"A Pre-Socratic Shakespeare?"

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n this paper, I argue that Shakespeare's famous, and sometimes puzzling, verbal playfulness derives from a view of language quite unlike the chiefly grammatical and lexical ones of his day, and that instead his practice has deep affinities with, perhaps even derivations from, the "pre-Socratic" philosopher Heraclitus. For both the English playwright and the Greek philosopher, the play-nature of language is a rushing energy containing, barely, the simultaneity of opposed qualities. Both are fond of complicated linguistic knots. Both have been famously criticised for their difficulty. This linguistic turbulence in both points to and exemplifies the unstable character of matter, the world, human being and logical categories. In pursuit of the idea of their connection, I explore the availability of pre-Socratic philosophy in the England of Shakespeare's day, particularly through academic treatments of and commentaries on Aristotle

"Shakespeare's Chaucerian Greeks: 'Hende Nicholas' Bottom and the Fairy Queen Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*"

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What does Shakespeare do when he dramatizes works by Geoffrey Chaucer that deal with Greek subjects and settings? First it is crucial to realize that Chaucer is extraordinarily important to the people of Shakespeare's era. He is regarded especially highly as the Father of the English vernacular literary tradition, with Thomas Speght publishing in 1598 an edition of Chaucer partially titled *The Workes of our Antient and learned English Poet,* and a second edition in 1602. Both of these editions appear, of course, in the middle of Shakespeare's prolific career, and may account for Shakespeare's repeated interest in and use of Chaucer as a source. If we stretch the Sixteenth Century to include the last two decades of the Fifteenth, then important Sixteenth Century editions of *The Canterbury Tales* are published by William Caxton in 1578 and 1483 and by Richard Pynson, who publishes the first true collection of Chaucer's works (including *The Tales*) in 1492. William Thynne in 1532 issues an edition followed by a second in 1542, and John Stow, the historical chronicler and author of the famous *Survey of London*, also comes out with a Chaucer in 1561—just before Shakespeare's birth in 1564. Thus, going back to Caxton, at least eight printed editions of Chaucer circulate in England across the "long" Sixteenth Century. Chaucer, for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, *is* the English literary tradition, the one author whom English readers and those from other countries regard as quintessentially English.

Yet there are at least two problems with Chaucer for an Elizabethan/Jacobean reader and writer. First, just as Shakespeare (because of his rich vocabulary and often archaic diction) is hard for many present-day readers, so too Chaucer is hard for Shakespeare and his contemporaries because of pronunciation changes caused the Great Vowel Shift (which happens roughly during the fifty years on both sides of 1500). In fact, Sixteenth-Century reviewers of Sir Francis Kynaston's Latin translation of *Troilus and Criseyde* praise the translator for making it possible to read Chaucer with having to resort to a an English

dictionary! Second, although much of Chaucer is high-brow (including *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Knight's Tale*), much of Chaucer is also bawdy, scatological, and lowbrow. Especially relevant to my larger project on Shakespeare and Chaucer is the wonderful fabliau of "hende Nicholas" in *The Miller's Tale*. Coupling this unsavory reputation of Chaucer's works with the reputation of the Greeks as a frivolous ("merry"), over-sexed people who lacked the venerable Roman gravitas made it easy for Shakespeare to see his dramatizing of Chaucer as a retelling of stories that audiences expected to have a great deal of comical amorous intrigue and crude language. Shakespeare creates in *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Troilus and Cressida,* and the possibly collaborative drama, *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* plays with fascinating mixtures of the highbrow and lowbrow, combinations of the wonderfully sublime and the extraordinarily crude. A great example of this combination is Shakespeare's comic partial retelling of Chaucer's tragic *Knight's Tale* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where Shakespeare shows, for instance, that the Fairy Queen Titania (a probable simulacrum for Queen Elizabeth I) is enamored of the lower-class ass-man Bottom.

