Need?": Theater without Borders conference (remote), June 2021.

gappy Greek conspired to make that kind of careless reading likely.[12] *Bacchae* was printed less often in the Renaissance than Euripides' other tragedies, and was sometimes even excluded from collections that contained the other tragedies. But it is hard to know if this represented a tacit judgment that the play was somehow deficient, or if its narrow textual tradition simply made it less likely to be edited and reproduced, with each subsequent omission from editions making it harder still to reprint, comment on, or even to find.

What, then, did Renaissance readers of *Bacchae* see? A good text or a lacunose one? What did they miss if they missed the lacunae? Or, since it is not clear that the apparent absence of lines was even noticed, what did they get from it, which may be quite different from what we get with our back-filled texts? The lacunae in *Bacchae* appear at moments that, if we understand ourselves to be looking at gaps, seem at the very least semantically freighted. Agave's last line before the break in the stichomythia could be translated as "Is all well put together in every part?" (1300); the last line before the second lacuna, again Agave's, could be translated as "O father, you see how changed I am" (1329). In the context of the play, the first line is part of Agave's recognition that the body she is holding is Pentheus'; the second is the beginning of her lament for him. But as we read them now, they seem to cry out for metatextual extension to the philological and performative labour of reconstructing a body, a text, or a play, only partly put back together and certainly also greatly changed.[13] Renaissance scholars in other contexts did not hesitate to analogise the texts they were laboriously reassembling to mutilated bodies; in his second *Centuries* (c. 1490) Angelo Poliziano offered an extended simile of the text of Cicero's *De natura deorum* that he was stitching together and the dismembered body of Hippolytus, and

12 None of the texts I consulted explicitly note lacunae, although none of them provide full commentaries. Instead they ignore them. The Latin translation in Lucium 1562, which otherwise follows the text of Oporinus 1550, has a different translation for the disturbed lines 1329-30 and omits 1331. Interestingly, the copy of Herwagen 1537 that I consulted at the Beinecke showed pen marks at the ellipsis after 1300.

13 For an effort to read the physical gaps in play manuscripts from a different historical context, that of early modern English playing, see Walker, 2013.

even by then the figure of tattered-texts-as-tattered-bodies was well-worn.[14] In "On Isis and Osiris" (2nd c. CE), Plutarch had interpreted the labours of Isis to recover the scattered pieces of her lover and brother Osiris as an allegory for the search for truth in the world, an interpretation John Milton follows in *Areopagitica* (1644).[15] In the third century CE, in *Strōmata* 13, Clement of Alexandria says that the sects of Greek and barbarian philosophers fragmented Christian truth just as the Bacchants tore apart the limbs of Pentheus, which means Christian truth can be recollected from pagan sources. But to my knowledge Clement's simile is not repeated elsewhere in reference to the text of *Bacchae*, where it would have been so thematically apt, and that itself may be evidence that earlier readers did not see the holes that modern editors think we should.[16]

The story of Pentheus and Agave was well known in the Renaissance; it appears in the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses* as well as in more recondite texts, and in *Metamorphoses* it comes between two very familiar tales, those of Narcissus and of Pyramus and Thisbe (3.511-719). But it seems to have been known as a story rather than as a performance, much less from Euripides' play. In Euripides' play, Agave believes that Pentheus' body is that of a lion she has killed; Ovid's Agave, in contrast, thinks she has killed a boar. But I found no clear references to the detail of the lion in accounts of Pentheus' death from the Renaissance. I also found nothing about Pentheus' cross-dressing, which likewise seems so powerful and strange a part of *Bacchae*. Even allusions that could point to Euripides' play – references to Pentheus seeing two suns and two Thebes, for instance – are more likely to lead back to Vergil, where Dido's nightmares about Aeneas are a pastiche of symptoms of tragic madness, "just as deranged Pentheus sees the ranks of Eumenides, / and a twin sun and two-fold Thebes showing themselves" ("Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus / et solem geminum et duplices se ostendere Thebas", *Aeneid* 4.469-70). Spenser recalls the story of

14 Poliziano 1972, 4.1*r*; see also Greene 1982, 169. Giamatti (1984) does not record this instance but looks at several others in which the body of Hippolytus becomes a model for humanist recovery of torn texts. See also Burrow 2013, 163-71; West 2007; West 2011.

15 Plutarch, "On Isis and Osiris", *Moralia* V; Milton 1991, 263.

16 On Milton's use of Clement, see Leo 2016, 200-1.

Pentheus' death when he likens Agave's madness to the female fury of Adicia, but he does not seem to be getting it from Euripides, since she seems to be accompanied by men: "that madding mother, mongst the rout / Of *Bacchus* Priests her own dear flesh did tear" (*Faerie Queene*, 5.8.47). As little as Euripides' other plays might have been known in Elizabethan England, Euripides' *Bacchae*, it seems, may have been known even less.[17]

But some of what has vanished into these textual and historical gaps might be recoverable, curiously, from ancient accounts of the play in performance. *Bacchae* holds such a central position in the scholarly and performative imagination now in large part because of its stunning *coups de théâtre*. It seems both to approach a ritual ecstasy at the heart of performance that is so easy to fantasise about, and, perhaps more soberly, to invite metatheatrical reflection on, as Ellen Mackay has observed, the way the stage takes revenge on its enemies.[18] There is no performance tradition of *Bacchae* in the Renaissance to speak of, or indeed until the twentieth century.[19] But there is at least one widely known ancient account of *Bacchae* that insists on the impact of its performance. In Plutarch's *Life of Crassus*, Crassus is killed in a skirmish leading an army against the Parthians and his body captured. That night in a theatrical performance at the Parthian capital, Crassus' severed head is brought on as a stand-in for that of Pentheus by the actor portraying Agave. Plutarch includes some lines from *Bacchae* that accompanied this horrifying entrance, making clear that he is thinking of Euripides' play in particular:

Ἀγαύη φέρομεν ἐξ ὄρεος
    ἕλικα νεότομον ἐπὶ μέλαθρα,
    μακαρίαν θήραν
(1169-71)

17 This is the argument of Orgel, "Elizabethan *Bacchae*."

18 Mackay 2006, 71, citing Martin Puchner but developing his claims substantially.

19 None of the 222 performances recorded in the Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD, http://www.apgrd.ox.ac.uk, hosted by the University of Oxford) dates from before the twentieth century. The earliest performance is one sponsored by Gilbert Murray, who edited the play in 1908 along with Euripides' others.

[Agave We are carrying from the mountain / A newly cut tendril to the halls, / A blessed hunting.]

and

Χόροσ τίς ἐφόνευσεν;
Ἀγαύη ἐμὸν τὸ γέρας.
(1179)

[Chorus Who killed him? // Agave Mine was the prize.][20]

"Thus they say was the finale (ἐξόδιον) with which the expedition of Crassus ended, just like a tragedy" (εἰς τοιοῦτό φασιν ἐξόδιον τὴν Κράσσου στρατηγίαν ὥσπερ τραγῳδίαν τελευτῆσαι), concludes Plutarch, perhaps thinking of Crassus' mortifying exit from the stage of history, or perhaps of the parodic satyr play that ended each cycle of tragic dramas. First time as tragedy, we might gloss, next time as farce.

Accounts like this one preserved a sense of the performative force of *Bacchae* as an enacted play, not just as a story or a text.[21] At least one English drama also seems to suggest that the performance of *Bacchae* was emblematic and striking. Philip Massinger's *The Roman Actor* (1626), a relatively late entry in the long tradition of plays that represent acting as potentially murderous, begins with the question:

Aesopus What doe we acte to day?
Latinus *Agaves* phrensie
With *Pentheus* bloudie end.
(1629, 1.1.1-2)

It is hard not to imagine that this pointed reference to Pentheus and Agave in the first lines of *The Roman Actor* is pointing at something, but it is not easy to determine exactly what. Does

20 Plutarch, *Life of Crassus*, ch. 33. In the second quotation, Plutarch's Greek is close but not identical to that of modern editions of *Bacchae*, so I use my own translation.

21 Another crucial witness to what is missing from *Bacchae* is the account of the *compositio membrorum* given by the third-century CE rhetorician Apsines, but this does not seem to have been known in the Renaissance; Dodds, 57, 232-34. See also Segal 1999-2000; Perris and Mac Góráin 2019.

the fact that Pentheus and Agave will be acted point towards the tortured theatricality of Euripides' play? A reference to *Bacchae* or some impression of it would neatly foreshadow the thematics and action of *The Roman Actor*. Its first part insistently takes up the (usual) paradoxes of acting and reality, and its titular protagonist offers a spirited defence of playing before being murdered during a performance by the jealous Roman emperor Domitian. The Roman setting of *The Roman Actor* signals decadence and pagan cruelty rather than any attempt at the traction of history (think *Ben Hur*, 1959, or, for that matter, Fellini's *Satyricon*, 1969); Massinger's play is a farrago of recognizable names in fantasy get-up. But perhaps this derivative quality underscores that the gesture here is towards the theatricality and metatheatricality of *Bacchae*: Agave's frenzy and Pentheus' bloody end do not need to fit *The Roman Actor* historically, but emblematically. The titles of some other plays performed by the acting company do not suggest parallels in Greek or Roman drama, and the lethal play that kills the protagonist resembles a Tudor moral drama. These factors all suggest *Bacchae*, whether known directly or filtered through Plutarch's story of it.

