

# Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference

---

Volume 11

Article 4

---

2020

## Knowing the World: Shakespeare on Travel in *As You Like It* and *Othello*

David Summers

*Capital University*, [dsummers@capital.edu](mailto:dsummers@capital.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc>



Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Please take a moment to share how this work helps you [through this survey](#). Your feedback will be important as we plan further development of our repository.

---

### Recommended Citation

Summers, David (2020) "Knowing the World: Shakespeare on Travel in *As You Like It* and *Othello*," *Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference*: Vol. 11 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/spovsc/vol11/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Literary Magazines at IdeaExchange@Uakron, the institutional repository of The University of Akron in Akron, Ohio, USA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Selected Papers of the Ohio Valley Shakespeare Conference by an authorized administrator of IdeaExchange@Uakron. For more information, please contact [mjon@uakron.edu](mailto:mjon@uakron.edu), [uapress@uakron.edu](mailto:uapress@uakron.edu).

## Knowing the World: Shakespeare on Travel in *As You Like It* and *Othello*

David Summers, *Capital University*

Getting to know the world through personal travel, particularly by means of the “semester abroad,” seems to me to be one of the least controversial planks in the Humanities professors’ manifesto. However, reading Shakespeare with an eye toward determining his attitude toward travel creates a disjuncture between our conviction that travel generally, and studying abroad in particular, is an enriching experience, and Shakespeare’s tendency to hold the benefits of travel suspect. There is little about my own time at university I regret more than not studying abroad, and few things I advocate for more strongly with my own students. And yet, there were many incidents in Shakespeare’s plays that seem dismissive of travel as a humane, life-affirming activity. We know little with certainty about Shakespeare’s own travel experience outside of England, or even if he had any; I have always found Shakespeare’s geographic knowledge suspect, as did Ben Jonson, apparently, who—even in his admiration for Shakespeare virtues as a writer—maintained that geographical exactitude was not one of those virtues. Jonson famously pointed out that “Shakespeare, in a play, brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some 100 miles” (466). For Shakespeare, some of this resistance to travel—or even apparently to looking at maps—may be class-driven, as Bate argues it is in Nash’s *Unfortunate Traveler*, while some of it is driven by a set of literary assumptions: that Bohemia and such places are as much literary tropes (as Byzantium was your Yeats) as real places, either on the maps in atlases or in the actual world, and that the representation of such places as tropes needs to be unrestrained by the accidents of actuality. John Gillies has called this (following Vico) “poetic geography” (5). Arden is not the Forest of Arden in Warwickshire, much less the Ardenne Forest in France—it is rather, arcadia, the pastoral counter-point to Alexandria, or Rome or Westminster. Theocritus’ pastoral mode is foundationally nostalgic, the city dweller missing Sicily, a longing for home, just as Greg Nagy has argued the foundational value of the *Odyssey* is *nostos*: getting home

safely. Shakespeare's view advances the claims of the literary texts as acts of "poetic geography," and especially drama perhaps, as means of representing the competing values of what we might call the Odyssean mind-set: embracing travel as rich, lived experience, but a relentless and overriding desire to get home to Ithaca. Travel can be textual—and perhaps it is best that way, either in the safety of the theatre, or in the safety and comfort afforded by one's own hearth. In this at least, Shakespeare is well situated in the Humanist intellectual tradition.

Harold Pinter once wrote in the script for *The Go-Between*, "The past is another country—they do things differently there." In most of the educational theory expounded by the early Italian humanists, visiting the past—or even present exotic places—through books was the only form of travel incorporated into their philosophy of learning. Pier Paolo Vergerio's summarizes the position in his essay on "Character and Studies":

For although written records are very valuable indeed for other purposes, they are especially valuable for preserving the memory of the past, as they contain the deeds of mankind, the un-hoped for turns of fortune, the unusual works of nature, and (more important than all these things) the guiding principles of historical periods... . What way of life, then can be more delightful, or indeed more beneficial, than to read and write all the time: for moderns to understand things ancient; for the present generations to converse with their posterity; thus to make every time their own, both past and future? (Kallendorf 45)