My seminar paper is a draft of the introduction to my current book project. The book traces Chaucer's venerated status as a learned English poet, examines negative Elizabethan perceptions of Greek and Chaucerian characters and stories, and demonstrates how the combination of these attitudes provides Shakespeare and his audiences with an irresistibly cynical and comical view of love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Troilus and Cressida,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen.*

"'If it live in your memory': Tracing Shakespeare's Trojans"

John Cameron
Saint Mary's University

> To this well-painted piece is Lucrece come,
> To find a face where all distress is stell'd.
> Many she sees where cares have carved some,
> But none where all distress and dolour dwell'd,
> Till she despairing Hecuba beheld,
> Staring on Priam's wounds with her old eyes,
> Which bleeding under Pyrrhus' proud foot lies.
>   -William Shakespeare, *Lucrece* (1443-49)

>   For lo, his sword,
> Which was declining on the milky head
> Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th' air tp stick;
> So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
> And like a neutral to his will and matter,
> Did nothing.
>   -William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (2.2.473-78)

> Yet our fall is certain. Already, up on
> the walls the lamentation has started.
> Memories and feelings of our days are weeping.
> Bitterly for us Prim and Hecuba wail.
>   -C. P. Cavafy, "The Trojans" (trans. Evangelos Sachperoglou)

As my title suggests, I seek to trace the Shakespeare's Trojans as they appear in his works, with the exception of *Troilus and Cressida*. It may seem odd to exclude the one play actually set in Troy during the time of the Trojan War, but my reasons for exclusion are these: firstly, I assume that one of my fellow panelists will be taking on that singularly enigmatic play in a more focused and rewarding way; secondly, I am more intrigued by the critical possibilities offered by the many echoes of and allusions to the Trojans and the Trojan War in Shakespeare's other works. These echoes and allusions are numerous, and I plan to outline some of the more fruitful of them; of particular interest in this regard is the 'tapestry' scene in *Lucrece*, during which Lucrece uses the tapestry depicting the Fall of Troy as a 'perfect glass' that contains 'a face where all distress is stell'd'. Nonetheless, my main area of focus will be the 'player's speech' in *Hamlet*, during which the First Player recites a scene from a play, 'never acted, or if it was, not above once,' depicting the Fall of Troy and the murder of Priam by Pyrrhus, son of Achilles. This speech will be discussed in terms of the possible sources of influence behind it, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* and Christopher Marlowe's *Dido, Queen of Carthage*; the impact of Troy as a metaphor of national founding in early modern England; and the critical discussion of this speech along with its place in *Hamlet* criticism, from John Dryden to to Alexander Pope to S. T. Coleridge to A. C. Bradley and beyond. Much of this discussion will inevitably be condensed in order both better adhere to the typical length of conference paper format and, particularly, to better allow me the opportunity to offer my own interpretation of both the speech and the multilayered, even knotty, dimensions of Pyrrhus as a metaphor. Of crucial importance will be how Pyrrhus operates within the drama in relation to both Hamlet and his predicament, for the connections that can be made, and the conclusions that can be drawn from these connections, are more complex than they first may appear. I hope to explore some of these connections and at least make an attempt at offering some conclusions about them in my paper.

"*Troilus and Cressida*: The Pleasures of Contamination"

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For at least a century, critics have found it productive to address *Troilus and Cressida* in terms of satire—the mixed mode par excellence, the mode of all genres and none. The dramatis personae boasts two famous satirical rogues and their creator's wider artistic vision and practice has been variously characterized as burlesque, mock-heroic, or anti-epic for its handling of materials ultimately derived from the Homeric *Iliad*.

Shakespeare's method in *Troilus and Cressida* has been discussed by Colin Burrow through the term *contaminatio*, that is, a deliberate blending of separate textual traditions which in part creates the satirical blending of tones and themes. While this concept well captures the mediation of Greek epic in this play through many later classical and vernacular retellings (compacted like so many strata of Schliemann's Troy), critics (and I among them) remain attached to the notion of a kind of primal scene of Shakespearean-Homeric contact. Or at least, relinquishing the classical mechanics implied from that term, the effect that A. D. Nuttall gestures at by evoking quantum "action at a distance." Jessica Wolfe's reading of the "scoptic" Chapman translation in turn helps us see even a putative "direct" Shakespearean reading of Homer as mediated by the satiro-comic reception of Homer in the Renaissance.