Plutarch's account of Crassus' posthumous star turn is among the pieces of evidence that led later philologists to speculate about what is missing from the text of *Bacchae*: a scene in which Agave brings together the torn pieces of Pentheus' body, finally setting with them his head, which she has been holding and lamenting over his body. This seems to have been just the sort of thing Elizabethans and other early modern aficionados of tragedy would have loved – extreme passions, extreme transgressions, all framed by intense expressions of female grief. Indeed, a scene that seems likely to be an imitation of Agave's mourning over Pentheus' body – Theseus' mourning over Hippolytus' body in Seneca's *Phaedra*, where however the action of grief shifts to the male parent – featured in what was among the first, maybe the very first, ancient tragedy publicly staged since the collapse of the Roman Empire, in 1486 by the humanist Pomponius Laetus' colleagues and students in Rome.[22] Seneca's *Phaedra*, or *Hippolytus*, and this scene, remained

22 Segal (1986, 215) observes: "The last scene of the *Phaedra* has a peculiarly complex form of literariness and textuality, for Seneca here 'contami-

powerfully influential across Europe for the next two centuries, and in particular among English playwrights of Shakespeare's age (Burrow 2013, 171). But there is scant trace of such a scene in the *Bacchae* that anyone could have read in the Renaissance. It was not until the nineteenth century that classical philologists proposed a possible source for such a scene among the missing lines of the play, a Christian tragedy from Byzantium (Kirchhoff 1853). And so we return to *Khristos Paskhōn.*

As it is probably less well known to most readers now even than *Bacchae* was to Elizabethan playwrights and other writers, *Khristos Paskhōn* requires some introduction. It is a tragedy, or perhaps what Milton called in *Samson Agonistes* a "Dramatic Poem which is call'd Tragedy", of 2610 lines – significantly longer, then, by fifty percent or more, than ancient tragedies – about Christ's crucifixion and Mary's lamentation over his body written in the elevated idiom of Attic tragedy. But *Khristos Paskhōn* is not exactly a tragedy. It stretches tragic form and echoes tragedy's demanding, highly wrought language because it is a *cento*, a text composed by gathering and reassembling lines from other texts into something new, conforming to the desire that Hannah Arendt attributed to Walter Benjamin of writing a work composed entirely of quotations.[23] *Khristos Paskhōn* is composed almost entirely of lines and passages from Greek tragedies, especially those of Euripides and including some that are no longer extant, as well as Christian and Biblical sources. Some are almost unchanged from their sources; others are altered to a greater or lesser degree to fit their new contexts, and some lines seem to be entirely new – seem, because without a corresponding line in a more ancient text, how would we know? The composition of centos from classical works was a not uncommon literary activity in late antiquity, nor

nates' Euripides' *Hippolytus* with the *Bacchae*". Cruciani (1983) collects early accounts of the performance staged by Laetus in early April 1486, outside the Palazzo della Cancellaria, near or maybe even in the Campo dei Fiori.

23 In Arendt's introduction to Benjamin's *Illuminations* (1968, 4). On Milton's own use of a similar form, the *catena*, see Schwartz 1990. But a catena privileges an original text as a centre of gravity for accumulating commentary, even as it revises the original text. A cento also may preserve themes and pressures without referring them directly to an original.

indeed in early modernity; Homer and Vergil in particular were often cut and pasted into centos.[24] This literary spoliation, like its architectural counterpart, might simply prop up a structure for which earlier technologies had been lost. Often these pagan texts were rearranged to reflect a new Christian message, asserting a Christian overcoming of the pagan past, wresting the spear from Homer's hand, or hinting at an unsuspected universalism, with even pagan sources dragooned unknowingly into evangelising the good news.[25] For modern scholars, cento composition means at very least that *Khristos Paskhōn* preserves pieces of the Greek tragedians that do not otherwise survive, although radically recontextualised. We cannot know for sure that its lines belong to the missing parts of *Bacchae*, although subsequent papyrus discoveries seem to confirm at least some of the speculations of the play's editors since the nineteenth century.[26]

But during the Renaissance *Khristos Paskhōn* was not recognised as a cento or a product of spoliation. It was thought to be an original work dating from the early days of the Christian church, a "true drama", as it calls itself near its conclusion – *alethes drama*, a true play or a true action (2605) – not a collage composed by setting together lines already written, but a thoroughgoing imitation based on deep immersion in both tragedy and Christianity, explicitly calling attention to its double heritage in Jerusalem and Athens:

ἐπείδ' ἀκούσας εὐσεβῶς ποιημάτων
ποιητικῶς νῦν εὐσεβῆ κλύειν θέλεις
πρόσφρων ἄκουε: νῦν τε κατ' Εὐριπίδην
τὸ κοσμοσωτήριον ἐξερῶ πάθος:

24 On *Khristos Paskhōn* as cento and more generally, see Pollman 2017; Alexopoulou 2013; Sticca 1974. Recently, the text of *Khristos Paskhōn* has begun to attract scholarly attention in its own right, for example, Bryant Davies 2017; Pollman 2017; Xanthaki-Karamanou 2022. Pollman 2017 also discusses other late antique and medieval centos. On other Renaissance centos, see Tucker 2009a, 2009b, 2010.

25 The latter is Clement's argument in *Strōmata* 13; see also Pollman 2017.

26 On papyrus fragments that may support a reconstruction from *Christus Patiens*, see Diggle's edition, "Fragmenta", 353, and Xanthaki-Karamanou 2022, App. III, 209-16.

[Since you have heard poems sacredly, / You want to listen to sacred things poetically / Listen closely – now according to Euripides / I will proclaim the *pathos* [the Passion, but also the suffering] that saves the world.][27]

Khristos Paskhōn circulated in multiple manuscripts dating from the mid-thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries under the name of Gregory of Nazianzus, to whom it was also attributed in the Byzantine encyclopedia, the *Souda* or *Suda*.[28] It was first printed in Rome in 1542 as Του Αγιου Γρηγοριου Ναζανζηνου Του Θεολογου Τραγωδια Χριστος Πασχων / *Sancti Gregori Nazanzeni Theologi Tragoedia, Christus Patiens* by Antonius Bladus, reedited and reprinted in both Louvain and Paris in 1544, and translated into Latin at least three times by 1550 – which is to say that by the end of the sixteenth century it was arguably more prominent a play than *Bacchae*, which had never been published in a single play edition at all and had been translated only twice into Latin, both times with other plays of Euripides.[29] By around 1600, the attribution to Nazianzen had been called into doubt, but not the work's status as an early Christian adaptation of the most admired expression of Greek literary culture.[30] It is now generally assumed to date from the twelfth century.[31] *Khristos Paskhōn* is also a document virtually

27 Brambs ed. (*Christus Patiens* 1885, 1-4); I have modified a translation by Fishbone 2002.

28 Parente, Jr. (1985, 352), citing Tuilier (*La Passion du Christ: Tragedie*, 1969, 75-116). The most frequent alternative to Nazianzen among early modern readers seems to have been Apollinaris of Laodicea, another bishop of the fourth century.

29 Parente 1985, 353-5. Seae also a record of Nazianzen's *fortuna* by Sister Agnes Clare Way, http://catalogustranslationum.org/PDFs/volume02/v02_gregorius.pdf, there paginated as 43-192, cited by Parente as Sister Agnes Clare Way in P. O. Kristeller and F. Edward Cranz, eds., *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum: Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries*, 2 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1971): 106-111.

30 Leo summarizes the state of the debate (2016, 206n11).

31 Wittreich (2002) claims that the attribution to Nazianzen was really only current among those in Grotius' circle and fellow travelers like Milton (195), but Parente (1985) argues that Nazianzen was still often taken to be the author through the seventeenth century, even if sometimes tendentiously (355). Sticca (1974, 26) asserts that attribution was more or less evenly split

unique in kind.[32] There are several centos from late antiquity, but nothing like *Khristos Paskhōn* in date (if the later date is correct), form, length, complexity, or choice of source texts in tragedy.

The early modern reception of *Khristos Paskhōn*, not surprisingly, seems to have been confined to learned circles rather than popular ones. But for scholars and scholarly playwrights seeking to adapt Greek tragedy and Christian history to each other, *Khristos Paskhōn* was bracing evidence that Christian tragedy was not only possible but ancient and orthodox. It offered a counterexample to the quasi-Aristotelian dicta about tragedy that had been crystallising over the course of the sixteenth century and that seemed to make such a synthesis impossible. In the Renaissance, when *Bacchae* seems perplexingly invisible, humanists like Hugo Grotius and John Milton were enthusiastically poring over *Khristos Paskhōn* as a possible model for a Christian tragedy in the authentic, strenuous style of the great Greek tragedians.[33] Grotius cited it as an inspiration for his 1608 Latin play, which was also entitled *Christus Patiens*; in the preface to *Samson Agonistes* printed in 1671, Milton used it to defend the appropriateness of Biblical tragedy by pointing out that "Gregory Nazianzen, a Father of the Church, thought it not unbeseeming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy, which he entitled, *Christ Suffering*."[34] *Khristos Paskhōn* did not remotely adhere to unities of time or place (although this was something Grotius tried to correct in his tragedy of the Passion) but sprawled

through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, while maintaining the minority position for Nazianzen's authorship. André Tuilier, the editor of the most recent edition (*La Passion du Christ: Tragedie*, 1969), also continues to defend the attribution to Nazianzen; aside from the edition, see Tuilier 1997. Contra, see Pollman 2017; Follieri 2009.