The phrase "the unusual works of nature" encode the pedagogical preference of books over lived experience as the best way to know even things we might be inclined to say, "You just have to see it for yourself." Or as Rosalind says, looking around at the end of an exhausting journey, "Well, this is the forest of Arden" (AYL 2.4.13). A rather flat assessment, hanging perhaps like an Aristotelean golden mean between Touchstone's "Aye, now am I in Arden: the more fool I. When I was at home I was in a better place; but traveler's must be content" (2.4.14-15) and Celia's "I like this place, / And willingly could waste my time in it" (2.4.93-94). Of course, her feet were tired, so her appraisal is suspect, but tired feet is endemic to travel. Such ambiguity, such diversity of the sense of place on the part of travelers, is in fact typical of Elizabethan attitudes toward travel, especially with regard to Italy, which Jonathan Bate has called, in reference to

Thomas Coryat's *Crudites* (1611), "a paradoxical attraction and revulsion" (61). Sir Henry Wooten both loved, and at times loathed, Venice, for example. Roger Ascham, who spent only nine days in Italy famously fretted that a few more days might corrupt even the best of young men, while Thomas Hoby traveled extensively even as far as Sicily on his own and came to love and admire Italy. I want to suggest a few of the ways this paradox works itself into Shakespeare's attitudes toward travel, mainly as seen in two plays, *As You Like It* and *Othello*.

### *Humanists on Travel and Learning*

The context we need for this investigation is a sense of the complex role that travel played in the mindset of humanist learning as it evolved through the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The starting point of the paradox is found in the pedagogical treatises of the Italian Renaissance. Here we find little mention at all of the educational power of actual travel, even while the great humanists were sometimes themselves inveterate travelers. Paul Grendler's magisterial survey of the field, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy*, finds no occasion to discuss the learning potential in travel; even when discussing how the new learning might aid mercantile endeavors the main issue identified by Grendler was whether learning to use the abacus was worthwhile. As for the travel of the humanists themselves, it seems to have been predominantly motivated by commerce, diplomacy or—as in *As You Like It*—political exile. Thomas More was on a diplomatic mission in the framing device he used for *Utopia*, which uses Book One to simultaneously laud the effects of travel on Raphael Hythlody, while eventually suggesting that travel—here cast as an analogical version of finding the sun in Plato's allegory of the cave, and therefore a very good thing—both made Hythlody wise beyond compare, and utterly unsuited to actual service in the real world. Plato suggested no philosopher would, if giving their natural inclination free rein, chose to take on the burden of political responsibility as long as a library or philosophical conversation beckoned, and Hythlody firmly declines all the enticements More can offer to become one of Plato's Guardians.

This preference for bookish learning over actual travel pervades the conversation about the educational and character building potentials in travel all through the 16<sup>th</sup> century, reaching its peak perhaps in Ascham's famous precepts on using book learning rather than lived experience of

foreign places if we want to preserve the virtues of our young men, and prevent them aping, Orsic-like, Italianate dress, manners, affectations of speech, and –god help us–Italian sexual mores. As late as 1633 such arguments must have been advanced by someone since they receive rebuttal in an odd little publication from one Benjamin Fisher, who has perhaps the Rick Steves of his day. His booklet contains two letters about the virtues of travel, one by the late Earl of Essex of dubious memory to Roger Manners, the Earl of Rutland and the other by Philip Sidney to his young brother. Fisher’s own preamble begins:

It hath been lately maintained in the academical dispute, That the best travelling is in maps and good Authors, because thereby a man may take a view of the state and manners of the whole world, and never mix with the corruptions of it. A pleasing opinion for solitary prisoners who may thus travel the whole world, though confined to a dungeon. And indeed it is a good way to keep a man innocent, but withal as Ignorant (Fisher).

