

Ophelia, the Walsingham Ballad, and the Dis-enchantment of the early modern world.
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As has long been recognized, echoes of what is generally known as “the Walsingham Ballad” occur in the Ophelia’s opening lines in *Hamlet*, Act 4, scene 5. Yet to speak of ‘the’ Walsingham ballad is a misnomer since in this case ‘it’ is really a family of both words and music. While members of each family are often combined in published and unpublished songbooks (and indeed in modern performances) words and music occupy distinct places in early modern culture. The tune and its many variants retain, by association, much of the nostalgia for the Old Religion; the words, by contrast, despite their appearance of piety, become associated with idolatry and scurrility, Walsingham becoming a symbol of sexual depravity. Both traditions are echoed in Ophelia’s lines.

In this paper, as well as reviewing recent work on the Walsingham ballad, both words and music, I examine some broader cultural patterns surfacing in Shakespeare’s plays regarding the fading memory of Walsingham as “England’s Nazareth,” a shrine specifically dedicated to the Annunciation. Although the historicity of the Lukan Annunciation story remains largely unchallenged, the scene undergoes a significant re-positioning within both Protestant and Catholic traditions -- eventually to be increasingly demystified within the more radical skepticism of the Enlightenment. A powerful modern metaphor for this process within which Ophelia’s evocation of the Annunciation in the Walsingham ballad can fruitfully be set is Gerhard Richter’s ‘Verkündigung nach Tizian’ (Annunciation after Titian), a 1973 sequence of four paintings in which Titian’s classical, horizontally aligned, image dissolves, with the Virgin and her angelic visitor gradually disappearing into wide amorphous brush strokes and pools of swirling color.

Shakespeare’s echoes of the Annunciation scene – in *Hamlet* not only in Ophelia’s song, but in the ‘nunnery’ scene; and in *Measure for Measure*, *Twelfth Night*, and *All’s Well, that Ends Well* – places his use of the Ballad material within the long cultural revolution from the magical world view of the Middle Ages to the gradual dis-enchantment of the Enlightenment, a transition in what Raymond Williams terms ‘the structure of feeling’ in the early modern world that is evoked by the Walsingham ballad’s echoes in Ophelia’s song.

Eastern Poetic and Western Narrative Resonances in *The Tempest*

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William Strachey’s *A True Repertory of the Wreck* is among the most often attributed source materials for Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Strachey describes “the winds singing and whistling most unusually,” which echo Trinculo’s “I heard it sing I’th’ wind” as he suspects “another storm” is “brewing” (2.2.19). Although not usually considered a source for *The Tempest*, Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s account of his ill-fated travels in Florida is another travel narrative that describes a tempest accompanied by a plethora of noises that sound in Shakespeare’s play. In addition to these narratives, *The Tempest* has

multiple poetic echoes of the East. This resonance can be heard in Prospero's magical soliloquy of 5.1, where he abjures "this rough magic" and echoes Medea's speech from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which Shakespeare likely knew from Arthur Golding's 1567 translation (5.1.51). Medea is represented as an Oriental character in Greek mythology; when Prospero channels Golding's Medea, he sounds the Asiatic style in a way that palimpsests both him and the island he describes through this geo-sonic echo. Additionally, lines from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* are audible in Ariel's first two songs, "Come Unto These Yellow Sands" and "Full Fathom Five." A liminal space between Europe and Asia, the Hellespont of Marlowe's poem has resonances with the island in *The Tempest*, which also occupies an unusual space between Europe and Asia, and even the New World. Shakespeare utilizes Marlowe's combination of "pearl" and "coral" to create the image of Alonso's drowned and metamorphosed body in "Full Fathom Five." These examples of citation from poetry associated with the East provide a counterpoint to the critical interpretation that *The Tempest* is a play solely about the New World. Rather, Eastern echoes of poetry resound in concert with New World travel narrative accounts, indeed creating "something rich and strange" in the island of *The Tempest*.

Shakespeare, *The Tears of Fancie* (1593), and the Obdurate Mistress

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When Shakespeare's Venus asks Adonis whether he is "obdurate, flinty, hard as steel?", she draws on a common Petrarchan sentiment, one that Shakespeare himself echoes in *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York* (1595). Though uttered in different circumstances, York's agonized admonishment to Margaret uses much of the same imagery when he tells her that instead of being appropriately mild and gentle, she is "indurate, sterne, rough, remorselesse." Depending on when we date *True Tragedie*, York's line may be either the precursor or descendant of Venus', but either way Shakespeare seems to have been inspired by the same poetic spring when writing both.¹ Other writers were just as taken by this language as Shakespeare evidently was—both Michael Drayton and John Marston would echo it in poems written in the late 1590s—but my paper will focus on the appearance of a similar line in another poem published in the same year as *Venus*.

Entered in the Stationers' Register in August of 1593, *The Tears of Fancie. Or, Love Disdained* is attributed on its title page to "T.W.," and Thomas Watson has been identified as the likeliest candidate for authorship. In the final line of its Sonnet 38, the lover describes his beloved as "obdurate, sterne, remorseles flintie," in a line whose resemblance to the lines of Venus and York seems far too strong to be coincidental. This

¹ In the Folio, this line becomes "Thou, sterne, obdurate, flintie, rough, remorselesse," bringing it even closer to the line in *Venus*.

is intriguing not least because *The Tears of Fancie* was published posthumously; Watson died in September 1592, and so the closeness of Sonnet 38 to the as-yet-unpublished *True Tragedie* and *Venus* seems almost certain to be the result of manuscript circulation. My paper will consider the implications of this textual sharing in several ways. First, it will consider the avenues through which Shakespeare and Watson might have known each other, and how Shakespeare may have come into possession of Watson's manuscripts or vice versa (my current hypothesis is through Marlowe, but that is a very tentative conclusion yet). Second, the essay will contextualize this potential borrowing within Shakespeare's larger literary relationship with Watson's works (we know that *Hekatompathia* was influential on Shakespeare's sonnet sequence, for example), and will investigate the implications for Shakespeare's intertextual methods, seeking to determine if it can shed new light on *how* Shakespeare worked. Finally, it will consider the implications of this textual relationship for the lines in *Venus* and *True Tragedie*—does it lead us to read these lines differently at all, and if so, how? And if it does *not* lead us to a new understanding of these lines, how is that significant in its own right for Shakespeare's poetic practices?