That is, even entertaining Nuttall's attractive if ultimately unpersuasive hypothesis of Shakespeare riving a knotty Greek description of the Achaeans' gate with the blunt wedge of grammar school memories and a dictionary, he would necessarily be reading the lines through a "scoptic" lens that helps determine his contaminating choices.

This paper aims to contribute to the discourses around genre and source in *Troilus and Cressida* in two ways. First, by advancing some modest and perhaps even new arguments for specific details or patterns in the play that coordinate with Chapman's *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades*, but in a way that relates them to the play's elaborate thematics of *contaminatio*, a concept elaborated through a vocabulary that foregrounds the sexual and genetic connotations without relinquishing its textual and theatrical ones. In discussing the theoretical nexus of "phylum-tree-rhizome" in his *The Pleasures of Contamination*, David Greetham suggests how this sexual metaphorics complicates textual scholarship; by reading these complications not only out of the textual record but out of the play so recorded, I will argue that *Troilus and Cressida* offers its reader-audience pleasures of contamination, but only to be enjoyed satirically, as pleasures of the spleen (cf. 1.3.178).

"*Hamlet* and the Myth of Reverse Rotation of the Universe in Plato's *Statesman*"

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The structure of time in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is organized in accord with the myth of the reverse rotation of the universe in Plato's *Statesman* (268a-274e). The play's many allusions to the dialogue equate Hamlet's destiny with the re-establishment of the divinely guided rule described in this central myth. Hamlet's task is to restore the disjuncture of time introduced by the corruption of Claudius' rule: "Time is out of joint— O' cursed spite/ That ever I was born to set it right!" (1.5.188). The play associates the motion of Claudius' "retrograde" rule (which is based on a desire contrary to Hamlet's 1.2.114) with the decline towards chaos that ensues "when the god lets go the helm" and the human rulers gradually "forget" (273a-c) the perfect rule of the previous, divinely guided rotation. With this forgetfulness, the world spirals into chaos "and the few good things it produces it corrupts with so gross a taint of corruption that it hovers on the very brink of destruction," until the god resumes control again and reverses its course (273e). As these reversing cycles alternate, at each transition the world is massively disrupted and many creatures are destroyed (273a). When the Cronos rules, humans live under divine superintendence, they are born of the earth, they age backwards, their bodies eventually disappear, and those killed by violence are said to disappear, as Polonius' body does. In the opposing cycle (the present age ruled over by Zeus) humans must rule themselves, they reproduce sexually and age forward, but because of the bodily element in reproduction, they gradually "forget" the perfect rule of the proceeding cycle (273b-c). Hamlet's father's "foul crimes done in his days of nature" (1.5.12) indicate that he also ruled in this human cycle, but unlike Claudius, "the fat weed that roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf" (1.5.33) his ability to "remember" (273b) the rule of the divinely guided cycle made him a far better ruler than Claudius, whose rule is tainted with such corruption that it marks the descent of the Danish state and everyone in it into "the bottomless abyss of unlikeness" (273d-e).

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The "tenantless" graves Horatio describes (1.1.115), and the ghost's appearance in Act I, accord with the myth's account of the emergence of the earthborn in the divinely guided cycle. The myth explains why Hamlet in his "put on" madness can "methodically" claim to be older than Polonius, and why he describes him as a "Great baby" (1.5.173, 2.2.371). Hamlet and Laertes' leap into Ophelia's grave is a kind of death and rebirth that associates them both with the advent of the divine cycle represented by Hamlet's self–identification as the true ruler, "Hamlet the Dane," avatar of the new rotation and avenger and purge of the corruption of Claudius' rule.