He goes on to admit that travel has had a deleterious effect on some simple-minded travelers: “it cannot be denied” he writes “that many men while they aim at fitness, make themselves unfit for any thing. Some go over full of good qualities, and better hopes, who, having as it were emptied themselves in other places, return laden with nothing but the vices, if not the diseases of the Countries which they have seen.” This anxiety about the moral effects of travel informs the obscene horrors of Nash’s *Unfortunate Traveller*, but when coupled with the ribald pleasures of that text, that narrative come to represent—as Jonathan Bate has shown—the simultaneous “paradoxical attraction and revulsion” of the Elizabethan view of travel abroad. Fisher summary thesis comes down firmly on the side travel, for some. “The best scholar is the fittest traveler, as being able to make the most useful observation: Experience added to learning, makes a perfect Man.”

Sidney’s letter to his younger brother, Robert, encourages him to travel, but to travel wisely. Travel should not be just to say you’ve been to X, or for a change of air, or even for the learning on languages, but rather for the “right informing your mind which are most notable in those places which you come into view ... . so may I justly say, who travels with the eye of Ulysses doth take one of the most excellent ways of worldly wisdom. For hard it is to know England, without you know it by comparing it with some

other country.” Sidney reinforces Ulysses as a trope for a certain kind of admirable travel by later in the letter quoting the opening lines of the *Odyssey* (in Latin, rather than Greek or English) to drive home the idea that travelers should not bring home the superficial and accidental customs of the places they visit, but to delve deeply in the minds of other men, and the ethos of other cities, to extract something like an essentialist theory of human morality, a transcendent, trans-cultural idea of the Good. What this represents is a shift in educational attitudes regarding actual travel that parallels what Gilles describes as the shift occurring at the beginning of the seventeenth-century from “poetic geography” to “the new geography” (37-38).

Odysseus is a recurring place holder for the genuinely curious, open-minded traveler, and had been that at least from the moment Dante wrests Virgil’s arch-villain from his mentor, and—even while casting Ulysses in a fairly deep circle of Hell—makes him the icon of the pagan striving to know the world, even striving to know God, by rowing all the way from Ithaca to Purgatory. But Dante had never read Homer, and as the Odysseus of Homer became known to humanist readers, Dante’s damned Ulysses evolves into the man who saw “many cities of men ... and learned their minds,” but even that is not, for Odysseus, the *telos* of travel, because the only reason he is out there at all (Ovid’s *Heroides* not withstanding) is “to save his life and bring his comrades home” (I.4-6). What he **doesn’t** do is bring those cyclopean bad habits modeled by Polyphemus back to Ithaca. Sidney is fully aware of how “bad travelers” can give “worthy travelers” some terrible press, and foresees that travelers conceived of as ludicrous manners sponges “shall be made sport of in comedies.”

“Experience added to learning, makes the perfect Man.” The debate over the dangers of moral corruption latent in the experience of the young Englishman abroad may not have been entirely exhausted by the 1630’s, but it did not seem to carry much force for John Milton, assuming the book-learning precedes the travel. In his essay *On Education* (1644), Milton outlines the last great Humanist treatise on reading and study, but ends with a note of travel:

Not shall we then need the monsieurs of Paris to take our hopeful youth into their slight and prodigal custodies and send them over back again transformed into mimics, apes and kichshaws. But if

they desire to see other countries at three or four and twenty years of age, not to learn principles but to enlarge experience and make wise observation, they will by that time be such as shall deserve the regard and honor of all men where they pass, and the society and friendship of those in all places who are best and most eminent (639).

This will surprise no one who has read *Areopagitica*: “ye cannot make them virtuous (here read, “mimics, apes and kickshaws”) came not thither so” (733). Milton’s own educational program, as wildly un-repeatable as it was, suggest a new attitude toward travel as essential to a complete education: a couple of university degrees, six or seven years of uninterrupted reading (at the expense of one’s father) and only then, the Grand Tour. Within just a few years prior to *On Education*, and in reference to Sir Henry Wooten, Issak Walton wrote that the great future diplomat “Laid aside his books, and betook him to the useful library of travel” (Bate 56). So that where once travel was the humanist metaphor for reading the past, we have now reached an elegant inversion, in which reading becomes the metaphor for travel in the present.

