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ESSAY

A Century of Scholarly Neglect: Shakespeare and Greek Drama

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HIGHLIGHTS

Poet Ben Jonson claimed that Shakespeare knew "small Latin and less Greek," yet it seems that the author actually knew much Greek and was familiar with many of the ancient Greek tragedies. The Stratford man arguably had no access to learning the language or to these ancient works, many of which were not translated into English during his lifetime.

ABSTRACT

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a number of Shakespeare scholars, including Israel Gollancz (1894), H.R.D. Anders (1904), J. Churton Collins (1904), and Gilbert Murray (1914) wrote convincingly of Shakespeare's debt to classical Greek drama. However, in the century since, most scholars and editors have repeatedly held that Shakespeare was not familiar with Greek drama. In Classical Mythology in Shakespeare (1903), Robert Kilburn Root expressed the opinion on Shakespeare's 'lesse Greek' that presaged this enduring dismissal: "It is at any rate certain that he nowhere alludes to any characters or episodes of Greek drama, that they extended no influence whatsoever on his conception of mythology." (p. 6) This century-long consensus against Attic dramatic influence was reinforced by A.D. Nutall, who wrote, "that Shakespeare was cut off from Greek poetry and drama is probably a bleak truth that we should accept." (Nutall, 2004, p.210) Scholars have preferred to maintain that Plutarch or Ovid were Shakespeare's surrogate literary mediators for the playwright's adaptations from Greek myth and theatre. Other scholars, however, have questioned these assumptions, including Laurie Maguire, who observed that "invoking Shakespeare's imagined conversations in the Mermaid tavern is not a methodology likely to convince skeptics that Shakespeare knew Greek drama." (p. 98) This near-universal rejection of Greek drama as Shakespeare sources have profound philological implications. Indeed, this essay argues that the proscription against recognizing the Attic canon as an influence in Shakespeare has been driven by the belief that Will Shakspere of Stratford had, at most, an education that was Latin-based. The examples show that the real author had to have been exposed to both the Greek language and the Greek dramatists. Evidence for alternative candidates, including Edward de Vere, shows that many were schooled in Greek and that some even collected and supported translations of Greek works. It is my contention that Shakespeare's dramatic imagination was actually fired by the Greeks, and Shakespeare research has clearly suffered from a century of denial.

KEYWORDS

Shakespeare, Shakespeare Authorship Question, Greek drama, Shakespeare's "less Greek", Edward de Vere

INTRODUCTION

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a number of Shakespeare scholars, including Israel Gollancz (1894), H.R.D. Anders (1904), and J. Churton Collins (1904), as well as Greek scholar Gilbert Murray (1914), wrote convincingly of Shakespeare's debt to classical Greek drama. However, in the century since, most scholars and editors have repeatedly held that Shakespeare was evidently not familiar with Greek drama. In *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (1903), Robert Kilburn Root expressed the opinion on Shakespeare's 'lesse Greek' that presaged this enduring dismissal: "It is at any rate certain that he nowhere alludes to any characters or episodes of Greek drama, that they extended no influence whatsoever on his conception of mythology" (p. 6).

This century-long consensus against Attic dramatic influence has been reinforced in the 21st century by Shakespeare critics A.D. Nutall (2004), Michael Silk (2004), and Colin Burrow (2013). Tradition-bound scholars have more often maintained that Seneca, Plutarch, or Ovid were Shakespeare's surrogate literary mediators for his apparent adaptations from Greek myth. However, Shakespeare's imagined conversations with university wits in London pubs are not likely to convince critics that Shakespeare knew, and adapted to his own purposes, elements from Greek drama.

The century-long, near-universal rejection of the dramas of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides as Shakespeare sources has profound epistemological implications as the proscription against the intertextual influence of the Attic canon has been driven by the knowledge that grammar school education in the 16th century was Latin-based, and that published translations of Greek tragedies were extremely rare. Perhaps more problematic yet is the possibility that the attribution challenge posed by alternative candidates, including Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, who was schooled in Greek, and collected and supported translations of Greek editions, could legitimately challenge the traditional narrative of authorship. The recent theory of co-authorship of the Shakespeare canon is at least partially driven by the philological evidence of these untranslated Greek sources.

Despite the consensus ranging from Root to Burrow, the textual and dramaturgic resonances between Greek tragedy and Shakespeare has long been the subject of scholarly interest. In *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy* (1908), Laughlan Maclean Watt perceptively identified the analogous dramatic flowering in historical context that equally suits the Golden Age of Athens and the Elizabethan eras:

> Perhaps in all the history of the fluctuation, conflict, and yearning of the world, there are not recorded any periods more fraught with influences, environments, and provocations of greatness than in the age in which Attic Tragedy rose and flourished, and that in which the genius of the Elizabethan era found its highest utterance on the English Tragic stage. (p. 2)

Watt's detailed comparative analysis of ancient Greek and Elizabethan drama posits a number of remarkable similarities between these traditions, that "irony of fate" was strong in both traditions, and that in Aeschylus and Shakespeare evil was overcome by good, and that Sophocles and Shakespeare shared a "pride of race, deep sympathetic insight, and knowledge of humanity unexcelled, bringing them often into contact, one with another.... both in spirit aristocratic..." (p. 345). Watt, however, never argued that Shakespeare might have been directly inspired by Greek tragedy, or that his plays and poems included specific textual connections to these dramas. Perhaps Watt's reluctance to make such an assertion was tempered by the prevailing scholarly opinion as expressed by his contemporary Robert Root.

In *Shakespeare's England*, John Edwin Sandys asserted that any proposed textual parallels "...have failed to carry conviction with calm and cautious critics. They have been justly regarded either as 'no more than curious accidents – proof of consanguinity of spirit, not of any indebtedness on Shakespeare's part' or as due to the 'general literary and theatrical tradition' that had reached the Elizabethan dramatists 'through Seneca'"(p. 265). Seventy-five years later, critical opinion remained absolute in its skepticism. In *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity*, Michelle and Charles Martindale (1990) similarly argued that the difficulty in translating Greek dramatic poetry and the absence of scholarly interest in this question has undermined the viability of any such claim:

> Any Greek language Shakespeare had would not have been sufficient to allow him to read the extremely taxing poetry of the fifth century B.C. Renaissance culture remained primarily Latin-based;...Moreover, despite all efforts, no one has succeeded in producing one single piece of evidence from the plays to make any such debt certain, or even particularly likely. (p. 41)

This discounting of Attic dramatic influence was reinforced again more recently in *Shakespeare and the Classics*, an essay collection edited by Charles Martindale and A.B. Taylor (2004). In "Action at a distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks", A.D. Nuttall wrote:

> That Shakespeare was cut off from Greek poetry and drama is probably a bleak truth that we should accept. A case can be made – and has been made – for Shakespeare's having some knowledge of certain Greek plays, such as Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Euripides' *Orestes, Alcestis,* and *Hecuba*, by way of available Latin versions, but this, surely, is an area in which the faint occasional echoes mean less than the circumambient silence. When we consider how hungrily Shakespeare feeds upon Ovid, learning from him or extending him at every turn, it becomes more evident that he cannot, in any serious sense, have found his way to Euripides. (p. 210)

In the book's succeeding chapter, "Shakespeare and Greek Tragedy: Strange Relationship", Michael Silk ironically admits that there are numerous "unmistakable" commonalities between Shakespeare and the Greeks, but simply echoes the platitudes of accepted authority: "There is no reason to suppose that Shakespeare ever encountered any of the Greek tragedians, either in the original language or otherwise" (Silk, 2004, p. 241).

Several critics have maintained that Shakespeare learned the conventions and plots of Greek drama by way of Thomas North's translation of *Plutarch's Parallel Lives of the Noble Greeks and Romans* (1579). In S*hakespeare and the Classics*, J. A. K. Thompson (1952) wrote that he was "content with throwing out the suggestion that, through the medium of North's *Plutarch*, Shakespeare divined the true spirit of Greek Tragedy" (p. 250).