"Hecuba in *Hamlet*, the *Aeneid*, and Euripides"

Jason Gleckman
Chinese University of Hong Kong

This conference paper attempts to address the possible references to Greek tragedy, specifically *Hecuba* by Euripides, in *Hamlet*. After reviewing the available evidence, I will argue that *Hamlet* proposes a twofold perception on the figure of Hecuba. On the one hand is the view presented in Book Two of the *Aeneid* (which Shakespeare knew well) wherein Hecuba represents, as does Priam, the archetypal helpless victim of violent slaughter. This is also the view presented in the player's speech in *Hamlet* wherein he pleads (echoing the *Aeneid*) for divine recognition of Hecuba's plight as well as mercy and justice for her. In this reading (as in the *Aeneid*) the figure of Neoptolemus/Pyrrhus who kills Priam at the altar in front of his wife's eyes represents a savage "new man" in contrast to his father, Achilles, who at least returned Hector's body to his father Priam in the end of the *Iliad*.
If Euripides's play, *Hecuba*, is brought into the reading of *Hamlet*, however, the perception of the events at the end of the Trojan war is changed. In *Hecuba*, when Pyrrhus is about to kill an innocent victim (Polyxena) he pauses (as in *Hamlet,* as Martin Mueller notes) and, although he does indeed commit the murder, it is seen more as a sacrifice and his unwillingness to perform it testifies to his potential moral virtue.

Pitting these two versions of Pyrrhus against each other may provide additional evidence of Shakespeare's familiarity with Euripides's *Hecuba* as well as suggest how the issue of divine justice, particularly in pre-Christian contexts, was perceived by Shakespeare in relation to *Hamlet*.

"Jonson's Greek: *Sejanus* and Aristotle's *Poetics*"

Jonathan Goossen
Ambrose University

Despite increasing critical interest, Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* remains a tragedy difficult to appreciate. This trouble arises from several prominent features. First, critics have complained that the play lacks an organizational centre around either character or theme. Moreover, its characters are flat and merely clinical in their pursuit of or commentary on various ends; none of them elicits the tragic emotions of pity or fear. Finally the play's omissions are significant: Jonson stubbornly refuses to stage almost any major event of suffering in the play, and he

excises any sense of fate or the gods' inexorable will. Without arguing that the play is an unjustly neglected masterpiece, this paper will explore how each of these features may arise from Jonson's attempts to employ a set of dramatic principles at the centre of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle infamously subordinates character to action, stating that because tragedy is the *mimesis* of an action, characters are only included for the sake of that action. As in his ethical philosophy, *praxis* or "action" designates purposive striving towards an end, and so remains essentially ethical. *Ēthos* or "characterization," then, is primarily that which manifests moral choice. Aristotle is also less interested in particular acts of suffering and the spectacle that often accompanies them than on tracing the lines of causation that lead to and from those events. And contrary to most ancient Greek drama, Aristotle's account of causation deliberately excludes the influence of the gods. These particular principles can, I think, go some ways towards explaining the structure of Jonson's first tragedy.

" 'Striking too short at Greek?': the extent of Shakespeare's borrowings in the dramatic language and references of his Hellenic and Hellenistic-set plays"

Mike Ingham
Lingnan University Hong Kong

My paper will investigate to what extent Shakespeare's borrowings are seen primarily through the prism of medieval or near-contemporary representations, and to what extent he appears to have engaged with contemporary Greek drama in translation, employing words and cultural concepts of Ancient Greek etymology. Evidence of the latter would support the idea of a wider array of sources, specifically from translations of Aeschylus, Euripides and other classical Greek authors significant to the English Renaissance.