### *As You Like It*

Travel motifs infuse the play, but the crucial passage in *As You Like It* regarding travel as such is found in the exchange between Rosalind and Jacques in 4.1, in which one of Shakespeare’s most defined, most complete and charismatic characters, takes a position which seems to disparage travel.

**Jacques:** I have neither the scholar’s melancholy, which is emulation, nor the musicians’ which is fantastical, nor the courtier’s which is proud, nor the soldier’s, which is ambitious, nor the lawyer’s, which is politic, nor the lady’s, which is nice, nor the lover’s which is all of these; but it is a melancholy of my own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplations of my travels, in which my rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.

**Rosalind:** A traveler! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your lands to see other men’s. The to have seen much and to have nothing is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

**Jacques:** Yes, I have gained my experience.

**Rosalind:** And you experience makes you sad. I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad—and to travel for it to! ... . Farewell Monsieur Traveler. Look you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity. And almost chide God for making you that countenance you are. Or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola (4.1-34).

Explicating Rosalind's position here is complicated by the rustic role she is playing as Ganymede, but the underlying attitude evinces precisely the comic skewering Sidney anticipated. Jacques is not, precisely, the foppish Italianate decadent Ascham worried travel in Italy would create, but he is a self-consciously constructed exotic of a mildly unpleasant sort. The irony here is that while his discourse of self-fashioning may be design to claim some space as *sui generis*, the effect of his exoticism is to allow Rosalind to cast him firmly as comic-type, one who will frequent the city-comedies of Jonson, Dekker and Brome. But regardless of Rosalind's comic lampooning of Jacques, she does seem to me to be revealing a genuine distrust of the value of travel set over and against the value of being home, and the very bourgeois ethic that values place land and wealth over experience and travel. Her function as an erstwhile-aristocrat who must pass as a "shepherd" (when she is in fact a land-lord with a tenant shepherd working for her) invites us to see the position she takes here as more than just a comic turn, but an expression of her real values. Or perhaps, of Shakespeare's real values.

And what of that poor tenant shepherd? Touchstone asks Corin if he has ever traveled. "Wast ever in court, shepherd?" (3.30). This comes on the heels of Corin's comic turn as natural philosopher, who—among other profundities such as "good pasture makes fat sheep, and that a great cause of night is lack of the sun" (3.25-26)—reminds us of the wrangle among humanists regarding the relative merits of books and actual travel, when he adds "he that hath learned no wit by nature nor art may complain of good breeding or comes of very dull kindred" (3.27-29). The ensuing interrogation of Corin by Touchstone on matters of moral corruption is a comic inversion of the concerns Ascham and others expressed about the corrupting effect on character that visiting foreign courts would likely have on young English gentlemen. Corin may be rhetorically out maneuvered by Touchstone, but there is little doubt that we are meant to conclude Corin

is, morally and in every other way, better off staying close to his sheepcote in Arden.

Even Arden as a “tourist destination” is quietly recast from being merely an example of an arcadian, pastoral ideal of Edenic virtue. Virtue, yes, but in the set piece spoken at the beginning of 2.1 the Duke, like Odysseus himself, makes a virtue of the necessity of exile, by comparing the morally bracing Forest of Arden to the decadent, devious Court. Even in winter, the eternal enemy of the pastoral dream, the cold winds of Arden “bite and blows upon my body / Even till I shrink with cold, I smile, and say / “This is no flattery. These are counselors / That feelingly persuade me what I am” (2.1.8-11). This is pretty standard pro-pastoral discourse, until the end of the speech when the Duke brings this venture in lived experience around to a more contained, bookish set of images: “And this our life, exempt from public haunt / Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything” (2.1.15-17). Lovely as the lines and the sentiments are, no one I think is convinced that the Duke is actually better off in Arden than at his own rightful court; Arden is as wrong for him as Court would be for Corin, which is precisely why he returns there at his first opportunity.