32 Sticca notes, "It is the *opinio communis* of scholars that the *Christos Paschon* represents the only authentic dramatic expression of the Byzantine religious theater" (1974, 26), although he takes the minority position of fourth-century composition.

33 On anxiety about the possibility of Christianizing Greek tragedy, including *Christus Patiens*, see Leo 2016.

34 Grotius 1626; Milton, *Samson Agonistes* in Orgel and Goldberg 1991, 671. On Grotius' use of *Khristos Paskhōn*, Waller 2019. A special issue of *Milton Quarterly* 36 (2002) included a new translation of *Khristos Paskhōn* by Fishbone, 130-92; as well Wittreich's overview of Milton's relation to it, 193-8.

across multiple characters and settings. Like the divine comedy it represented, it accommodated a happy ending to its tragic events; not coincidentally, some of the plays identified as Euripides' were also used to justify tragicomic outcomes (Pollard 2017, 180). But it was obviously knit from the same stuff as the Greek tragedies that Aristotle knew and that Renaissance readers admired, even if those readers did not recognise how literally and materially this was true.

A lot of *Khristos Paskhōn* might charitably be described as tragic noise: not very specific predictions of impending disasters or descriptions of those that have happened offstage, the usual expressions of grief and dismay. It is of course easier to adapt general lamentations than particular descriptions from one plot to another. Passages from *Bacchae* are echoed in over three hundred lines throughout *Khristos Paskhōn* – over ten percent of the text, in other words – and they often feel much more particular than others – a mother mourning her son, an unrecognised divinity.[35] Sometimes the citations are startlingly incongruous: a Theologian character who sometimes serves as narrator or interpreter as in Western European medieval drama talks of his conversion using lines that recall Medea's murder of Pelias by tricking him into being dismembered and boiled in a cauldron (*KP* 932-40); and the chorus of women waiting in the garden to visit Christ's tomb echo the Bacchae sleeping out on the mountain celebrating the ecstasy of Dionysus (*KP* 1832ff.; *Bacch.* 673-84). The parts that seem to supplement *Bacchae*'s missing pieces are taken mostly from Mary's lament over the crucified and disfigured body of Jesus, some smug vaunting of the Theologian over the punishments coming to those who crucified him, and Christ's assertion of divine being with human birth.

But this last instance exemplifies what is perhaps most striking about *Khristos Paskhōn*: its double vision of pagan and Christian tragedy, forcing their differences and similarities into jarring, illuminating proximity. Christ is διφυής, "double-natured" or "twice-born" ("διφυοῦς", *KP* 1795) like Dionysos in *Bacchae*. Mary

35 I am following Brambs' attributions of lines (*Christus Patiens* 1885, 15-17), and excluding around forty lines that may be missing from the received text of *Bacchae*.

is a Semele (*KP* 1550-54; cf. *Bacch.* 27-30). Adam coincides with Kadmos as a "sowe[r] of the earth-born crop" (*KP* 193; *Bacch.* 257) and "our first sower" (*KP* 879; *Med.* 1224). *Khristos Paskhōn* features multiple *angeloi* or messengers, but they shift from a talkative, harried Messenger of Greek tragedy (*KP* 130-266, 363-418, 639-81) to the sublimely laconic Angel of the Bible (*KP* 2060ff.; Matthew 28:5-7 etc.).[36] There is a similar play on words where the vocative *daimōn* bends from its ancient Greek use to address someone behaving strangely towards a Christian sense of *demon* (*KP* 274; *Rhes.* 854). Christ's part is disorientingly divided between suffering Pentheus and triumphant Dionysus, and also defined in opposition to both of them.[37]

There is one dazzlingly vertiginous moment when a Messenger (not in this case an angelic one) tells the High Priests "I would rather sacrifice to him than grow angry and kick against the pricks (*pros kentra laktizoimi*), a mortal against a god" (*KP* 2268-9). The lines are taken from *Bacchae* 794-5, when Dionysus, acting as his own priest, admonishes Pentheus how the king should behave towards the new god. But they pass through the Book of Acts as well, where they are the words spoken by the risen Christ to the unconverted Paul, another god warning another mortal: "Why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks" (*pros kentra laktizein*, Acts 9:5, 26:14).[38] When *Khristos Paskhōn* borrows it back from Euripides, also in the service of Christ, this short phrase – a common enough idiom, surely,[39] but just as surely distinctly recognisable in these crucial occurrences – becomes charged with the distinct energies of each of these powerful contexts: Dionysus to Pentheus, Christ to Paul, the convinced Messenger to the erring, unrepentant Priests.

36 Fishbone's translation recognizes this shift by calling earlier figures *Messenger* and the later one *Angel*, but the Greek text uses the same speech prefix.

37 Xanthaki-Karamanou, *'Dionysiac' Dialogues*, 114-91, shows how thoroughly *Khristos Paskhōn* develops particularly Euripidean themes, so that we read Euripides in its Christianity and Christianity through its Euripides.

38 Leo (2016, 193-5) discusses the several passages in the New Testament widely recognised in the Renaissance as quotations from pagan Greek literature, but this is not among the ones canonically identified.

39 Erasmus, for instance, includes it in 1575, 139.

Still further reflexively, the word translated "pricks" or "goads", *kentra*, puns etymologically on the Greek word for cento, *kentrōn*.[40] *Khristos Paskhōn*, at least, warns its reader not to protest against it as cento, a mortal confronting a text that seems to maintain its divine force even in dismemberment and transformation.

In sum: the Renaissance *Bacchae* is missing some of the features we associate most strongly with *Bacchae* now, in particular its investment in extreme emotional or psychic states, its enactments of female grief, and its exploration of a powerful blend of ritual abandon and metatheatrical self-awareness (although there are still plenty of those even in the Renaissance *Bacchae*). Many of these features appealed mightily to early modern readers in other contexts, and we might imagine that had these been more present, a Renaissance *Bacchae* might have been more culturally prominent. As it was, *Bacchae* in its Renaissance form seems to have been nearly unknown, and perhaps unusable as a whole.[41] But many of its elements were eminently and demonstrably crucial, unrecognised, in overlapping cultural fields: performance, classical scholarship, the history of emotions and their representation, religious expression. Taken together, *Bacchae* and *Khristos Paskhōn* exemplify the particular Renaissance practice of reception as recontextualization, or spoliation: a reuse of pieces that does not clearly acknowledge their sources except to signal their strangeness to their new configuration, and that preserves their strangeness while accommodating them. In fact, some of *Bacchae*'s most ecstatic passions reached the Renaissance as separable elements despoiled from their original context but retaining their impact, in the surprising form of a bookish Byzantine cento, from which readers of the Renaissance divined – through *divinatio*, unpredictable philological sympathy – an astonishingly Euripidean spirit in the guise of the celebration of the mourning of Christ.

40 Alexopoulou 2103, 125; Liddell-Scott, *s.v.* κέντρων, is something that has been scarred by a goad or a punch, κέντρον, and thus figuratively a patched text that has been stitched together from scraps.

41 But on the Renaissance propensity to use classical tragedies as collections of potential excerpts, see Burrow 2013, 163-71.