One key aim of my interdisciplinary literary-linguistic paper is to challenge the more reductive scholarly interpretation of Jonson's passing reference to Shakespeare's "small Latine and less Greeke" in his poetic encomium printed in the First Folio. At the same time it will respond to more recent contrary assertions that appear to exaggerate the extent of Shakespeare's Greek scholarship, at least from a lexical perspective. In so doing, I will assess some of the salient linguistic and dramatic evidence in the Greek-set and Greek-themed plays that might indicate a greater level of dialogue between Shakespeare and Hellenic culture than has been surmised by some scholars. I will also discuss, with reference to the Greek-set and -themed plays, how Greek sources and references become dramatically alchemised in Shakespeare's melting-pot .

"Remembering Greece in Shakespeare's Rome"

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This paper examines Shakespeare's reception of Plutarch, whose *Lives* furnished his vision of ancient Rome. Examination of Antony's prophecy of revenge in *Julius Caesar* reveals significant continuities as well as revealing departures. Among other changes Shakespeare imports into this speech *Atē* ("blindness, disaster"), which he reads as an infernal spirit of discord. Shakespeare also translates the mysterious, intransigently alien *daimōn* ("god,

tutelary spirit, fortune") into Caesar's ghost, a Senecan revenge spirit. George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and the author of *Caesar's Revenge*show similar patterns of adoption. But Shakespeare shows a remarkable independence from Plutarch and from early modern translators and playwrights. He rejects the purposeful supernaturalism in Plutarch that renders Roman and Greek history moral and comprehensible; he also rejects the contemporary adaptation of this supernaturalism into a Christian hermeneutic.The march of Roman history in *Julius Caesar* does not manifest God's controlling hand.

"Shakespeare's Greek Novel"

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Hellenistic novels had a tremendous impact in the Renaissance through vernacular translations and they influenced not just later romances but also English drama. Focusing on Shakespeare's *Pericles*, I'm particularly interested in two aspects of the early modern reception of Greek novels: how the classical world is understood through medieval texts; and how the reception of Hellenistic novels was a way too of understanding the ancient Near East.

Pericles's plot comes from *Apollonius of Tyre,* a Latin text from a lost Greek original that had a wide medieval circulation, mainly through the Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, a compilation of exemplary tales. *Pericles* does not simply use the story but foregrounds its medieval roots, most notably through the use of the figure of Gower, who himself offered a version of the story in *Confessio amantis*. Interestingly, other early modern dramatic versions also use medieval sources: Dutch historian Pieter Bor wrote two further dramatic versions, *Apollonius Prince van Tyro* and *Apollonius en zijne dochter Tarsia* (Apollonius and his daughter Tarsia), published 1617, based on the Dutch vernacular version of the *Gesta Romanorum.*

Ranging widely in its geography, many of the places in *Pericles* are located in the Near East. How do early modern adaptations of Hellenistic novels also adopt the genre's racially and culturally multifarious world? Classicism and orientalism were intimately linked in the Renaissance and diverged late. Many of the Hellenistic authors came from the eastern Mediterranean and their Greek novels have a cosmopolitan character. Early modern commentators on the ancient novel note their 'eastern' origins. Salmasius's edition of Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, calling his author an Alexandrian, puts it in a transnational history of fiction, locating the origin of fables in Milesian tales from Asia, then transmitted to Arabs before they reached Europe. Pierre-Daniel Huet does something very similar in his 1670 *Traité de l'origine des roman*, which soon became an influential account of romance. In the early modern reception of Hellenistic novels, what were the complex interactions among classicism, 'oriental' scholarship, and early colonialism?

"Either/or and/or both/and?"

Curtis Perry
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In the opening paragraph of their useful introduction to the subject of Shakespeare's Greek—the essay that was our first assigned reading for this seminar—Alison Findlay and Vassiliki Markidou describe their volume's project as follows:

> *Shakespeare and Greece* aims to invert Ben Jonson's claim that Shakespeare had 'small Latin and less Greek' and to prove that there is more Greek and less Latin in a significant group of Shakespeare texts.

Within the post-romantic Shakespeare industry, texts are valued in proportion to the degree that they can be shown to have inspired Shakespeare, so I take this statement primarily to be a salutary criticism of the way that a handful of Latin texts have hitherto enjoyed a monopoly over the reflected cultural capital emanating from the Shakespearean sunsource. We do indeed need to learn to value a wider range of texts and to think of Shakespeare as participating in networks of intertextual commerce that are (as John Kerrigan recently puts it) "prismatic" (72) rather than linear.