Who doesn’t return to his former life, which seems to have been constituted of various world travels, is Jacques. In a gesture that has struck many as oddly irrelevant, Jacques ends his travels in a cloistered hermitage— a trope that stands at the opposite end of some continuum connecting the anchorite to Monsieur Traveler. Jacques becomes the permanent exile, but not of the wondering sort like Dante, who, Ulysses-like, makes a virtue of sad necessity moving from court to court, city to city. Jacques source of experience will become increasingly cloistered so that, while he may not return to court with the rest of the exiles, he enters a closed library of sorts, with one other conversation partner—and a captive one at that. Both the Duke’s return to his court and Jacques cloister are an end to exile and peregrination.

The Duke as exile reminds us that the play alludes to yet another exiled traveler, who played a dominant role in Shakespeare imagination, as well as in his own carefully constructed poetic persona: Ovid. Touchstone, who doesn’t like a shepherd’s life or Arden, or even the idea of the pastoral, tells us he is stuck here among the goats “as the most capricious honest poet Ovid was among the Goths” (3.3.6). Ovid’s poetry

of exile contains his warm remembrances of his youthful travels, but it is of course dominated by one theme, and one theme only—the desire to go home. When Jacques responds to Touchstone’s mention of Ovid among the Goths, he reminds us first of the larger problem of learning and knowledge, “Oh knowledge ill-inhabited!” and then of the problem of finding one’s proper place in the world, “worse than Jove in a thatched house” (3.3.7-8). Jove belongs on Olympus, Corin with his sheep, the Duke and Touchstone at Court, and Jacques in a contemplative’s hermitage.

### *Othello*

While Jacques pretends to a persona made exotic and wise by travel, Othello presents us with a genuine exotic for whom travel has been his mode of being, and the effects of travel among his defining characteristics. Like Jacques, Othello likes to bring up his extensive travels in conversation, with the dramatic difference that the Moor, we are convinced, has not only been to places Jacques never dreamt of visiting but has inhabited those dire and dangerous places as a denizen rather than as a tourist. His life has indeed been a difficult one, marked by displacement from his rightful home, slavery, mortal danger and genuine suffering. His travel was at least to some degree and in its origins, forced upon him and was his path to survival. If, as it seems, he willingly chose to forsake the “royal siege” (1.2.22) he enjoyed in his homeland and his native religion in favor of being an admired alien in Venice and a Christian convert, that does not diminish the genuine tribulations entailed by his life as a wandering professional soldier. He has earned the right to speak, and therefore Brabantio and Desdemona listen, as do the Duke and his Senate, and as do we.

What Othello has to say about his travels is powerful. It charms Desdemona, and the Duke says it would have charmed his daughter as well. His traveler’s tales have a concreteness about them that Jacques does not attempt. Indeed, Jacques never actually relates a single anecdote drawn from his travels; instead, he simply asserts that his travels have made him grow wise, and with his wisdom, melancholy. Othello’s traveler’s tales are nothing if not vivid and concrete with their “antres vast and deserts idle, / rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven” (1.3.141-2), but the places as surpassed by the wonders of “the cannibals that each other eat, / The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their

shoulders” (1.3.144-6), as well as by the narrative appeal of “most disastrous chances” and “hair-breadth ‘scapes in the imminent breach.” All in all, travelers and their tales seem to come off much better in *Othello* than in *As You Like It*.

When Othello describes himself it tends to be in terms of his life as a soldier, claiming to know little of the world except for martial enterprises and tents in the field, but when he becomes both observer of his own life, and its narrator, the guiding metaphor for his life is the journey. In his *apologia* before the Senate—which is the audience’s introduction to Othello’s backstory as well as to his rhetorical and social position in the Venetian milieu—it is the travels and wonders the audience remembers more than the hair-breath escapes, and we never learn anything specific about his genius as a military strategist. What we learn is that he is a skilled narrator of his own life of travels, his protestations of being “rude of speech” unconvincing. His story of his errancy so shapes his conception of himself, it remains the dominate metaphor connecting Othello to his own life even in his tragic last hour. When assuring Gratiano that he will not harm him or escape, Othello’s rhetoric naturally turns to Travel: “Be not afraid, though you do see me weaponed. / Here is my journey’s end, here is my butt / and the very sea-mark of my utmost sail” (5.2.264-6). As well as providing Othello with the guiding metaphor of his life, traveler’s tales are woven into what we might call the deep grammar of his life:

. . . Set you down this,  
 And say besides that in Aleppo once,  
 Where a malignant and turbaned Turk  
 Beat a Venetian once and traduced the state.  
 I took by the throat th’ throat the circumcised dog  
 And smote him—thus!     *Stabs himself*

**Lodovico:** O bloody period!

**Gratiano:** All that’s spoke is marred! (5.2.349-355)

In the final moments of his life, by citing the Indus and Aleppo Othello takes us farther afield than any other specific locale named in the play, and cast his death in narrative terms of remembering a traveler’s tale, turning our memories back to the “antres vast” and “idle deserts” from the first narrative that won all hearts.. Clearly, for Othello at least, his role as traveler with tales to tell is as central to his identity to as is his blackness, his martial prowess, or his role as alien among Venetians.

And yet, Shakespeare does not allow us to feel that these memories of travel have been converted into life-affirming wisdom. Moreover, the reader suspects they share some of Jacques' self-calculating posturing. They have not brought Othello wisdom or insight into mysteries of love or happiness, and they have not instilled in him judgment of other people's character. Few of Shakespeare's tragic protagonists suffer the disparagement from himself and others for his folly than does Othello, and properly so. He is too easily duped, too out of his depth with a plausible villain like Iago. If anyone in the audience believed that travel makes us better and wiser persons, Shakespeare makes that plausible villain, Iago, also a traveled man: he has been England it seems, and came away from the experience knowing only that Englishmen like to drink, and the words to a few tavern songs.

There is no doubt we are meant to feel the attraction and pleasure of traveler's tales as strongly as Desdemona when she finds Othello's stories passing strange and wondrous pitiful. But the effect is suspect to the extent it creates an untenable bound between the world-weary, errant Othello and the cloistered Desdemona who is emerging into a passionate independent thirst for life. In their case, the love that arises from the narrator-auditor dynamic is tragically unbalanced: "She loved me for the dangers I had passed / And I loved her that she did pity them" (1.3.168-9). This construction suggests that Desdemona is a blank, except insofar as she reflects Othello's suffering and solitude back to him sympathetically. Her speeches in this scene inform the audience she is a much stronger and assertive will than Othello has yet come to appreciate. Critics have made much of her naïveté regarding sexual relations between men and women, but perhaps too little of her courage and drive to engage with the world beyond Venice. She is the least traveled character in the play, and it is difficult to determine if we are to think she just wants childishly to see the excitement of war, or to escape an over-protective father, or if she has an admirable curiosity about the world beyond Venice, but what is clear is that she is one of the tragic casualties to foreign travel the Humanist pedagogues warned about. Ironically, since Desdemona is a Venetian herself, Shakespeare must move her to an even more liminal, exotic and dangerous place, Cyprus, which proves not to be a happy experience for her.

Othello's personal narrative that dominates the beginning of the play is certainly not cast as an advertisement for the pleasures of travel as such, but it does testify to the pleasures of hearing or reading traveler's tales. The inclusion of the notable "wonders"—the Anthropophagi and men with heads beneath their shoulder—simultaneously frames one of the more scintillating pleasures of such narratives and calls into question the inherent veracity of the genre. Mandeville's *Travels*, for example, were being viewed with an increasingly skeptical eye under the impact of more recent narratives such as Raleigh's *Discovery of Guiana* (1596) and accounts such as Montaigne's essay *Of Cannibals*, which recounts the visit in France of actual South American cannibals who were, to Montaigne's eye, in many ways much like his own countrymen. Mandeville had been surpassed in any event, for Shakespeare's purposes in *Othello*, by John Pory's translation (1600) of Leo Africanus's *A Geographical Historie of Africa*, which provided Shakespeare with not only the topographical features of Othello's speech but also much of his Moorish ethnography, and Philemon Holland's translation (1601) of Pliny's *Natural History*—a far more authoritative source for Anthropophagi than Mandeville, as well as Othello's belief that water only flows westward out of the Pontus into the Hellespont. What the litany of source material for this impressive speech demonstrates is the inherent irony of a dramatic monologue purporting to be the spontaneous recital of an authentic traveler's experience that is—as it must be—the bookish product of a hard-working playwright.