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Index

Abel, Lionel 472
Accius, Lucius 18
Adams, Joseph Quincy 153n34, 154, 158n42
Adamson, John 282
Aeschilus 18, 92; *Seven Against Thebes* 389n8
Alamanni, Luigi *Tragedia di Antigone* 398
Alexander the Great 119, 275
Alexander, Neville *Oedipus* 99
Alexander, William 213, 213n30, 214, 216, 217, 218, 443, 444, 445; *Croesus* 31, 36, 197, 198, 211, 443, 444, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 461, 464, 465; *Darius* 213, 443, 444, 444n3, 444n6, 453; *Doomes-Day* 444, 445n7, 459n25, 460, 463; *Jonathan* 444; *Monarchick Tragedies* 80n12, 213; *Paraenesis* 444; "To his Sacred Majestie" 443n1 / *The Alexandraean Tragedy* 444
Alexopoulou, Marigo 483n24, 488n40
Allen, G. 131n2, 132
Alonge, Tristan 422
Amelang, David J. 267
Anon., *Clyomon and Clamydes* 280, 286; *Descrittione de la scena et intermedii fatti per aere e per terra ne la Tragedia di GIOCASTA* 79
Apollodorus 450n16
Apollonius Rhodius 119, 450n16
Archibald, Elizabeth 110, 118, 119, 121
Arendt, Hannah 482
Ariani, Marco 81n13
Ariosto, Ludovico 205, 410, 429; *Orlando Furioso* 205
Aristophanes 20, 29, 30, 31, 33, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 143n21, 144, 144n22, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 151n31, 152, 153, 154, 155, 160n46, 160n47, 161, 161n49, 162, 163, 206, 223, 225, 226, 227, 227n7, 228, 229, 231, 233, 234, 235, 237, 238, 239, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 285n29, 295, 298, 301, 302, 303, 304, 308, 314, 316, 317, 328, 329, 330, 331; *Birds* 141, 161n49, 253, 255, 305, 309; *Clouds* 134n6, 136, 139, 140, 141, 142, 152, 152n32, 154, 155, 160, 160n46, 223, 230, 233, 233n17, 233n18, 234, 238, 244, 245, 246, 246n33, 247, 248, 248n35, 249n36, 304, 305; *Ecclesiazusae* 244; *Pax* 158, 161n47, 272; *Wasps* 136, 143, 161n49, 226, 227, 233, 233n17, 233n18, 234,

241n27, 302, 302n4, 303, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 311n8, 315, 316, 317, 329; *Wealth* 136, 158, 164, 223, 224, 224n4, 224n5, 226, 228, 250, 253, 254, 257, 305, 311n8.
Aristotle 55, 82, 83, 83n18, 85, 88, 89, 93, 93n26, 139, 240n27, 267, 268, 268n10, 274, 275, 284, 385, 390, 391, 391n10, 392, 393, 428, 486; *Ippeis* 83; *Medea* 275; *Oedipus the King* 472, 472n2; *Poetics* 82n16, 83, 89, 138, 139, 268, 277, 472n2; *Rhetoric* 385, 389, 391, 392, 393, 393n13, 401n22
Armes, William David 130
Arnott, W. Geoffrey 428n26
Arnould, Jean-Claude 416n9, 418
Ascham, Roger 51, 140, 150n29, 199, 344, 365, 366, 369; *The Scholemaster* 150n29, 366
Ashbee, Andrew 176n3
Astington, John 270
Atkin, Tamara 86
Attridge, Derek 78, 86
Auger, Peter 445n7
Augustine 455n21
Aulus Gellius 62
Avezzù, Guido 87n22, 89n24
B. R. (Barnaby Rich?) 205, 446, 449, 449n14, 450
Badius, Jodocus 92, 93
Baldwin, E.C. 130
Baldwins, T.W. 57
Bandello, Matteo 35, 36, 57, 59, 61, 62, 63, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 414n7, 415, 415n8, 416, 417, 418, 419, 421, 423, 424, 428, 429, 430, 432, 433, 434; *Novelle* 410, 412, 428; *Timbreo e Fenicia* 35, 409, 413, 428, 430, 434
Banks, John *The Destruction of Troy* 171
Banno, Joe 125
Barish, Jonas A. 157n41
Barker (Bercker), William 72, 446
Barlow, William 266, 281
Barnes, Joseph 83
Barnfield, Richard *Encomium of Lady Pecunia: or the Praise of Money* 224n3
Barton, Anne 130, 131, 160, 162, 163
Basilikon Doron 217, 445
Bate, Jonathan 20, 336, 432
Bawcutt, N. W. 211n25
Beacham, Richard C. 272
Beaugrande, Robert Alain de 132
Belfort, André 93
Belleforest, François de 35, 36, 57, 59, 61, 413, 414, 414n7, 415, 415n8, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 429n27, 429n28, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435; *Histoires Tragiques* 65, 410, 411, 417, 418, 419, 420, 422, 428
Belsey, Catherine 49n3
Benjamin, Walter 482
Bereblock, John 79
Bernardelli, Andrea 132
Bernstein, Neil 274n19

Betteridge, Thomas 362
Bevington, David M. 173, 200n6
Biet, Christian 452
Bigliazzi, Silvia 22, 25, 25n5, 77, 89, 298, 301, 453
Biles, Zachary 233
Bishop, Tom 34, 35, 337, 476
Blair, Ann 425n23
Bliss, Lee 354
Bloom, Harold 33, 144n22
Boaistuau, Pierre 59, 63, 412, 413, 417, 418, 419, 420, 422; *Histoires Tragiques* 419, 422
Boccaccio, Giovanni 61, 62, 63, 352, 363, 413, 413n6; *Decameron* 59; *Filoloco* 352
Boehrer, Bruce Thomas 160n47
Boiardo, Matteo Maria *Histories* 205; *Orlando Innamorato* 205
Bombace, Gabriele *Alidoro* 81
Booth, Roy 271
Bouchetel, Guillaume *Hecuba* 423
Bourne, Claire 87, 92, 95
Braden, Gordon 17, 18, 20n2, 22, 23, 23n4, 24, 63, 336
Bradley, Jesse Franklin 153n33, 153n34, 153n35, 153n36, 154, 154n37, 155, 158n42
Brandesby, John 199
Brawner, James Paul 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 80, 100, 101, 102
Brock, Heyward D. 269n12
Brooke, Tucker 72, 73, 75
Bryant Davies, Rachel 483n24
Buchanan, George 61, 215, 282, 344, 347, 422, 452, 464; *De Iure Regni Apud Scotos* 215; *Jephthes* 347
Bullough, Geoffrey 27, 57, 64, 412, 418
Burner, Sandra A. 176n3
Burrow, Colin 19, 27, 28, 29, 36, 49, 55, 62, 64, 71, 85, 131, 137n13, 142, 144n22, 147, 301, 435, 482
Butler, Judith 472, 472n2
Cadman, Daniel 445
Caigny, Florence de 457, 460
Calder, W. M. 274
Calfhill, James *Progne* 79
Camden, Willem 131, 140
Camerarius, Joachim 94, 386; *Ajax* 99
Campangne, Hervé-Thomas 416n9, 418, 423
Campion, Thomas *Obseruations in the art of English poesie* 100
Canter, Willem 91, 92, 386
Carion, Johannes *Chronica* 198, 200, 201
Carr, Richard A. 417, 418
Carter, Sarah 131n2, 132n3
Cartwright, Robert 351
Cartwright, William 272n16
Carew, Richard 286n29
Cary, Elizabeth *Mariam* 80n12
Castelvetro, Lodovico 140
Chambers, E.K. 72n1, 72n2
Chapman, Alison A. 185
Chapman, George 170, 171, 172, 173; *The Iliads of Homer Prince of Poets* 170
Charlton, H.B. 21, 443n1, 444n3, 445 , 445n8, 447, 451; *Recreations with the Muses* 447; *The Senecan Tradition in Re-*

naissance Tragedy 21
Charnes, Linda 189
Chaucer, Geoffrey 198, 363; *Canterbury Tales* 201
Chettle, Henry *England's Mourning Garment* 153n34; *Troilus and Cressida* 171n1
Christopherson, John *Jephthah* 347, 362n3, 364, 365, 365n11, 366, 366n16, 370
Christus Patiens (or *Khristos Paskhōn*) 37, 38, 471, 473, 473n5, 473n6, 473n7, 474, 482, 483, 483n24, 483n26, 484, 484n27, 485, 485n33, 485n34, 486, 486n35, 487, 487n37, 488
Cicero 55, 207, 278, 281, 299, 300, 368, 477; *De Natura Deorum* 277, 477
Coffin, Charlotte 20n2
Collinus 22, 89, 90, 91
Compagnon, Antoine 132
Compagnoni Michela 335n1
Conti, Natale 434n33
Cooper, Helen 110, 111,
Cooper, Thomas 65, 451n18
Corcella, Antonio 207
Cotgrave, Randle 266
Craig, D.H. 272n16
Cremona, Nicolas 416
Cruciani, Fabrisio 483n22
Cunliffe, John W. 81, 86, 96, 97, 98
D'Angelo, Fiammetta 277n20
D'Anvers, Alicia 285n29
Dall'Olio, Francesco 31, 32, 36, 76n8, 198n3, 199, 199n5, 203, 203n13, 209n24, 446n10, 453
Daniel, Samuel 100; *Cleopatra* 86; *Philotas* 80n12, 453
Davies, John 55
Davison, P.H. 130
Dawson, Anthony B. 271n15
Day, Alexandra 378, 378n43
Day, John 83
De Grazia, Margreta 56n9
de Guevara, Antonio 27
de la Taille, Jacques *Daire et Alexandre* 453
De Nazianze, Grégoire 473n7
de' Pazzi, Alessandro 83
de Sponde, Jean 172
Della Porta, Giambattista 431
Dekker, Thomas *Troilus and Cressida* 171n1
Delsigne, Jill 337
Demaubus, Thierry 285n27
Demetriou, Tanya 19, 20, 20n2, 34, 35, 36, 47, 47n1, 71, 336, 345n7, 371n27, 411
Derrida, Jacques 114
Dessen, Alan C. 182
Dewar-Watson, Sarah 20n2, 61, 277, 286, 337, 349n9, 420n15, 430n29
Digital Anthology of Early Modern English Drama (EMED) 198
Dillery, John D. 450
Dixon, Dustin W. 264n3, 278
Dodds, E.R. 472, 472n3, 473n5, 474n8, 480n21
Dolce, Lodovico 21, 22, 25, 79, 83, 84, 271; *Didone* 271, 271n13; *Giocasta* 25, 79, 84
Donatus, Aelius 88, 140, 146; *De Comoedia* 86, 88