The reception of Thompson's suggestion that Plutarch was the surrogate literary mediator for the Shakespeare adoptions from Greek drama was reinforced most recently by Oxford University Senior Fellow Colin Burrow in *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity*. Burrow (2013) includes extended chapters on Virgil, Ovid, Roman Comedy, Seneca, and Plutarch as sources for Shakespeare, but rejects the possibility that Shakespeare was influenced directly by the dramatic literature of 5th-century Athens:

> Shakespeare almost certainly never read Sophocles or Euripides (let alone the much more difficult Aeschylus) in Greek, and yet he managed to write tragedies which invite comparison with those authors. He did so despite the limitations of his classical knowledge and perhaps in part because of them. He read Plutarch in North's translation rather than reading Sophocles in Greek. This means that he read a direct, clear statement about the relationship between divine promptings and human actions rather than plays in which complex thoughts about the interrelationship between human and divine agency were buried implicitly within a drama. Having 'less Greek' could therefore have enabled him to appear to understand more about Greek tragedy, and its complex mingling of voluntary actions and divine promptings, than he would have done if he had actually been able to work his way through Aeschylus and Euripides in the first place. (p. 247)

A century-old tradition of scholarship also exists, however, which engaged the question of Greek tragedy and tragicomedy being directly connected to a number of Shakespeare's dramas. J. Churton Collins was the first 20th-century critic to take this broader view. In *Studies in Shakespeare*, Collins (1904) identified a number of 16th-century Latin translations of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides that were published on the Continent, and he asserted that it was "improbable, almost to the point of being incredible, that Shakespeare should not have had the curiosity to turn to them" (p. 41).

Other 20th-century critics who have investigated this question include renowned Greek scholar Gilbert Murray, and Shakespeare scholars Jan Kott and Louise Schleiner, who have all argued convincingly that Aeschylus' *Oresteia* influenced *Hamlet*.[1] Inga Stina-Ewbank has proposed that Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* was a source for *Macbeth*, and others have similarly identified Greek dramatic elements in that play.[2] Jonathan Bate, Sarah Dewar-Watson, and Claire McEachern have all acknowledged that Euripides' tragicomedy *Alcestis* influenced the final scenes of both *The Winter's Tale* and *Much Ado about Nothing*.[3] George Stevens, J.A.K. Thompson, and Emrys Jones have argued that *Titus Andronicus* was indebted to Euripides' *Hecuba* and Sophocles' *Ajax*, while A.D. Nuttall has detected evidence that Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* influenced *Timon of Athens*. However, like so many before him, Nutall is obliged to refer to his insightful comparative analysis as only pressing an analogy.

Oxford University Professor Laurie Maguire (2007) has contextualized the embarrassing argument over Shakespeare's knowledge of Euripides in *Shakespeare's Names*:

> Reluctant to argue that Shakespeare's grammar-school Greek could read Euripides, critics resort to social supposition to argue their case. Charles and Michelle Martindale suggest that 'five minutes conversation with a friend could have given Shakespeare all he needed to know'

> as does Nutall: 'If we suppose what is simply probable, that he (Shakespeare) talked in pubs to Ben Jonson and others....' I agree with these suppositions, as it happens, but invoking the Mermaid tavern is not a methodology likely to convince skeptics that Shakespeare knew Greek drama. (p. 98)

Maguire devoted six pages to examining the availability in England of Continental editions of Latin and Italian translations of Euripides' plays. London printers evidently lacked the expertise to print parallel Latin and Greek texts of high quality. Citing contemporaneous literature that alluded to or quoted Euripides in dramas, sermons, political treatises, and commonplace books, Maguire concluded, "The availability of parallel-text editions with clear Latin translations and explanatory apparatus made it easy for anyone with an interest to read Euripides" (p. 103-104).

However, it should be noted that continental translations of the dramas of Aeschylus and Sophocles were quite rare and therefore difficult to establish as Shakespearean sources. In *Ancient Scripts and Modern Experience on the English Stage 1500-1700*, Bruce Smith (1998) states:

> In the same period, there were, to be sure, eighteen translations of the plays of Sophocles, but they were concentrated almost exclusively on only three plays, *Antigone*, *Oedipus Rex*, and *Electra*. By 1600, there was not even one translation of a play by Aeschylus in Italian, French, English, German, or Spanish. (p. 203)

Professor Root's century-old opinion has recently come under challenge on multiple fronts. For 21st-century Shakespeare authorship studies, this may well represent a philological Achilles heel to the traditional attribution. No one has contextualized this cognitive dissonance better than Andrew Werth, whose 2002 paper, "Shakespeare's 'Lesse Greek'" deftly exposed one of the great lacunae in Renaissance scholarship: the near-complete absence of published studies of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Greek dramatic literature. Werth provided numerous examples and critical commentaries that support the conclusion that Shakespeare drew directly from Greek epic and drama, and noted how scholars have often expressed conflicted opinions over the significance of these intriguing textual echoes. Published in *The Oxfordian V*, Werth's arguments have been cited by no less authority than Professor Stanley Wells, who praised Werth's insights during a speech to the World Shakespeare Congress in 2011.[4]

Brooklyn College Professor Tanya Pollard has most recently explored this question, citing Werth, as well as several of my articles in her study, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*. Pollard's (2017) review departs radically from the traditional narrative by showing how ancient Greek drama exerted a powerful, but essentially uncharted influence on Renaissance England's dramatic landscape:

> Identified with the origins of theatrical performance, and represented especially by passionate female figures, these newly visible Greek plays challenged early modern writers to reimagine the affective possibilities of tragedy, comedy, and the emerging hybrid genre of tragicomedy. (p. 2)

Pollard insightfully identifies the Greek sources of Shakespeare's distinctive adaptations of comedy, ones that emphasized affecting audiences through the performance of female passions, which contrasts with satiric playwrights like Jonson, Middleton, and Marston, whose comedies most often featured male protagonists seeking revenge or usurpation:

> Plays such as *Comedy of Errors* and *Twelfth Night* depart from their Plautine models with Greek-inflected settings, and allusions to Greek prose fictions and lamenting female figures.... In *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Pericles*, and *The Winter's Tale*, suffering female figures evoke Alcestis by reviving triumphantly after apparent death, drawing on self-consciously Greek female institutions such as the Delphic Oracle and the Temple of Diana at Ephesus. (Pollard, 2017, p. 22)

Besides detailing Shakespeare's reinvention of Euripidean representations of Hecuba, Iphigenia, and Alcestis, Pollard provides extensive evidence of Greek fluency among the 'university wits', as well as 60 pages of appendices of Continental publications and translations of Greek plays during the 16th century. However, Pollard does not extend arguments posed by Murray, Collins, Kott, or Schleiner regarding the evidence of Shakespeare's debt to Aeschylus or Sophocles in writing his tragedies.

This century-long controversy has profound implications regarding the very origins of dramatic art and the superimposed blinders of literary biography on these philological considerations. The following discourse will undertake to review the scholarship affirming that Shakespeare's mythopoetic imagination was fired by the Greek example. That he incorporated numerous plots, themes,

dramaturgy, allusions, tropes, allegory, and words taken from the Greek canon is credible and worthy of detailed, play-by-play investigations. The following dramas have attracted the most scholarly attention.