My concern, though is that simply inverting Jonson's hierarchy preserves the zero-sum logic that has tended to structure source study for Shakespeareans: if Greek sources take up more the cultural capital associated with Shakespearean influence then there must perforce be less remaining for the Latin text he was previously supposed to have relied upon. This way of thinking disallows the possibility that Shakespeare himself may be been interested in the intersection or dialogue between prior texts, imagining in effect that each item of classical literature exists prior to Shakespeare in a vacuum awaiting revivification in the galvanic machine of the Shakespearean text. The history of debate over Shakespeare's sources is full of arguments structured as either/or arguments that (in my view) would be better understood in terms of both/and: classical literature or native folk sources? Rome or Greece? Etc.

What if Shakespeare's interest in Greek material is (at least sometimes) related to, rather than opposed to, his interest in Roman literary models? My goal for this paper will be to pursue this idea by teasing out what this might look like in one or two of the highly metatheatrical tragedies where scholars have argued effectively for the presence of either Euripides or Seneca: *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. What happens if, instead of trying to determine which of these classical dramatists is really at the heart of Shakespeare's mystery we try to think about how the plays negotiate between the examples of the two writers as part of the way each thinks through the inherited affordances of tragedy? To make this argument in a concise and constrained manner, I expect to engage with Tanya Pollard's recent exploration of the influence of Euripides's *Hecuba* in these two plays, as well as on arguments about the influence of Seneca by (among others) our own Robert Miola.

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"Gower and Greek Romance in *Pericles*"

Jane Raisch
University of York

This paper will argue that Shakespeare's *Pericles*, primarily through the figure of Gower-as-narrator, dramatizes the fraught process of adaptation from Greek romance to English drama. In the decades leading up to the turn of the seventeenth century, critics like Phillip Sidney had pointed out the unsuitability of romance plots drawn from the Greek world – with their temporal and geographic expansiveness – for adaptation on the London stage. Shakespeare, in response, crafts a dramatic romance in which this implicit generic 'unsuitability' becomes an explicit part of this play's exploration of cultural difference. Shakespeare, I propose, puts the difficulty of adaptation on display.

Gower's frequent and lengthy narratorial interventions (almost unprecedented in Shakespeare's corpus) draw the audience's attention to, rather than conceal or gloss over, the logistics of adaptation required to make romance work on stage. Conversely, the sheer amount of narrative material Gower is tasked with reporting – extensive backstories, vast journeys, significant changes in time and place – enacts the impossibility of this adaptation, the challenge romance by definition poses to theatrical plausibility. To stage a romance will always necessarily be partial; aspects of romance will always remain just beyond the possibilities of theatrical representation. In making this 'impossibility' central to the play itself, Shakespeare connects the play's thematic preoccupation with the boundaries of knowledge to its self-conscious generic experimentation. The proliferation of 'gaps' (to quote Shakespeare's Gower) that characterizes the play – between romance and drama, between far-flung quasi-Mediterranean cities, between decades, between family members, and between culturally disparate textual sources – reflects its representation of the unspeakable and unknowable as the fundamental conditions of Pericles' cultural encounters.

In so vividly depicting the narratological fissures of adaptation, the play interrogates the cultural multiplicity inherent to romance. The juxtaposition of Gower's English archaisms with a Greek-meets-chivalric landscape captures the linguistic and literary diversity embedded within the reception history of its sources. Even if Shakespeare didn't know the tangled cultural origins of Gower's retelling of Apollonius of Tyre, he clearly attended to the layers of cultural signification present in the story itself. These layers are in some ways fittingly reflected in the play's own fraught transmission history, in which the prose 'romancing' of George Wilkins a year after its production has retroactively helped modern editors reconstruct a 'correct' text.