Donne, John 51, 51n4, 113; *Satire* 51n4
Dowland, John *His golden lock time hath to silver turned* 78
Drakakis, John 49n3, 62
Drant, Thomas 89, 269, 299n1
Dressler, Wolfgang Ulrich 132
Driver, Tom F. 18, 337
Du Bartas, Salluste 279; *Semaines* 444
Duffin, Ross W. 74, 77, 78, 86, 96, 98, 98n29
Dugan, Holly 435
Duncan, Douglas 161n49, 163n52
Duncan-Jones, Katherine 59
Dunn-Hensley, Susan 284n27
Duranti, Marco 20, 20n2, 84
Dutton, Richard 271, 326
Eager, Charles Richard Arthur 264n3
Earley, Benjamin 199, 211, 212
Eden, Kathy 50, 51n4
Edwards, Richard *Damon and Pithias* 101
Edwards, Robert R. 352
Eliot, T.S. 17
Ellerbeck, Erin 154n38
Elton, William R. 282
Elzevier 138
Enders, Jody 285n28
Engel, William 337
Enterline, Lynn 337
Erasmus, of Rotterdam 24, 35, 50, 91, 266n5, 268, 277, 361n1, 362, 368, 371, 371n29, 372, 372n31, 373, 374, 374n37, 376n40, 377n40, 377n41, 379, 379n43, 425, 426, 455, 487n39; *Adagia*, 23n4, 24, 35, 268, 274, 455; *Iphigeneia* 362
Estienne, Henri 94, 199, 211, 386, 387, 446; *Apologia* 199
Estienne, Henri II 446
Euripides 18, 21, 22, 24, 28, 28n7, 33, 36, 38, 63, 82, 83, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 267, 268, 274, 276, 277, 283, 298, 335, 336, 338, 339, 343, 344, 371, 371n29, 372, 372n32, 373, 374, 374n36, 375n40, 377, 378, 379, 379n43, 409, 410, 421, 424, 425, 425n22, 426, 426n24, 427, 428, 429, 429n27, 429n28, 430, 431, 431n30, 432n31, 432n32, 435, 450, 452, 477, 478, 479, 479n19, 481, 484, 486, 487n37; *Alcestis* 33, 34, 36, 48, 61, 335, 337, 343, 344, 347n8, 348, 349, 350, 361, 361n1, 362, 362n4, 369, 369n23, 370, 430, 431; *Andromache* 425, 425n22; *Bacchae* 38, 471, 472, 472n3, 472n4, 473, 473n5, 473n6, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 479n17, 480, 480n20, 480n21, 481, 481n22, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 486n35, 487, 488; *Hecuba* 28, 90, 91, 371n29, 419, 472n2; *Hercules Furens* 90, 93, 274n19; *Hippolytus Stephanophoros* 274, 283n25, 482n22; *Ion* 275; *Iphigenia in Aulis* 35, 91, 264n2, 347, 349, 361, 362, 366, 370, 380, 423; *Iphigenia in Tauris* 35, 264n2, 275, 362; *Medea* 268; *Orestes*

64; *Phoenissae/Phoenician Woman* 35, 389n8; *Troades* 83, 90; *Trojan Women* 48
Evanthius, 88, 324; *De Fabula* 86, 88, 324
Ewbank, Inga Stina 20n2
Fabbro, Elena 227n7, 233
Farrant, Richard 31, 71, 72, 74, 84, 100, 101, 204, 206, 208, 208n23, 209, 210, 211, 213n26, 216, 217, 218, 453; *The Warres of Cyrus king of Persia* 28, 29, 31, 71, 73, 77, 80, 84, 100, 101, 197, 198, 204, 205n16, 208, 209n24, 211, 213n26, 216, 217, 218, 453
Fenton, Geoffrey 59, 63
Ferrari-Barassi, Elena 82n15
Ferris-Hill, Jennifer L. 159n44
Field, Nathan 34, 338, 339, 353, 353n11; The Knight of Malta 339; The Tragedy of Thierry and Theodoret 338; *The Triumph of Love* in *Four Plays, or Moral Representations, in One* 353n11
Fineman, Joel 188
Fiorato, Adelin Charles 412, 416, 419, 419n13
Fishbone, Alan 484n27, 485n34, 487n36
Fletcher, John 33, 34, 335, 337, 338, 339, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354; *The Knight of Malta* 339, 351, 352, 353, 353n11; *The Mad Lover* 346; *The Tragedy of Thierry and Theodoret* 33, 335, 339, 342, 343, 344, 345, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 354
Flower, Francis 78
Follieri, E. 485n31
Forrest, William G. 233n17
Foucault, Michel 25
Fowler, Harold N. 268n11
Frost, David L. 337
Gadamer, Hans-Georg 162
Ganberg, Evgeniia 31
Ganim, John 119
Garnier, Robert 399, 399n19, 452; *Antigone ou la Pieté* 35, 398; *Hyppolite* 283n25
Garrison, John S. 264n3, 278
Gascoigne, George 21, 35; *Jocasta* 21, 25, 34, 82, 84, 101, 362
Geldart, W. M. 306n7
Genest, John 351
Genette, Gérard 131n2, 132, 132n3, 133, 133n4
Gerrish, B. A. 279
Gesta Romanorum 110n2, 119
Giacchero, Marta 200n7
Giamatti, A. Bartlett. 478n14
Gibson, Jonathan 413n5
Gilbert, Allan H. 93n26
Gillespie, Stuart 113
Giovannelli, Maddalena 254n39
Giraldi Cinthio (Cinzio), Giovambattista 81, 81n14, 82, 83, 84, 85, 276; *Intorno al Comporre delle Comedie, et delle Tragedie* 271
Girard, René 160n48
Gismond of Salerne 96, 98, 98n29, 101
Godfrey of Viterbo *Pantheon*

118
Gollancz, Israel 65, 337
Gorboduc 77, 79, 86, 97, 101, 362
Gorris Camos, Rosanna 414n7
Gossett, Suzanne 125
Gosson, Stephen 101n30, 278
Gostwick, Roger 282n24
Goulston, Theodore 268
Gower, John 30, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123; *Confessio Amantis* 109, 110, 112, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 121, 123
Granville, George *Heroick Love* 171
Graves, Dorset 143, 143n21, 266
Graves, Robert B. 266
Greenblatt, Stephen 49, 284, 287
Greene, Thomas 131, 144n22, 478n14
Greene, Robert *Alphonsus of Aragon* 270; *Pandosto* 336, 415
Greg, W.W. 280
Gregory of Nazianzius 476, 476n7, 484, 485
Greville, Fulke *Mustapha* 452
Griffith, Eva 271n14
Grilli, Alessandro 20, 29, 29n8, 30, 31, 131, 135, 136, 138, 141, 142, 158, 159n44, 158n45, 227, 234n19, 234n21, 239n24, 240n26, 298, 324n13, 329n14, 331
Grogan, Jane 102n31, 197, 198, 199n4, 205, 205n16, 206, 207, 207n22, 211, 213n26, 217, 446, 447n11
Gryphius, Andreas 92, 94
Guarini, Battista 276, 276n20; *Il Pastor Fido* 52
Guarini, Battista 52, 276; *Il pastor fido* 52
Guersens, Jules de *Panthée* 453
Gum, Coburn 130, 131, 135, 136, 136n9, 136n11, 141n18, 142, 142n20, 143, 143n21, 147, 152n32, 158, 224n4, 227n8, 228n12, 229, 229n13, 230
Hall, Edith 183
Hall, F. W. 306n7
Hall, Joseph 51, 51n4, 54
Halpern, Richard 471n1
Handley, Eric W. 233n17
Hardin, Richard F. 239n24, 276
Harding, Thomas 278
Harrison, Alick R. W. 238, 238n23
Harrison, George 267n8
Harrison, Tom 33, 34, 131, 163n51, 238n23, 295n1, 296
Hartwell, Abraham 280n22
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich *Antigone* 472, 472n2
Heinsius, Daniel 138, 138n14, 139, 139n16, 146, 148n28, 155, 276, 279, 280, 329n14; *Animadversiones in Horatium* 139; *De satyra Horatiana libri duo* 138; *De tragoediae constitutione liber* 139, 276, 279; *Liber de satyra Horatiana* 148n28
Heliodorus *Aethiopica* 113
Henslowe, Philip 270
Herford, C.H. 130, 164
Herodotus 31, 36, 101, 197, 198,