Hamlet

For a Nordic tragedy, *Hamlet* encompasses a profusion of classical allusions in the text, with repeated references to Hercules and Alexander the Great. The themes of royal assassination, inherited fate, ghostly visitation, intergenerational murder, tainted food and wine, violated sanctuary, and maimed burial rites woven into *Hamlet* exactly echo the tragic narratives of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. No scholar has better explicated these analogs than Gilbert Murray, whose brilliant 1914 Shakespeare lecture to the British Academy, *Hamlet, and Orestes: A Study in Traditional Types*, identified many remarkable similarities between Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Euripides' *Orestes* dramas, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*:

> There are first the broad similarities of situation between what we may call the original sagas on both sides; that is, the general story of Orestes and Hamlet, respectively. But secondly, there is something much more remarkable; when these sagas were worked up into tragedies, quite independently and on very different lines, by great dramatists of Greece and England, not only do most of the old similarities remain, but a number of new similarities are developed. That is, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Shakespeare are strikingly similar in certain points which do not occur at all in Saxo or Ambales or the Greek epic. (p. 14)

Murray was England's foremost Greek scholar during the first half of the 20th century and is credited with numerous translations of Attic dramas and the revival of classical Greek theatre in London. Murray stopped short of claiming that Shakespeare was directly influenced by Greek tragedy, repeating the old saw that "all critics" have opposed this theory. As an alternative explanation, Murray proposed there exists a set of universal principles particular to tragedy that help explain these anomalies:

> Are we thrown back then, on a much broader and simpler though rather terrifying hypothesis, that the field of tragedy is by nature so limited that these similarities are inevitable?... I do not think that in itself it is enough to explain those close and detailed and fundamental similarities as those we are considering... there must be a connection somewhere. (p. 15)

Over the century since Murray published his remarkable insights, other scholars have confirmed his judgment. Another Greek specialist, H. D. F. Kitto[5], has also identified Greek dramatic elements in *Hamlet*. In 1990, the *Shakespeare Quarterly* published Professor Louise Schleiner's detailed analysis, which went further than any other 20th-century critic in proposing a direct influence of Aeschylus' trilogy on *Hamlet*, mediated through one of the continental Latin translations:

> I am convinced that at least some passages of Euripides' Orestes and Aeschylus' *Oresteia* ... by some means influenced *Hamlet*. The concrete theatrical similarities between the Shakespearean and Aeschylean graveyard scenes and between the roles of Horatio and Pylades ... are, in my view, too close to be coincidental. Furthermore, the churchyard scene of *Hamlet* does not occur in any of the play's known sources or analogs: if it was not a sheer invention ... it has some source not yet identified. (Schleiner, p. 30)

Schleiner proposed several possible sources of Latin translations of Aeschylus, including the Saint-Revy edition (Basel, 1555) and the Vettori Aeschylus editions published by Henri Estienne (Paris, 1557, 1567). She noted that Ben Jonson owned a copy of the Saint-Revy *Oresteia* in 1614:

> ... The Greek subtext of *Hamlet*, if such it is, will not only help account for the rebirth of full-fledged tragedy after 2,000 years, it will also clarify Horatio's role and correct our century's overemphasis on oedipal qualities in *Hamlet*. For Shakespeare's Hamlet is much more a version – even a purposive revision – of Orestes than Oedipus. Hamlet is at no risk of marrying or having sex with his mother. He is at considerable risk of killing her. (Schleiner, pp. 36-37)

Martin Mueller has most recently advanced the notion of a direct connection in his recognition of how *Hamlet* engages the legacy of ancient tragedy through a web of allusive ties to Orestes-centered dramas. Mueller (1997) also insightfully notes that Shakespeare's contemporaries left literary evidence that they thought of *Hamlet* as an Orestes-inspired play:

> In Thomas Heywood's *The Iron Age* (1611), a dramatization of the Orestes myth, we find a closet

> scene between Orestes and Clytemnestra. Further, *The Tragedy of Orestes*, Written by Thomas Goffe, Master of Arts, and Students of Christ Church in Oxford and Acted by the Students of the Same House in 1616, while full of Shakespearean echoes in general, reads at times like a *Hamlet* cento. It is evident that Heywood and Goffe saw Orestes as Hamlet because they had seen Hamlet as Orestes. (Mueller, p. 27)

All this to say, there is literary evidence that Shakespeare's contemporaries appreciated his use of Greek drama in writing this greatly admired tragedy, and that 20th-century Greek scholars recognized numerous analogs. The question arises about why the possibility of Greek influences has never been fully addressed by editors of modern editions of *Hamlet*.

Macbeth

The chilling, supernatural world of *Macbeth* similarly echoes elements featured in the *Oresteia*, but Aeschylus' trilogy, as a direct source for *Macbeth*, has never received the critical attention bestowed on *Hamlet*. Remarkably, one early scholar recognized that of the entire canon, "*Macbeth* most resembles a Greek tragedy"[6], and J. A. K. Thompson (1952) even noted this close association in *Shakespeare and the Classics*:

> *Macbeth* is, in many respects, the most classical of all Shakespeare's plays. It employs more powerfully and overtly than any other, the method of tragic irony, which gets its effects by working on the foreknowledge of the audience – here communicated by the Witches -.... And the killing of Duncan is, in the Greek manner, done off stage. (p. 119)

In his detailed commentaries on the sources of *Macbeth*, however, Thompson ignored the Greek tragedies, and focused primarily on Seneca's *Hercules Furens* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as more likely to have been Shakespeare sources.

Thompson is not the only scholar to identify analogs to Greek tragedy in *Macbeth* and then drop further investigation. In *Shakespeare Survey 19: Macbeth*, general editor Kenneth Muir (1966) wrote that "*Macbeth* has long been considered one of Shakespeare's most sublime plays, if only because of the analogs between it and Greek tragedies" (p. 5). Muir's essay collection included insightful commentaries by Arthur McGhee on "*Macbeth* and the Furies".

Among the early critical opinions linking *Macbeth* to the *Oresteia* that are cited in Horace Howard Furness' *Variorum* edition (1873, 1903) was one expressed by Lord Campbell (Lord High Chancellor of England and author of *Shakespeare's Legal Acquirements Reconsidered*, 1859). Campbell determined that *Macbeth* reminded him of Aeschylus primarily because both playwrights employed conceptions too bold for easy representation:

> In the grandeur of tragedy, *Macbeth* has no parallel, until we go back to *The Prometheus and The Furies* of the Attic stage. I could produce ... innumerable instances of striking similarity between the metaphorical mintage of Shakespeare's and Aeschylus's style - a similarity, both in beauty and in the fault of excess, that, unless the contrary had been proved, would lead me to suspect our great dramatist to have been a studious Greek scholar. But their resemblance arose only from the consanguinity of nature. (Furness, p. 480)

Of all 20th-century Shakespeare scholars, J. Churton Collins provided the most detailed consideration of a direct link between *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' trilogy. Citing a number of potential inter-textual echoes to Greek tragedy, Collins (1904) noted these similarities in characterization:

> Clytemnestra in *The Agamemnon* might well be the archetype of Lady Macbeth. Both possessed by one idea are, till its achievement, the incarnations of a murderous purpose. In both, the motive impulses are from the sexual affections. Both, without pity and without scruple, have nerves of steel and wills of iron before which their husband and paramour cower in admiring awe, and yet in both beats the women's heart; and the fine touches which Aeschylus brings this out may well have arrested Shakespeare's attention. The profound hypocrisy of the one in her speech to Agamemnon answers to that of the other in her speeches to Duncan. (pp. 72-73)

Collins described how the build-up to Duncan's murder and the murder itself, with Lady Macbeth waiting in suspense outside the King's chamber, have a "strong generic resemblance to the catastrophes of the *Choephoroe* (*Libation Bearers*), the *Electra* (of Sophocles) and the *Orestes* (of Euripides)" (p. 73).

Collins was aware that the works of Aeschylus had never been published in England, and simply accepted

that for his later plays, "we must assume that instinct led Shakespeare to the Greek conception of the scope and functions of tragedy and that by a certain natural affinity, he caught also the accent and tone as well as some of the most striking characteristics of Greek tragedy" (p. 87). Despite the intriguing possibilities proposed by Collins, only a handful of Shakespeare scholars have continued to explore various dramatic elements that link the Scottish play to Greek tragedy.

In *Ethical Aspects of Tragedy*, Laura Jepsen (1971) compared *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* and focused on the principle of "poetic justice" and the tension between individual responsibility and hereditary guilt as defining the heroic struggle. "Like Aristotle, the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare generally conceive of a universe in which standards of morality are absolute" (p. 6). Jepsen argued that the guilty conscience assailing Macbeth was akin to Nemesis, which furiously pursued Clytemnestra, and she also notes that both characters never showed a sign of repentance. Macbeth is at "the end, deceived by the witch's prophecies, but like Clytemnestra calling for the battle-axe, he dies defiantly presenting his shield" (p. 31). While Jepsen presented a detailed comparative analysis of the plots, characters, and ethics of these two tragedies, she never contended that Aeschylus directly influenced Shakespeare.

In *Tragedy: Shakespeare and the Greek Example*, Professor Adrian Poole (1987) noted that Aeschylean tragedy is uniquely rich in the "power to represent fear, its symptoms, sources, objects and consequences. *Macbeth* is in this sense Shakespeare's most Aeschylean tragedy" (p. 15)[7]. Poole accurately portrayed the restless confusion and insomnia from painful memories that possessed the characters of both the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*, giving rise to a "vertiginous apprehension". Poole noted that Lady Macbeth, like Clytemnestra, "exhibits an astonishing self-control, a violent seizure of language through which she seeks to control herself and others" (p. 19).

Poole's analysis even included a recognition of the similarities of the dramatic situations of the avenging sons, Orestes and Malcolm, and he goes so far as to suggest that the English Siwards (Earls) in *Macbeth* serve as the equivalent of Aeschylus' *Pylades*, as "guarantors of a justice whose source lies elsewhere, beyond the confines of natural corruption" (p. 49). However, Professor Poole, like so many scholars beforehand, stops short of ever making the radical proposal that Shakespeare drew directly from Aeschylus.

Despite these obvious parallels in plot, dramaturgy, characterization, and supernatural terror, no current edition of *Macbeth* suggests Aeschylus as a possible source. The images, allusions, and thematic parallels that connect these tragedies are summarized in my article, "Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Oresteia*" (*Brief Chronicles 3*, 2011). The arguments therein concern parallels related to the fatal "trammel net", the dramaturgy of bloody knives, ghostly visitation, night terrors, the "damned spot", poisoned breast imagery, avian augury, and the Weird Sisters as latter-day Furies. I believe these all represent new textual and thematic evidence which draws Shakespeare ever closer to Aeschylus than previously recognized, and establishes *Macbeth* as Shakespeare's closest representation of Attic tragedy.

Finally, in a recent report, "'Striking too short at Greeks': The Transmission of *Agamemnon* to the English Renaissance Stage", Professor Inga-Stina Ewbank (2005) remarks on the "eclecticism of Shakespeare's inter-textualizing" included her "growing sense that Shakespeare learned from the Aeschylean chorus, with its intimate (and totally un-Senecan) connection with the house and the city" (p. 51). Ewbank's commentaries trace the history of neoclassical representations of Aeschylus' characters. According to Ewbank, the Saint-Revy translation appears to have been the version of Aeschylus commonly read by humanists on the Continent and in England. Importantly, the Saint-Revy edition was based on an incomplete manuscript which compressed the *Agamemnon* and the *Libation Bearers* into one play in which Agamemnon never appears as a character.[8]

Professor Ewbank also recognizes that Thomas Goffe's *The Tragedie of Orestes* (1616) revealed another recognizable connection between Shakespeare and Aeschylus. Ewbank (2005) noted that in Goffe's drama, "Aegisthus and Clitemnestra become like the Macbeths: he invokes the 'sable wings' of Night and Clitemnestra 'unsexes' herself, and together they stab Agamemnon in his bed.... Orestes, meditating on his father's skull, Hamlet-fashion, finds assurance in a Macbeth-like visit to an Enchantress and three witches who produce, to the accompaniment of '*Infernall Musique*', a dumb show of Aegisthus and Clitemnestra '*with their bloody daggers*' killing Agamemnon." (Ewbank, p. 49)

Ewbank fails, though, to satisfactorily answer questions of how, in 1616, Goffe incorporated dramatic elements later found in *Macbeth*, which was not published until seven years later in the First Folio. Nonetheless, her conclusion sounds a positive note regarding the potential here: "We need to know more about the part played by Greek texts in Elizabethan and Jacobean literary culture, but evidence seems to mount up that some form of first-hand contact with Aeschylus has left traces in Shakespeare's dramatic imagination" (Ewbank, p. 52).

Timon of Athens

Compared to other Shakespeare plays, *Timon of Athens* is an austere and static drama, almost completely lacking in action. In his annotated bibliography, John Ruszkiewicz notes the generically mixed qualities of *Timon*, "a play conceived as tragedy, but incorporating elements of morality, comedy, farce, satire, masque and pageant:" (Ruszkiewicz, 1986, xviii). Opinion has been mostly critical of *Timon*, although G. Wilson Knight praised this drama as being tremendous, of universal tragic significance. That we have a text at all is remarkable as some editors have concluded it was never intended for publication, being mysteriously inserted in the place of *Troilus and Cressida* in the First Folio. That there were no designations for acts or scenes in the Folio text is also evidence to view *Timon* is unique.

The potential co-authorship of *Timon* with Thomas Middleton has been embraced by a number of scholars, although there is still considerable uncertainty over the date of composition based on performance records or allusions to a dramatic production. While there were a number of English literary allusions to *Timon* during the latter 16th century, none specifically refer to a Timon drama except one: William Warner's reference to the Athenian misanthrope in *Syrinx or A Sevenfold History* (1584). From "To the Reader":

> And yet, let his coy prophetess presage hard events in her cell, let the Athenian misanthropos [printed in Greek characters] or man-hater bite on the stage, or the Sinopian cynic bark with the stationer; yet, in Pan his Syrinx, will I pipe at the least to myself.[9]

Warner's "coy prophetess" is most likely an allusion to Cassandra, the seer who rejected Apollo and became Agamemnon's ill-fated slave at the end of the Trojan War. This passage is quite possibly a reference to a character in the lost drama, *History of Agamemnon and Ulisses*, performed at court in December 1584 by the Earl of Oxford's Boys. In *English Dramatic Companies*, 1558-1642, J. T. Murray speculates that this play "may have been written by the Earl of Oxford himself, for he was reckoned by Puttenham and Meres among 'the best for comedy' of his time" Murray, J. (p. 345).

Warner's reference to the "Sinopian cynic" is clearly a reference to the 5th-century Greek cynic philosopher, Diogenes, a character in John Lyly's *Campaspe*, which was also staged by Oxford's Boys during the same court revels in 1584. *Campaspe* was published later that same year, thus the allusion to the "stationer". The "Athenian *misanthropos*" biting on the stage is almost certainly an allusion to a contemporary presentation of a Timon drama. Warner's letter opens the door to the possibility of topical and allegorical interpretations of Shakespeare's *Timon* that relates to the events in the Earl of Oxford's life in the early 1580s.

A significant dispute exists over the acknowledged sources of *Timon*. Scholars readily accept Plutarch's *Life of Marcus Antonius* and Lucian's dialogue, *Timon The Misanthrope*, as primary sources, but controversy continues over the part played by an unpublished, anonymous manuscript of a Timon satire, *MS Timon*, possibly written for the Inns of Court or a university audience. *MS Timon* was published for the first time in 1842 by Alexander Dyce. H. J. Oliver has effectively argued that it is hard to understand how Shakespeare could have known this unpublished academic comedy, and Muriel C. Bradbrook has interpreted it to be more likely a derivative parody of Shakespeare's tragedy.

Oxford editor John Jowett noted that neither Plutarch nor Lucian embodied the bleak cynicism found in Shakespeare's tragedy, and that Timon's pessimism seems to belong to a "more complex textual field", one that depicts, he notes, the economic ruin of the nobility. Shakespeare radically recast Timon in the mold of a classical tragic hero, and did so by adapting the dramatic structure, poetics, dramaturgy, and allegory inherent to Greek tragedy. A.D. Nuttall, author of *Shakespeare the Thinker* (2007), noted that in Timon, "Shakespeare dramatized inhumanity in such a way as to reflect the stiff archaic formalism of Greek tragedy and employed expressions that are a clear expression of irony, running at full Sophoclean strength" (p. 42).

Shakespeare's *Timon* possesses a three-part structure that parallels the traditional Greek tragic trilogy. Rolf Soellner has insightfully suggested that *Timon* follows the tripartite design offered by Renaissance humanists: protasis, epitasis, catastrophe. The Folio text of *Timon* does not include act or scene divisions, but the play explores three distinct, progressively darker dramatic moods, all of approximate equal length. I have labeled these divisions: "Prodigal Timon" (Act I plus the Masque of the Amazons), "Timon's Misfortune" (Acts II, III, and IV Scenes 1 and 2), and "Timon's Fury" (Act IV Scene 3 and Act V). Nuttall (2004) seems to agree as regards Act IV of *Timon*, noting that the structure and character of the scene is "astonishingly Greek".