199, 200, 200n7, 201n7, 202, 203n12, 204, 205, 205n18, 206, 206n20, 207, 208, 208n23, 210, 211, 212, 213n30, 214, 214n32, 215, 217, 218, 426, 443, 446, 447, 447n11, 448, 449, 449n14, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 456, 458, 460, 462, 465; *Histories* 31, 32, 101, 197, 200, 205, 206, 207, 209, 211, 212, 218, 443, 446
Hesiod 206, 250n37
Hewitt, Barnard 269
Heywood, Jasper *Troas* 95
Heywood, Thomas 173, 181, 182, 185, 190, 266, 267; *An Apology for Actors* 266, 267; *Silver Age* 271, 271n14; *The Iron Age* 31, 169, 171, 177, 181, 183
Hill, Eugene D. 199, 203n13, 213n28, 367n18
Historia Apollonii Tyrii 119
Hodges, Cyril Walter 270
Hodgson-Wright, Stephanie 361
Holinshed, Raphael 273
Homer 19, 20, 62, 147, 150, 150n29, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 181, 182, 185, 190, 206, 429, 483; *Iliad* 147, 169, 172, 173, 174, 180, 187, 267, 268,472n2; *Odyssey* 147, 169, 274
Honig, Bonnie 472, 473
Hopkins, Lisa 20n2, 335n1
Horace 30, 33, 51, 85, 89, 93, 93n26, 129, 134, 138, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 158n43, 159, 162, 163, 188, 228n10, 257, 265, 274, 275, 277, 281, 299, 301; *Ars Poetica* 30, 89, 134, 138, 147, 150, 159, 188, 269, 274, 299; *Satires* 30, 134, 158n43, 159
Hoxby, Blair 420n15
Howarth, William D. 275
Howard-Hill, T. H. 85, 86, 89, 90n25
Hubbard, Thomas K. 152n32, 326
Huges, Alan 303
Hughes, Thomas 95, 99; *The Misfortunes of Arthur* 78, 86, 95
Hui, Isaac 144n23
Humble, Noreen 102n31, 199, 207
Hutson, Lorna 58, 137n13, 138n15, 147n27, 410n1
Hutton, James 420n16
Hyde, Mary Morley Crapo 263, 284
Iser, Wolfgang 24, 25, 240n25
Isocrates 35, 245, 362, 362n4, 369, 370, 374, 375n39, 378, 379n43
Jackson, Lucy C. M. M. 347n8
Jackson, Thomas 281
James I, King of England 213, 215, 217
Jauss, Hans Robert 25n5
Jeandet, Abel 420n16
Jones, Emrys 18, 21, 25, 28, 28n7, 50, 82, 84
Jones, Inigo 287
Jones, Norman 77

Jonson, Ben 17, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 47, 52, 129, 130, 131, 133, 134, 134n6, 135, 135n8, 136, 136n11, 137, 137n13, 138, 139, 139n16, 140, 141, 142, 142n20, 143, 143n21, 144, 144n22, 145, 146, 146n25, 147, 147n26, 147n27, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 152n32, 153, 153n33, 153n36, 154, 154n37, 155, 156, 157, 157n41, 158, 158n42, 160n47, 160n48, 161, 161n49, 162, 163, 163n52, 164, 165, 223, 224n1, 224n3, 224n4, 225, 226, 227, 227n7, 227n8, 227n9, 228, 228n10, 228n11, 229, 231, 232, 232n16, 233, 235, 237, 239, 241, 241n28, 242, 242n29, 243, 245, 246, 246n33, 247, 248, 249, 249n36, 251, 254, 255, 256, 257, 257n41, 258, 269, 269n12, 271, 272n16, 275, 286, 287, 295, 295n1, 296, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 302n4, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 324n13, 325, 326, 327, 329, 329n14, 330, 331; *Art of Poetry* 301; *Bartholomew Fair* 135, 141, 165, 183; *Cynthia's Revels* 130, 160; *Discoveries* 33, 136, 137, 137n13, 139, 146, 147n26, 147n27, 155, 165, 276, 296; *Epicene* 33, 301, 302, 318, 318n11, 319, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330; *Every Man In His Humour* 130, 141, 165, 272; *Every Man Out of His Humour* 130, 134, 140, 145, 160, 165, 227n8, 286, 300, 301; *Execration Upon Vulcan* 135n8; *Poetaster* 51, 51n4, 130, 134, 138, 140, 141, 148, 158, 160, 165, 248, 257; *The Alchemist* 141, 156, 157n41, 159, 164, 248, 248n34; *The Case Is Altered* 130, 161, 162, 165, 242n29, 295, 296; *The Devil is an Ass* 136, 136n9, 165; *The Staple of News* 32, 136, 142, 143, 165, 223, 224n4, 228, 229, 232, 232n15, 237, 238, 241, 243, 245, 251, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 300, 302n4, 318; *Volpone* 51, 131, 161, 165, 224n2, 241n28, 329; *Works* 153n36, 154n37
Juvenal 52, 53, 54, 149, 163
Kannicht, Richard
Karim-Cooper, Farah 431n30
Kastner, L.E. 443n1, 444n3, 445, 445n8, 447, 451, 459n25, 463
Kay, W. David 134n5
Kelliher, Hilton 338
Kendal, Gordon 387n5
Kenward, Claire 20n2, 180, 182, 183
Ker, James 455n20
Kerrigan, John 20n2, 47, 47n1, 412, 435n35
Kewes, Paulina 51n4
Kinwelmersh, Francis 35, 82; *Jocasta* 21, 25, 34, 82, 84, 101, 362
Kirchhoff, A. 473n5, 482
Kitto, H.D. 18
Kleinknecht, Hermann 224n5
Kloss, Gerrit 234n21

Koeppel, Emil 346
Konstan, David 239n24
Kortekaas, G. A. A. 110, 113n4
Kyd, Thomas *Cornelia* 86
La Péruse, Jean Bastier de 457; *Medea* 423
Laertius, Diogenes *Life of Plato* 202n9
Lafkidou Dick, Aliki 130, 136n10, 227n8, 228n12
Lamb, Charles 73n5, 348
Lamb, Edel 318n11
Lamb, Mary Ellen 453
Lape, Susan 239n24
Laurot, Bernard 449, 450
Lawrence, Jason 411
Lawrence, W. J. 72n1, 74
Lazarus, Micha 19, 20n2, 22n3, 82n16, 83n18, 94, 336, 370n24, 385, 400, 400n20, 401n22, 424
Lee, Henry Sir 78
Leech, Clifford 337
Leicester, Earl of 63
Lennox, Charlotte 57, 59
Leo, Russ 279, 369n22, 424, 427
Leonard, Miriam 471n1
Lesnick, Henry G. 174
Lever, Katherine 133
Levin, D. N. 449
Levin, Richard 187
Livy 62, 101
Lloyd, William Watkiss 337
Lombardi, Bartolomeo 83
Lombardi Vallauri, Luigi 229n14
Looney, Dennis 205, 206
Lord, Louis E. 134n6
Lost Plays Database (LPD) 206n19
Louden, Bruce 337, 430n29
Lovascio, Domenico 33, 34, 213n29, 338, 354, 445
Love, Harold 232n15
Lucan 34; *Pharsalia* 345
Lumley, Jane 34, 35; *Iphigenia* 375
Lupić, Ivan 472n2
Lydgate, John 186n5, 198, 363
Lynch, John P. 245n31
Mac Góráin, Fiachra 472n3, 480n21
Macaulay, G.C. 120
Macdonald, Robert H. 447n11
Mack, Peter 50
Mackay, Ellen 472, 479, 479n18
Maggi, Vincenzo 83
Maggioni, Maria Luisa 381
Maguire, Laurie 17n1, 49n3, 336
Mallin, Eric S. 188
Manutius, Aldo 89, 90, 91, 92
Manutius, Aldus Junior 89
Mapstone, Sally 444n3, 444n6, 447n11
Markidou, Vassiliki 110, 111
Marlowe, Christopher 25; *Doctor Faustus* 177; *Tamburlaine the Great* 72, 209n24
Marmita, Bernardinus 93
Marsh, Thomas 95
Marshall, Hallie R. 233n18
Marston, John 47, 52, 52n5, 53, 54; *Histriomastix* 264, 286n30; *The Scourge of Villainy* 52
Martial 135, 163
Martin, Randall 145n24, 227n8
Martindale, Charles 18, 20n2, 25
Martindale, Michelle 20n2