> We have the pattern of the humiliated Hero, apart from society, in a wild place. To him come, in succession, various figures to upbraid him or (more important) to solicit his aid. It is a pattern

> of great power in Sophocles, strong in Aeschylus, less strong in Euripides. In *Oedipus at Colonus* the protagonist, blind, filthy, and ragged, is visited in turn by Theseus, Creon, and Polynices, who wishes to raze Thebes to the earth in vengeance for the wrong he has suffered. Oedipus, for all his strange aura of sanctity, is more like Timon than one expects. He embraces his own wretchedness and curses those who have wronged him. (Nuttall, 2004, p. 107).

Nuttall identified three plays with a structure similar to the final part of *Timon of Athens*: Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Philoctetes*, and Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*. In each of these three Greek tragedies, a betrayed and wounded hero survives in a desolate wilderness, but is pursued by needy visitors. Of *Timon*'s succession of supplicants, Nuttall wrote, "We seem to have traveled back to the earliest period of Greek drama, in which the 'second actor' has not yet been invented and where...the same speaker came forward to address the audience in a succession of different masks" (p. 89).

Many critics, including A.D. Nuttall, Maurice Charney, G. Wilson Knight, H.J. Oliver, and James Bulman, have noted this tragedy's unprecedented use of Greek-like choric passages. The term "gods" also appears more often in this play than any other Shakespeare work, another characteristic of Greek drama. Shakespeare's *Timon* begins in the Greek fashion with an oracle, which Adrian Poole noted creates an "apprehension of temporal convergence at once fearful and hopeful", and was "characteristically Sophoclean". Further, Timon dies off-stage, and his death is reported by a messenger, also fitting the classical Greek model. Timon's excess of bitter emotion to the point of madness is a theme that is often incorporated in Attic tragedy. James Bulman and Frank Kermode have both argued that, of all the plays of Shakespeare, *Timon* most closely adheres to an Aristotelian moral scheme. Critics have also commented on how Timon employs Greek versification, especially *stichomythia*, and cannibalistic imagery, another characteristic of Attic tragedy.

Timon of Athens presents a matrix of Greek dramatic elements that imbue the tragedy's plot, characterization, poetics, ethics, imagery, and dramaturgy with a classical aura. A.D. Nuttall's brilliant deductions about the similarities between Shakespeare's *Timon* and Sophocles' *Oedipus* are particularly important, though Nuttall is obliged to disclaim Shakespeare's knowledge of this untranslated tragedy. Shakespeare's *Timon* is the playwright's most Sophoclean creation, both in the hubris of his prodigality and the cynicism of his misanthropy. Timon's fury-driven death in the wilderness comes without the benefit of self-reflection. A Renaissance adaptation of Greek tragedy, *Timon* is a self-consciously literate creation, one which adapts a mosaic of Greek sources that would most likely have been appreciated only by a well-educated audience.

Oxfordian biographers have strongly suggested that *Timon* is a political allegory, one specifically reflecting Edward de Vere's financial and social misfortunes in the early 1580's, when the Timon drama was performed.[10] That de Vere was the archetypal bankrupt patrician who wasted a fortune to end up as a Queen's pensioner reinforces the claim that Timon is ultimately about the economic ruin of the author and that Timon's dramatic flaws may well reflect Oxford's emotional condition at a very low point in his life. E.K. Chambers believed that Shakespeare wrote *Timon* under conditions of mental and perhaps physical stress, that he had a breakdown.

How closely Timon fits the mold of the Earl of Oxford during this period is remarkable. Timon's patronage of the Poet and Painter reflects Oxford's support of many writers. Having received a dozen literary dedications by 1580, Oxford sat for at least two paintings, the Welbeck and Ashbourne portraits. Like Oxford, Timon supported the performing arts in the *Masque of the Amazons*, a device that may mirror the *Masque of Amazons* performed before Queen Elizabeth and the French ambassador in 1578. Timon's even claims the troupe 'Entertain'd me with my own device' (I.2.146). At this time, Oxford himself was supporting two theatre groups, Oxford's Men and Oxford's Boys, and he was also known to have written interludes and performed before the Queen.

The Winter's Tale

Critics have long recognized that the plot of *The Winter's Tale* is derived primarily from Robert Greene's 1588 romance, *Pandosto, The Triumph of Time*. While there are many verbal echoes from *Pandosto* in Shakespeare, the difference between Greene's tragic prose novella and Shakespeare's romance are as striking as are the many similarities. Shakespeare seems once again to have structured his drama as a classic Greek trilogy: first as tragedy in Sicily, marked by Leontes' escalating murderous jealousy, climaxing with the death of Mamillius and the disappearance of Hermione; second as a Bohemian romantic pastoral ending with the elopement of Florizel and Perdita; and third in scenes of reconciliation in Sicily that conclude with the reanimation of Hermione. G. Wilson Knight has reverentially referred to the statue scene as "the most strikingly conceived and profoundly penetrating moment in English literature".

The classical names of the characters, largely adopted from Plutarch's *Lives*, the preeminence of Apollo, the

themes of extreme jealousy, attempted regicide and infanticide, and the mysterious resurrection of the queen after 16 years absence all point to sources from the classics. Nineteenth-century Shakespeare scholars, including W. W. Lloyd in 1856, Israel Gollancz in 1894, A. E. Haigh in 1856, and H. R. D. Anders in 1904 all recognized Euripides' *Alcestis* as the primary source for the statue scene, but during the 20th-century, acknowledgment of this connection essentially disappeared. Of recent editions, only the 1963 Arden includes a brief footnote. Most scholars now would consider Ovid's Pygmalion story from *The Metamorphoses* as the primary source of the reanimation of the statue of Hermione.

What is noteworthy but overlooked by most critics is the preeminence of Apollo in both *The Alcestis* and *The Winter's Tale*. The few references to Apollo in Greene's *Pandosto* are traditional appeals to the god, unlike *The Winter's Tale*, where there are an overabundance of allusions to him or his oracle. In Euripides' *Alcestis*, Apollo delivers the prologue, then argues with Death over the fate of Queen Alcestis and prophesizes the possibility of her rescue. Apollo is also featured through two songs of the *Alcestis* chorus.

Although Apollo does not appear on stage, the extent to which Shakespeare has invested his play with manifold aspects of the god is detailed by David Bergeron in his article "The Apollo Mission in *The Winter's Tale*" (1995): "Of the 29 references to Apollo in his canon, 13 come in *The Winter's Tale*.... Only in [this] romance does Shakespeare refer to Apollo's power as an oracle" (p. 362). Shakespeare includes a detailed description of the sacred temple at Delphos, and the oracle itself is presented with great pomp formally during the Queen's trial. In the scene of Hermione's resurrection, Paulina's mastery as a priestess of Apollo is consummate. The mystical tone of her speeches, combined with the effects of the music and the "many singularities" of art, epitomizes the spirit of Apollo, according to Bergeron (1995):

> We recall that traditions link Apollo to the Nine Muses, to music and art. Paulina creates a complete Apollonian moment at her house where music, art, and theatre interconnect at a propitious time. Like Romano and like Apollo, Paulina sculpts his experience to produce mystery, wonder, faith, and eventually catharsis. (Bergeron, 1995, p. 377)

While doubt that Shakespeare would have had access to Greek or Latin editions of *The Alcestis* made 20th-century scholars reluctant to claim that Shakespeare knew Euripides' drama, over a century ago a handful of classically-trained scholars took notice of the remarkable similarities between the statue scene and the final scene of Euripides' tragicomedy. A.E. Haigh's comparative analysis in his book, *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks* (1896), detailed many parallels between *Alcestis* and *The Winter's Tale*:

> Every critic has admired the pathos and dramatic effect of the final scene, in which Alcestis is brought back disguised as a stranger, and received at first with reluctance, until she is gradually recognized. Two points in the scene deserve notice. The first is the curious resemblance to the conclusion of *The Winter's Tale*, where Leontes is taken to see, as he imagines, the statue of his dead wife and finds instead the living Hermione. Second, is the silence of Alcestis after her return from the grave. The silence is due not to theatrical exigencies and the absence of a third actor, as some critics have supposed, but to the deliberate choice of the poet. For one who has just been restored from the darkness of the tomb, no form of words could be as appropriate as the mute and half-dazed torpor in which she stands (p. 285).

A century later, however, in *Shakespeare and the Uses of Antiquity*, Michelle, and Charles Martindale dismiss these similarities as merely "fortuitous" The dramaturgical elements in *Alcestis* that bear a resemblance to Shakespeare's romance, however, go well beyond the parallels of a mysterious return of a presumed dead queen and her restoration to a grieving husband. Music and prayerful thanks conclude both dramas. In both plays, the queens are described with the same idealized language ("sacred lady", "blessed spirit", "peerless", "the best and dearest"); and both are honored by tombs that are described in their respective dramas as sacred shrines, monuments that bear evidence of their husbands' shame.

Although Alcestis does not return to Admetus in the form of a statue, Euripides' King promises to have a lifelike statue made of her: "Your image, carven by the skilled hands of artists, shall be laid in our marriage-bed; I shall clasp it, and my hands shall cling to it and I shall speak your name and so, not having you, shall think I have my dear wife in my arms––a cold delight, I know, but it will lighten the burden of my days" (Oates and O'Neill, 1938, p. 688).

Alcestis was the ancient model of wifely goodness. Depicted in Plato's *Symposium* as the ultimate example of altruism, she was also the subject of Chaucer's lengthy prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, where, married to the God of Love, she counsels the poet to write of the great women of antiquity. Shakespeare seems to have

picked up where Chaucer left off. Standing on the shoulders of Euripides, Plato, and Chaucer, he brings to modern life this ancient figure of feminine goodness. So compelling is the emotional effect of the statue scene that during the 19th century, it was known to have been performed quite frequently as a stand-alone scene, often as a prelude to other dramas. Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* is a paean to Apollo, populated by a dramatis personae named symbolically for famous 4th and 5th-century Greek heroes, and concluding with a miraculous restoration of an Alcestis-like figure of loving goodness.

What many 19th-century scholars understood about Shakespeare's knowledge of Euripides' drama has been disregarded for too long. Sarah Dewar-Watson, in her 2009 *Shakespeare Quarterly* article, "*The Alcestis* and the Statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*," offered a renewed acknowledgment of what earlier scholars recognized as Shakespeare's inspiration for what is arguably the most revered scene in the entire canon.

Much Ado About Nothing

While there were a number of early scholars who recognized Shakespeare's debt to Euripides' *Alcestis* for the statue scene, ironically, no critic argued for the possibility that the concluding scenes of *Much Ado About Nothing* were similarly influenced by Euripides' tragicomedy. Two Shakespeare editors, however, have recently published works that recognized the distinctly Euripidean dramaturgy in the last act of *Much Ado*. Jonathan Bate and Claire McEachern have both posited that *Much Ado*'s final scene is also likely based on Euripides' tragi-comedy. McEachern's introductory commentaries in the 2006 Arden edition notes that Shakespeare's dramaturgy in the marriage scene is much closer to Euripides' depiction in *Alcestis* than to Bandello's story, which is the primary source of the Hero-Claudio plot:

> Unlike Sir Timbreo, but like Admetus, Claudio must accept his second bride without seeing her face...and forces him to have faith where once he lacked it. Hero's mock funeral, in turn, recalls and prefigures other of Shakespeare's mock deaths, such as Juliet's or Helena's, or Hermione's, in which heroines undergo a trial passage to the underworld. Euripides' *Alcestis* is also structurally similar to *Much Ado* in its use of comic scenes (those of Hercules' drunken festivities during the heroine's funeral) to counterpoint the apparent tragedy and hint at the comic ending to come. (McEachern, pp. 21-22)

Jonathan Bate also posits that Alcestis was a possible Shakespeare source in his essay, "Dying to Live in *Much Ado About Nothing*" (1994). Although he neglects to cite or quote any of the older scholarship on T*he Winter's Tale*, Bate is notably the first modern Shakespeare scholar to make this claim for *Much Ado*:

> One way of putting it would be to say that *The Winter's Tale*, with its hinged tragi-comic structure, is the logical conclusion of Shakespeare's work. That play is certainly the fully matured reworking of *Much Ado*.... The ultimate "source" for the Hero plot of *Much Ado* is a Greek myth, that of *Alcestis*. (p. 79)

Bate refers to this moment as the very heart of the play. To him, Hero's apparent death and silence are reminiscent of her classical namesake, Leander's Hero, who drowns herself rather than live without her beloved. According to Bate, Hero is probably named as a representative of Ovid's *Heroides*, the catalog of the worthy women of antiquity who were betrayed and abandoned by their husbands and lovers:

> The Hero and the other heroines of the *Heroides* are essentially tragic figures; in that Ovidian text, there are no second chances. *Much Ado* is more in a romance mold, and this suggests a generic link with Euripides' *Alcestis*. The latter was a kind of transcended tragedy; it was performed in the position usually held by the comic satyr-play, as fourth in a group of dramas, following and in some senses defusing or providing relief from three tragedies. It is a potential tragedy but with last-minute relief. Life is heightened because of the process of going through death: the pattern is that of many works in the romance tradition and of several of Shakespeare's later comedies--*Much Ado*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. (Bate, 1994, p. 83)

Bate asserts that *Alcestis* may not be the primary source of the Hero plot, but Euripides' heroine nonetheless serves as a "powerful, mythic prototype" for women who are silenced by a temporary consignment to the grave:

> As in *All's Well That Ends Well*, and *The Winter's Tale*, the actual death of the myth is replaced by a self-conscious stage trick. Theophanies like that of Apollo and super-human interventions like that of Herakles are replaced by domesti-

> cated divine agents: the Friar's scheme, Helena's self-contrived devices, Paulina's priestess-like art. Silence is not given a mythico-religious cause but becomes a psychological and social reality. (p. 81)

In Ovid's *Heroides*, the heroines often refer to their tombs, and several of them inscribe their own epitaph. Bate notes that "The epitaph and tomb scene makes Hero recognizable as one of the *Heroides*. Her name makes this link: it sets up a prototype that can be recognized by the audience" (Bate, 1994, p. 82). Bate's argument on the symbolic significance of Hero's name is relevant, but he inexplicably fails to note the distinct parallels between the Chorus near the conclusion of *Alcestis* and the tomb rites of Act 5 of *Much Ado*. In Euripides' drama, the Chorus sings its lamentation that neither knowledge of "Orphic symbols" nor "the herbs given by Phoebus to the children of Asclepius" avails against man's mortality, that Fate's "fierce will knows not gentleness". The last stanza of this Chorus serves as a paean to Alcestis, the "blessed spirit", and includes expressions suggestive of Shakespeare's epitaph and song dedicated to Hero:

> Ah!
> Let the grave of your spouse
> Be no more counted as a tomb,
> But revered as the Gods,
> And greeted by all who pass by!
> The wanderer shall turn from his path,
> Saying: 'She died for her lord:
> A blessed spirit she is now.
> Hail, O sacred lady, be our friend!'
> Thus shall men speak of her.
> (lines. 986-1005)[11]

The tomb scene in *Much Ado* is very short, only 33 lines long, and half of the lines comprise the epitaph and dirge. This very solemn scene concludes with Don Pedro's description of dawn in an allusion to Apollo, "the wheels of Phoebus" (5.3.26), who is preeminent in *Alcestis* and *The Winter's Tale*. Hero's epitaph, remarkably, sounds very much like the *Alcestis* Chorus in that both proclaim the particular sacrifices of the deceased women, which merits their fame:

> Done to death by slanderous tongues
> Was the Hero that here lies:
> Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
> Gives her fame which never dies:
> So the life that died with shame,
> Lives in death with glorious fame. (5.3.3-8)

As soon as the epitaph is sung, Claudio calls for music and this "solemn hymn":

> Pardon, goddess of the night,
> Those that slew thy virgin knight,
> For the which with songs of woe
> Round about her tomb we go.
> Midnight, assist our moan,
> Help us sigh and groan,
> Heavily, heavily.
> Graves yawn and yield your dead,
> Till death be uttered
> Heavily, heavily. (5.3.12-21)

If Claudio is modeled after Euripides' *Admetus*, whose contrition and shame is well developed, then his vow of an annual visit to Hero's monument must be serious. The "goddess of the night" here is an allusion to Diana, goddess of the moon and of chastity. Greek choruses danced when they sang, often circling in unison and alternating directions with each stanza. The First Folio edition of *Much Ado* substituted the words "Heavenly, heavenly" for line 21, which could certainly be an allusion to the possibility of resurrection. Both the tomb scene in *Much Ado* and the Chorus in *Alcestis* reflect a sober, melancholic pathos. Both are immediately followed by joyful reunions with mysteriously veiled women returned from the grave.