Maslen, R. W. 413
Mason, P.G. 472n8
Mason Vaughan, Virginia 264n3
Massinger, Philip 33, 338, 339, 481; *The Knight of Malta* 339; *The Roman Actor* 480; *The Tragedy of Thierry and Theodoret* 338
Mastroianni, Michele 398n18, 422n18
Maximus, Valerius 198
Maxwell, Julie 411
Mazouer, Charles 461
McDiarmid, John F. 203n14
McDonald, Russ 354
McJannet, Linda 110, 110n1
McKeithan, Daniel Morley 337, 342, 343, 343n6
McKenzie, Donald F. 232n16
McManus, Clare 337
McMullan 337
McPherson, David 135, 135n7, 143n21, 146, 227n9
Medda, Enrico 224
Melanchthon, Philipp 50, 64, 399, 400, 400n20, 401n22
Mellows, W. T. 338
Menander 88, 88n23, 150, 151, 239, 240n26, 243, 301; *Aspis* 161n49
Mentz, Steve 113
Meter, J. H. 138n14
Milne, Kirsty 206n21
Milton, John *Areopagitica* 478
Minturno, Antonio 83, 140
Miola, Robert 17n1, 20, 20n2, 21, 22, 22n3, 24, 81, 130, 133, 134n6, 137, 161n49, 224n3, 229n13, 248n35, 284, 336, 387n5, 398n18, 399n19, 412, 430
Minturno, Antonio 83, 140
Moir, Michael A. 171
Montaigne, Michel de 51, 52, 55, 411, 464
Montgomery, Marianne 411n2
Moore, Helen 113
Moreno, Alfonso 239n24
Morosi, Francesco 20, 29, 29n8, 31, 32, 131, 135, 136, 138, 141, 158, 159n44, 159n45, 233n17, 234n20, 234n21, 254n39, 298, 302n4, 307, 318, 324n13, 331
Most, Glenn W. 131n2
Moul, Victoria 158n43, 228n10, 257n41
Mousson, Pierre 443, 463, 463n28, 464, 465; *Croesus liberatus* 443, 463; *Pompeius Magnus* 464; *Tragoedia Cyrus Punitus* 463
Mowat, Barbara 113
Mueller, Martin 415n8, 416, 430n29
Mulready, Cyrus 77n9
Munday, Anthony 206n16, 346; *Zelauto* 205
Munro, Lucy 72, 74, 100, 350, 355
Murnaghan, Sheila 19
Mussio, Thomas E. 410n1, 415n8
Nashe, Thomas 55, 55n8, 62, 146n25; *The Unfortunate Traveller* 55
Natale, Massimo 83n17
Neander, Michael 425n22
Newell, W. R. 102n31, 207
Newton, Francis Souza 86n20;

Tenne Tragedies 86, 86n20, 95, 99; *Oedipus* 86n20; *Thyestes* 86n20
Nicholls, Thomas 199n4
Nicholson, Jennifer E. 411
Nietzsche, Friedrich 472, 472n3, 472n4
Norland, Howard 19, 362, 362n3
North, Thomas 23, 23n4, 25, 446, 462
Norton, Glyn P. 387n5
Nuttall, A. D. 336
Ochester, Edwin F. 178
Ogilby, John 175, 176; *Homer's Iliads and Odysses* 175
Orgel, Stephen 26, 38, 277, 287, 472, 472n3, 473, 479n17, 485n34
Ormerod, Oliver 434n33
Ostovich, Helen 130, 140, 140n17, 147, 298, 330, 331
Ostwald, Martin 233n17, 245n31, 389n7
Ovid 28n7, 55, 56, 59, 60, 62, 63, 163, 177, 178, 337, 420, 429, 461, 478; *Heroides* 420, 461; *Metamorphoses* 55, 177, 337, 420, 478
Ownbey, E. S. 179
Pac(c)uvius, Marcus 18
Pade, Marianne 199
Paduano, Guido 234n19, 386, 386n2
Painter, William 27, 29, 59, 61, 62, 63, 206; *Palace of Pleasure* 27, 59, 61, 63, 206
Palacas, Maria 269n12
Parente, James A. Jr. 484n28, 484n29, 484n31
Payne, Richard 95
Pearse, Nancy Cotton 343, 351, 353
Peck, Russell 116, 119, 120, 121
Peele, George 31, 169, 170, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 181, 185, 190, 264n2, 270, 286n30; *Descensus Astraeae* 286n30; *The Arraignment of Paris* 31, 169, 170, 174; *Iphigenia* 264n2; *The Battle of Alcazar* 270
Pérez Díez, José A. 349
Perris, Simon 472n3, 480n21
Perry, Curtis 79n11, 96n27, 96n28
Persius 52, 53, 54, 148n28, 149
Pettie (Petty), George 27, 34, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62; *Petite Palace* 34, 56, 59
Petrus, Papageorgius 393n12
Petrus, Enricus 92, 94
Peyré, Yves 20n2, 409
Phillips, James E. 452
Piccione, Rosa Maria 425, 426n24
Pieri, Marzia 82n15
Pigman, G.W. 53, 131, 139, 142, 144n22, 387n5
Pitcher, John 337, 339, 342
Plato 49, 55, 150, 151, 154, 155, 202n9, 268; *Apology of Socrates* 155; *Cratylus* 268n11
Plautus 85, 137, 148n28, 151, 151n31, 153, 154, 162, 240, 242, 242n29, 274, 275, 276, 277, 283, 295, 297, 301, 301n3; *Amphitruo* 274, 276, 281; *Asinaria* 301n3; *Aulularia* 162, 240, 242n29, 295;

Captivi 162, 295; *Cistellaria* 301n3; *Epidicus* 301n3; *Miles Gloriosus* 297; *Persa* 301n3; *Poenissae* 301n3
Plutarch 17, 22, 23, 23n4, 24, 26, 36, 48, 62, 63, 66, 101, 199, 205, 420, 443, 446, 447n11, 448, 449, 454, 455, 462, 478, 478n15, 479, 480, 480n20, 481; *How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend* 455; *Life of Crassus* 479, 480n20; *Life of Demetrius* 25; *Life of Phocion* 448; *Life of Solon* 443, 446, 448; *Lives* 22; *Moralia* 448, 478n15; *Parallel Histories* 205, 446; *The Dialogue of Love* 420
Poe, Joe P. 254n39
Poliziano, Angelo 477, 478n14
Pollard, Tanya 19, 20, 20n2, 34, 47, 47n1, 113, 277, 279, 336, 337, 344, 345, 347, 350, 387n5, 422n17, 430n29, 431, 432, 472, 472n2, 476n10, 486
Pollman, Karla 473n6, 483n24, 483n25, 485n31
Poole, Adrian 18
Pope, Alexander 50, 53, 183, 281; *Dunciad* 50, 53, 183
Porter, Chloe 337
Porter, David H. 174, 175
Porter, Joseph A. 411
Potter, John M. 130, 135
Preston, Thomas 31, 197, 198, 199, 200, 202, 202n11, 203, 203n14, 204, 211, 213, 215, 216, 217, 218, 453; *Cambises* 31, 197, 198, 200n6, 202, 203n13, 211, 213, 216, 218, 453
Prouty, Charles Tyler 424, 424n21
Pruvost, René 59, 413n4
Psalms 78, 97
Puttenham, George 100
Quenot, Yvette 420n16
Quint, David 49n3
Quintilian 51, 58, 140; *Institutio* 58
Radt, Stefan
Rainolde, Richard 58, 59, 65; *Foundation of Rhetoric* 58
Raisch, Jane 29, 30, 113
Reardon, B. P. 113n4
Rechner, Leonhard 135
Reid, Lindsay Ann 174n2
Relihan, Constance C. 117
Revermann, Martin 233n18
Reynolds, Matthew 409, 412, 412n3
Reynolds, Paige Martin 174
Rhodes, Neil 47n1, 370n26, 387n5
Richardson, Catherine 170n3, 264, 283n25, 363n6
Rieks, Rudolf 465n28, 464, 465, 465n29
Roberts, Sasha 23
Robortello, Francesco 83, 140
Rogers, Pat 183
Rosen, Ralph M. 233n18
Salingar, Leo 63n10, 280
Sauer, Elizabeth 452
Saxo Grammaticus, *Historia Danica* 65
Scaliger, Julius Caesar 83, 140, 172, 180, 274, 419