Neither Bate nor McEachern commented on another potential Euripidean element in Shakespeare's comedy, the four allusions to Hercules. In Euripides' *Alcestis*, Hercules is first made ridiculous through a drunken burlesque, and then redeems himself by performing the role of *deus ex machin*a. The allusions to Hercules in *Much Ado* suggest that Shakespeare was not only familiar with Euripides's treatment of Hercules, but also with other untranslated, non-dramatic sources, including Homer's *Iliad* and *Lucian*.

In *Much Ado*, the first allusion to Hercules identifies him as a matchmaker. Don Pedro swears to "undertake one of Hercules' labors, which is to bring Signor Benedick and the Lady Beatrice into 'a mountain' of affection th'one to th'other" (2.2). Don Pedro's image very likely references Euripides' drama, where Hercules grapples with Death to save Queen Alcestis and return her to the living, veiled, like Hero, to conceal her identity. Importantly, this episode is the only one among Hercules' many labors, adventures, and romances in which he performs such a matchmaking duty.

Euripides's Hercules is portrayed quite satirically in *Alcestis*. Following a series of pathetic scenes centered on death and grief, Hercules staggers drunkenly on stage,

raving about the blessings of wine and perfections of Aphrodite, unwittingly offending the horrified servants of the grieving household. In this regard, Euripides' Hercules is similar to Shakespeare's Benedick, who is made a literal fool for love by Don Pedro's campaign. Later Benedick will be dispatched by Beatrice, who invokes Hercules to get him to agree to risk death and challenge Claudio in order to restore Hero's honor.

Shakespeare alluded to Hercules 35 times in his dramas, far more often than any other classic hero. In this, he followed the example of many classical poets. These Herculean narratives, depicting a hero in his struggle against supernatural forces, inspired many Renaissance writers. As an archetypal tragic hero, Hercules provided the personal template for doomed characters found in Marlowe, Chapman, and Shakespeare. In *The Herculean Hero*, Eugene Waith (1962) made a compelling case for interpreting Coriolanus and Mark Antony as tragic heroes closely identified with Hercules. Waith focused exclusively on the tragic Hercules as a Renaissance model. It seems quite likely that Euripides' Hercules also provided a template for comedic excess, exhibited by Shakespeare's romantic Hero, Benedick, in *Much Ado about Nothing*.

Shakespeare's Greater Greek and the Authorship Challenge

In *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy*, Laughlin Mclean Watt (1908) proclaimed that there has been no period of history more conducive to "provocations of greatness" than in the ages of Attic and Elizabethan tragedy, that the "grandeur, depth, and breadth" of the literary production of both of these eras "took up the most momentous questions – life, death, God, man, judgment, and all the huge ethical shadows that, on the skirts of these, haunt men's being and conduct" (p. 2). Watt's assertions underline the cultural significance of recognizing the profound imprint Greek dramatic literature had on Shakespeare's creative imagination. The mythopoetic narratives of the Greek playwrights have endured over 2,500 years, inspiring Shakespearean adaptation and modern translation through such 20th-century tragedians as Eugene O'Neill, T.S. Eliot, and Arthur Miller.[12]

The primary reason scholars have avoided establishing philological connections between the Greeks and Shakespeare seems to relate most directly to the enduring legacy of Jonson's ironic reference in the First Folio to Shakespeare's "lesse Greek", the limitations imposed by Shakespearean biography and the deficiencies of 16th century English grammar school education in the Greek classics, as well as the dearth of available editions of Greek dramas or Latin translations in England. The enduring assumption was that English Renaissance culture was Latin-based and that Attic tragedy had not influenced the English stage. However, literary evidence of intertextual connections of structure, plot, imagery, theme, trope, allegory, dramaturgy, and topicality presented here directly challenges this established belief. To have overlooked the myriad connections between Shakespeare and the Greeks is to have missed a critical link in the great chain of dramatic genius.

In 2014 the Center for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies at the University of York in the U.K. sponsored a day-long colloquium on "Greek Texts and the Early Modern Stage", which explored the impact of the Greek canon on Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The colloquium website noted: "Greek provokes strong associations for a number of reasons: its controversial associations with Erasmus, Protestantism, and heresy; the specter of democratic governance; the rebirth of interest in Galenic medicine; the pervasive influence of Greek culture on Latin literature; and the identification of Greece with the origins of theatre."

In the abstract of her paper, "*Hamlet* and the Ghost of Sophocles," Sarah Dewar-Watson argued that the verbal echoes of Sophocles' *Antigone in Hamlet* suggested Shakespeare was familiar with the anthology of seven Greek plays, *Tragediae selectae Aeschyli*, *Sophoclis*, *Euripidis*, published in Paris in 1567 by Henri Estienne. The edition included Latin translations of *Antigone*, *Hecuba*, *Alcestis*, and *Iphigenia at Aulis*.[13] Nonetheless, Oxford University's Colin Burrow (2013) maintained Plutarch as Shakespeare's primary source for understanding the conventions of Greek theatre, while Jonathan Bate expressed similar feelings that Ovid, not Plutarch, mediated Shakespeare's Greek: "...it cannot be proved that Shakespeare knew any of the plays of Euripides. But there is no doubt that he derived a Euripidean spirit from Ovid. Euripides taught Ovid what Ovid taught Shakespeare: the art of tragicomedy..." (p. 239). But no real conclusion was reached as to why the subject had been ignored for so long. There is obviously much work yet to be done here.

In *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, C.L. Barber (1959) argued that "once Shakespeare finds his own distinctive style, he is more Aristophanic than any other great English comic dramatist, despite the fact that the accepted educated models and theories when he started to write were Terrentian and Plautine" (p. 3). There is evidence that *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare's one Athenian comedy, reflects numerous elements that are recognizably based on Greek Old Comedy and was arguably directly influenced by Aristophanes' masterpiece, *The Birds*.[14]

According to David Bevington's Arden edition, *Troilus and Cressida* incorporates imagery that references a num-

ber of untranslated passages from Homer's *Iliad*. Other scholars have reported that *Troilus and Cressida* echos passages from Sophocles' *Ajax* as well as Euripides' *Phoenissiae*. Richard Grant White (1886) and J. Churton Collins (1904) made a compelling case for Ulysses' eye metaphor speech in 3.3 to have been based on another untranslated Greek work, the *First Alcibiades* of Plato, which James Hanford called "the closest parallel between Plato and Shakespeare ever brought forward." Others have noted how *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* arguably incorporate elements adapted from Euripides' tragicomedies, *Ion* and *Iphigenia at Taurus*.

The only recently published works that systematically examine the Greek canon for elements incorporated by Shakespeare are by Greek scholars Myron Stagman and Tanya Pollard (2017). In his 430-page book, *Shakespeare's Greek Drama Secret*, Stagman argued that there are many unmediated textual correspondences between Greek dramas and the plays of Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare's achievement was unique precisely because of his mastery of Attic drama. Stagman cataloged many potential textual connections between Shakespeare and the Greeks, and he speculated that the poet's education must have included readings from Homer, Lucian, Pindar, and the Athenian playwrights.

Tanya Pollard's (2017) Bainton Award-winning book, *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*, represents a breakthrough among tenured Shakespeare scholars as the first in-depth examination in over a century of the evidence that Shakespeare was profoundly influenced by Euripides.

The long-held reticence to address fully the question of Greek dramatic sources, may also be at least partly related to the Shakespeare authorship question and specifically to Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, as the primary alternative candidate. Oxford had an outstanding classical education and would have had access to the texts of Attic tragedies during his youth through his tutor, Cambridge University Greek orator, Sir Thomas Smith. Smith was obviously familiar with the conventions and texts of the classical theatre as he sponsored Greek productions of both *Plutus* (1536) and *Peace* (1546) of Aristophanes at Cambridge University.

De Vere also had access to continental editions of Greek texts for nearly a decade while he lived at Cecil House, where he was in close contact with England's leading translators: Arthur Golding (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, 1567), George Gascoigne (Euripides' *Phoenissiae*, 1572), and Arthur Hall (the first ten books of Homer's *Iliad*, 1581). Smith and Cecil possessed Greek editions of Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Plato in their personal libraries. Mildred Cecil, Oxford's mother-in-law, was herself an accomplished Greek translator. John Strype (quoting Roger Ascham) wrote that "Mildred Cecil spoke and understood Greek as easily as she spoke English." The inventory of her Greek editions makes clear that de Vere certainly had ready access to the Attic tragedians.

Add to this the fact that the Earl attended the Greek Church when he lived in Venice during his Italian travels in 1575 and was accompanied there by Nathaniel Baxter, Sir Phillip Sidney's Greek tutor. Thus, throughout his early life, Oxford was surrounded by scholars well-versed in the Greek canon. That Oxford acquired editions of Plutarch's *Lives* and Plato in folio editions in 1569 and received the dedication to Thomas Underdown's highly influential English translation of *Heliodorus* adds to the evidence of Edward de Vere's fascination with Greek literature. There is irony in the idea that Oxford's claim to the name Shakespeare may have been adversely influenced by the intellectual vigor of Shakespeare studies simply because of the fact that he is a far superior candidate as regards the creation of dramas based on Greek sources.

Nonetheless – and putting that question aside for the moment -- the collective evidence presented here would arguably confirm that Shakespeare (whoever he or she was) certainly was part of the mythopoetic lineage of dramatists that stretches from Aeschylus to our own day.

BIOGRAPHY

Earl Showerman, M.D. is an honors graduate of Harvard College and the University of Michigan Medical School and has presented and published scholarly papers on the Greek dramatic sources in a number of Shakespeare's plays. He has taught a series of courses on Shakespeare and the authorship question at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Southern Oregon University, and is the author of a chapter on Shakespeare's medical knowledge in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial* (2013/2016, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform). He also contributed to *Know-It-All Shakespeare* (2017, Wellfleet Press). He is the current President of the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship and a past Trustee of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition.

ENDNOTES

1 See Showerman, E. (2004). "Orestes to Hamlet: Myth to Masterpiece", *The Oxfordian VII*

2 See Showerman, E. (2011). "Shakespeare's Greater Greek: *Macbeth* and the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus", *Brief Chronicles* Vol. 3

3 See Showerman, E. (2019). "Shakespeare's Many Much Ado's: Alcestis, Hercules and *Love's Labour's Wonne*", originally published in *Brief Chronicles* Vol. 1 (2009).

Reprinted in *Shakespeare Criticism Vol. 141*, Gale, Cengage Learning.

[4] Stanley Wells cited "Shakespeare's 'Lesse Greek'" in a presentation to the World Shakespeare Congress in Prague in July 2011. Werth's identification of the untranslated *Greek Anthology* as the source for *Sonnets 153* and *154* impressed Wells, who commented that Werth should not be condemned for being an Oxfordian.

[5] Kitto, H.D.F. (1956). *Form and meaning in drama: A study of six Greek plays and Hamlet.* Methuen.

[6] Wheeler, T. (1990). *Macbeth: An annotated bibliography* Garland Publishing. Francis Glasson published "Did Shakespeare read Aeschylus?" in the *London Quarterly and Holborn Review,* 173 (1948) 57-66. "Glasson points to eight examples of *Macbeth* and Aeschylus' *Choephori*. Some are verbal, some based on similar situations (e.g., Orestes' knocking on the door of Aegisthus' house and the delayed response of the servant). Having surveyed the scholarship and evidence for and against Shakespeare's knowledge of Greek (Aeschylus had not been translated into English, and the Latin translation does not resemble *Macbeth* as much as the Greek original), Glasson concludes that the question posed by his title cannot be answered definitively. But he points out that, of all Shakespeare's plays, *Macbeth* most resembles a Greek tragedy."

[7] Poole, A. (1987). *Tragedy, Shakespeare and the Greek Example* Basil Blackwell, 15. Chapter 2, "'The Initiate Fear': Aeschylus, Shakespeare" (15-53), includes an extended discussion of the similarities in the representation of prophecy, fear, and the inevitability of suffering in the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth*. Poole also co-edited *The Oxford Book of Classical Verse in Translation*.

[8] Ewbank, 39. Lines 311-1066 and 1160-1673 are missing from Aeschylus' original text of the *Agamemnon* in the Saint-Revy edition.

[9] Warner, W. (1950). *Syrinx or A Sevenfold History*, ed. Wallace A. Bacon. Northwestern University Press, "To the reader"

[10] Anderson, M. (2005). *Shakespeare by another name: The life of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, the man who wrote Shakespeare*, Chapter 7. "Fortune's Dearest Spite" (1582-1585), 184. "Exile and banishment also figure prominently in a second Shake-speare play that comments on the events of 1582. *Timon of Athens* charts the downward spiral of a man who cannot manage power, money, or responsibility."

[11] Bate, J. (1994). "Dying to Live in Much Ado about Nothing." *In Surprised by Scenes: Essays in Honor of Professor Yasunai Takahashi*, edited by Yasunari Takada Kenkyusha, pp 69-85.

[12] Euripides. *Alcestis*. Trans. Richard Aldington in *The Complete Greek Drama*. ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill Jr.. Random House, 709–710. Subsequent quotations from *Alcestis* included.

[13] Sarah Dewar-Watson, "Hamlet and the Ghost of Sophocles" Abstract: "There is growing recognition of Hamlet's particular engagement with Greek tragic sources (e.g., Schleiner, 1990). Most recently, Tanya Pollard has highlighted the significance of Watson's *Antigone* (1581) for our reading of the play. This paper argues for further intertextual relationships between *Hamlet* and Sophocles' *Antigone*. In *Hamlet* I.v, the Ghost protests that he died without due preparation for death: that he died 'Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd' (I.v.77). This line recalls Teiresias' description of the corpse of Polyneices corpse as 'ἄμοιρον, ἀκτέριστον, ἀνόσιον' (*Antigone*, 1071). In both cases, there is a distinctive use of tricolon, the privative prefix, and an emphasis on the absence of ritual elements which should properly accompany death. Significantly, the obvious source for Shakespeare's reading of the *Antigone* – Watson's translation – does not render this phrase very closely. I suggest that the apparent verbal echo in *Hamlet* takes us to a parallel text anthology, *Tragœdiae selectæ Aeschyli, Sophoclis, Euripidis* (1567). The Greek text of the Antigone contains a facing translation by George Rataller. This volume contains three Greek tragedies (Erasmus' *Hecuba* and *Iphigeneia* and Buchanan's *Alcestis*), which Shakespeare is believed to have known. My claim that Shakespeare knew this Greek-Latin edition of the *Antigone* does not displace Watson's translation from view. Watson may well have prompted Shakespeare to read other versions of the text. The implications of the textual link I am positing suggest that we need to look in a more extended way at this volume of seven plays and its possible influence on Shakespeare, and looking beyond the verbal reminiscence which I am positing, I argue that *Hamlet*'s debt to the *Antigone* is pervasive. Sophocles' play, I suggest, provides a key stimulus for Hamlet's exploration of moral questions concerning what the living owe the dead."

[14] See Showerman, E. (2015). "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Shakespeare's Aristophanic Comedy" *Brief Chronicles* Vol 6, 107-136.

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