Schelling, Felix E. 130, 136n12
Schleiner, Louise 63, 64
Schwartz, Regina 482n23
Scriverius, Petrus 135
Sebillet, Thomas *Iphigenia in Aulis* 423
Segal, Charles 480n21, 481n22
Selden, John 135, 154n37
Seneca, Lucius Anneus 22, 33, 76, 80, 85, 86, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 99, 452, 453, 454, 455, 455n20, 456, 458, 458n24, 459, 460, 461, 461n26, 481, 481n22; *Agamennon* 95; *De Ira* 200; *Hercules furens* 90, 93, 274n19; *Hippolytus* 481; *Medea* 456, 459; *Oedipus* 22, 86n20, 95; *Phaedra* 458, 481, 481n22; *Tenne Tragedies* 86, 86n20, 95, 99; *Troades* 82; *Troas* 95; *Thyestes* 86n20, 95, 283, 455, 456
Settle, Elkanah *The Siege of Troy* 31, 169, 171, 173, 181, 183, 184, 185, 190; *The Virgin Prophetess* 171
Shakespeare, William 17, 18, 22, 23, 25n5, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 47, 48, 49, 50, 54n6, 55, 55n7, 55n8, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 66, 102n31, 109, 110, 111n3, 112, 113, 121, 122, 123, 123n5, 124, 125, 126, 131, 151, 151n31, 153, 170, 181, 186, 186n5, 187, 188, 189, 190, 264, 267, 271, 284, 285, 286, 297, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 342, 344, 345, 345n7, 347, 348, 350, 354, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 415, 415n8, 416, 417, 418, 424n21, 428, 430, 430n29, 431, 321n30, 431n30, 432, 434, 435, 459n24, 463, 482; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 61, 109; *A Winter's Tale* 48, 61, 66, 123; *All Is True; or, King Henry VIII* 338; *Antony and Cleopatra* 22; *As You Like It* 264, 272, 283; *Cymbeline* 55, 56, 109, 267, 285, 286; *First Folio* 151; *Hamlet* 48, 63, 346; *Henry V* 102n31, 123, 124, 411; *King Lear* 18, 34, 47, 63, 227n7, 287, 335, 339, 342, 343, 343n6, 348; *Midsummer Night's Dream* 61, 109, 176; *Much Ado about Nothing* 36, 336, 409, 410, 411, 412, 415, 424, 430, 431, 434, 435; *Pericles* 30, 109, 110, 110n1, 110n2, 111, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 121, 123, 125, 126, 285, 286, 345; *Romeo and Juliet* 61; *The Two Noble Kinsmen* 338; *The Winter's Tale* 27, 34, 36, 124, 335, 336, 337, 339, 342, 343, 344, 345, 347, 348, 353n11, 354, 415n8, 430, 431n30, 463; *Titus Andronicus* 28, 411, 453; *Troilus and Cressida* 31, 54, 170, 186, 187, 188, 190; *Venus and Adonis* 59
Shepherd, Sanford 172
Sherbo, Arthur 352
Shirley, James 31, 169, 171, 173, 175, 176, 176n3, 177, 178,

179, 180, 181, 185, 190; *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses* 31, 169, 171, 177, 179, 180, 181, 183; *The Triumph of Beauty* 171, 176, 176n3, 177
Showerman, Earl 430n29
Shuger, Deborah K. 347, 366n14
Sidney, Mary 63, 86; *Antonius* 86
Sidney, Sir Philip 63, 283, 420n15, 452; *Arcadia* 63
Silk, Michael 18, 23, 336
Simonin, Michel 414n7, 416, 416n9, 418, 419n14, 420n16, 422n19
Simpson, Percy 130
Sisson, C.J. 147n27
Smith, Bruce R. 280, 386, 473, 474
Smith, Emma 17n1, 38, 125, 126
Smith, Gregory G. 150, 150n29, 150n30, 152
Smith, John Hazel 366
Smith, Thomas 204n24, 204, 365, 365n9, 365n10, 370; *De Republica Anglorum* 203n24, 370
Snuggs, Henry L. 93n26
Socrates 137, 139, 143, 154, 155, 160n46, 230, 233, 235, 244, 245, 246, 246n32, 247, 248, 248n35; *Phrontisterion* 143
Sommerstein, Alan H. 143, 225n6, 295n1, 303n5, 311n8
Sonnino, Maurizio 233n18
Sophocles 18, 22, 23n4, 24, 25, 35, 92, 94, 96, 150n29, 336, 385, 385n1, 386, 386n2, 388n4, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393n11, 393, 393n13, 394, 397, 399, 400, 421, 422, 426, 429n27, 429n28, 449, 450, 450n15, 460; *Ajax* 94, 96; *Antigone* 35, 385, 385n1, 386, 386n1, 386n2, 387, 387n4, 390, 391, 392, 393n13, 394, 397, 398n18, 399, 450; *Oedipus at Colonus* 18, 63; *Oedipus Tyrannus* 449, 460; *Tragōdiai hepta* (*Tragoediae Septem*) 94, 401
Soubeille, Georges 422
Sowerby, Robin 172
Spenser, Edmund 150n30, 174n2, 205, 205n16, 213n26, 478; *The Faerie Queen* 205, 213n26
Sponde, Jean de 172, 173
Statius 34, 345; *Thebais* 345
Steggle, Matthew 224n4, 227n8, 228n11, 228n12, 229n13, 245n30, 272, 285
Steinsaltz, David 411n2
Stelzer, Emanuel 32
Stenuit, Bernard 93n26
Stern, Tiffany 73, 77n9, 271
Sternhold, Thomas 78
Stiblinus, Gasparus 90, 91, 92
Sticca, Sandro 483n24, 484n30, 485n32
Stilma, Astrid 445
Stobaeus, Ioannes 409, 425, 425n23, 426, 426n24, 427, 428n26, 429, 429n27
Strabo 27
Strauss, Berry S. 233n17
Studley, John 264n2; *Agamemnon* 99; *Hercules Oetaeus*

264n2
Sturel, René 413n4, 426, 428
Sturm, Johannes 50, 51
Suthren, Carla 22, 24, 369, 369n23, 374n37, 427n25, 430n29, 431n30, 434n34, 451n18, 4556n23, 471n1
Sutton, Dana F. 233n17, 273, 386n3
Syme, Holger Schott 411
Tamisier, Pierre 420, 421, 422
Taverner, Richard 200, 202n10, 203, 204, 455; *Garden of Wysedome* 198
Taylor, A.B. 20n2
Taylor, Gary 49n2, 278, 284
Telò, Mario 233n17, 237n22
Temple, Camilla 180
Terence 85, 87, 88, 151, 151n31, 152, 153, 162, 163, 242
Thayer, C. G. 130
Thucydides 199n4, 392n11
Tomita, Soko 413n4, 413n5, 413n6, 417n11
Tomkis, Thomas 154, 154n38; *Lingua* 154, 154n38, 155
Tottel, Richard 95, 363
Trissino, Gian Giorgio 83
Tucker, George Hugo 484n24
Tuilier, André 473n7, 484n29, 485n31
Twine, Laurence *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* 110n2
Ulrich, Otto 342
Ugolini, Gherardo 34, 35, 389n7
Upton, John 156, 157, 157n40, 158
Valla, Lorenzo 199, 446, 449, 449n14, 454, 460
Valls-Russell, Janice 20n2, 36, 37, 47n1, 213n30, 455n20
Vegetti, Mario 245n31
Vettori, Pier 83, 89
Voltaire 155
Xanthaki-Karamanou, Georgia 473n6, 483n24, 483n26, 487n37
Xenophon 31, 36, 62, 72, 75, 76, 76n8, 101, 102, 197, 199, 204, 205, 205n16, 206, 207, 208, 208n23, 210, 211, 218, 443, 446, 447n11, 448, 449, 449n13, 451, 453; *Cyropaedia* 72, 197, 199n4, 204, 206n20, 207, 208, 217, 218, 443, 446, 451; *Oeconomicus* 199n4
Xylander 91
Walker, Greg 362
Walker, Jonathan 477n13
Wall-Randell, Sarah 55
Waller, Giles 485n34
Walpole, Horace 370n25
Walter, Melissa 410n1
Warner, G. F. 447n11
Warner, William 205, 205n16; *Pan his Syrinx* 205
Warren, Michael 49n2
Warren, Roger 110n2, 112n3, 113, 124
Warwick, Earl of 63
Warwick Bond, R. 280
Watson, Thomas 23n4, 34, 35, 362, 362n3, 364, 365, 366, 385, 386, 386n3, 387, 388, 388n6, 389, 393, 393n13, 393n14, 394, 395, 395n15, 396, 397, 397n16, 397n17, 398, 399, 401; *Absalom* 362, 364, 366,

366n13; *Antigone* 34, 35, 385, 386, 386n3, 395n15, 394, 395n15, 396, 398; *Argumentum* 394, 396; *Ekathompathia* 23n4; *Sophoclis Antigone* 386n3
Webbe, William 99, 150, 151, 152; *A Discourse of English Poetrie* 99, 150
Weimann, Robert 19
Wessner, Paul 87, 88, 88n23, 250n37
West, M. L. 250n38
West, William N. 38, 478n14
White, Paul 77
White, Rachel 295n1
White, Robert Sommerville 400n19
Whitfield White, Paul 77
Whitman, Cedric H. 233n17
Whittington, Leah 20n2
Wiener, Fritz 393n14
Wiggins, Martin 71, 72n1, 73n5, 170n3, 264, 283n25, 336, 342, 351, 351n10, 363n6, 450n17, 453
Wilmot, Robert 96, 97, 98, 99, 99n29; *Tancred and Gismund* 96, 97, 98, 99n29, 99
Wilson, Douglas B. 337, 344, 430n29
Wilson, Louise 387n5
Wilson, Nigel G. 225n6
Winsheim, Veit 387, 399, 400, 400n20, 400n21
Winshemius Vitus 94
Winston, Jessica 455n20
Wittgenstein, Ludwig 33, 297
Wittreich, Joseph 484n31, 485n34
Wood, James 265, 265n5; *Shepperdy Spiritualiz'd* 265
Wood, Anthony à 175; *Athenae Oxonienses* 175
Wood, Nigel 25n5
Worth-Stylianou, Valerie 387n5
Wright, Jonathan 365n11
Wright, Matthew 233n18
Wriothesley, Henry, Earl of Southampton 55
Wynne-Davies, Marion 371n30, 378, 379n43
Yachnin, Paul 271n15
Zaccaria, Vittorio 419

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