### *Conclusion*

Jacques and Othello are entirely different kinds of traveler. Jacques is a traveler *as such*, but Othello's traveler-tales are drawn from the hard experience of a professional soldier and escaped prisoner. We may suspect that, if Desdemona draws some vicarious thrill from hearing these tales told, as we do too, there may also have been some pleasurable thrill involved for Othello in the living of them. But they are the product of work, not play, not curiosity and not the designed getting of wisdom. In that sense, they are closer to a notion of travel represented by Odysseus than by Jacques. Jacques seems to have been a genuine tourist of a sort, but those are rare in Shakespeare. Perhaps the closest to a purely "grand tour" moment in any of the plays comes in *Twelfth Night*, when Sebastian and Antonio find themselves on the streets of Orsino's town. Sebastian wants

to see sights: “I pray you, let us satisfy our eyes / With the memorials and things of fame / That do renown this city” (3.3.22-24). Antonio, like Othello, is a soldier who may get to see the world by accident, but it is not thirsty for the “memorials and things of fame”: “Would you’d pardon me. / I do not without danger walk these streets” (3.3.24-25). In this moment, the two forms of travel are juxtaposed, as are competing viewpoints that travel can be delightful and illuminating, and that may sometimes be extremely dangerous. Antonio retreats to the safety of “home” (in this instance, a suburban inn called The Elephant), even though he encourages Sebastian to “beguile the time and feed your knowledge / With the viewing of this town” (3.3.41-42). Perhaps he does precisely that, and perhaps Viola and Sebastian begin the play as tourists (as Trevor Nunn’s 1996 film suggests), but if so, it has no dramaturgical interest for Shakespeare. It is not part of their backstory, and the only significant sights Sebastian sees while wandering around Illyria is the beautiful Olivia. She will be, as events unfold, his wife so this gesture toward seeing the sights is swiftly reimagined as actually finding oneself at discovering his proper home. There is some minor threat of danger for both Sebastian and Antonio, but while it is never serious it reminds us that Viola’s first introduction to Illyria turns her mind to death. Illyria is Elysium, but as it turns out, it is also Ithaca.

Tourists such as Sebastian are few. Most of the Shakespearean characters who qualify as what Gillies calls “voyagers”(3), are either doing a job after some fashion or are the subjects of exile, as in the case of Duke Senior. The late plays show a growing interest in the situation of exiles. Prospero was the bookish Duke of Milan whose “library was Dukedom large enough,” prior to his exile to his island. The King of Naples and his followers are voyaging for political reasons, and even that is resented by Sebastian and Antonio who decry the geographic and cultural distance Alonso has created between himself and his daughter Claribel. Pericles, after fleeing for his life, is caught in a seemingly endless peregrination until finally finding his way home to wife and child. *Winter’s Tale* represents for the audience the danger latent even in the seemingly harmless journey of Polixenes going to visit his childhood friend, Leontes. About half of the sea-voyages in the late romances—and there are quite a few—entail absolute wreckage or (apparent) loses of life in a storm, a record unlikely to inspire travel in readers. But more pointedly, the shipwreck trope is an

ancient one, and one that signifies more than anything else a frustration of *nostos*, the traveler's desire to get home. Ovid, for example, frets about shipwrecks and storms on his way out to Tomis in the *Tristia*, while a younger, happier Ovid had related the hauntingly poignant tale of Ceyx's death at sea in Book XI of *Metamorphoses*. The spirit of Ceyx haunts Alcyone much as Ovid haunts Shakespeare's romances.

What has Ovid to do with the matter of Shakespeare on travel? The exilic poems of Ovid include an evocative account of young Ovid's travels around the Mediterranean, but those are outweighed by the recurrent lament of the exile longing for a recall to Rome. As with Sebastian and Antonio, tourism and its discontents are placed side by side in Ovid's *Tristia*. Shakespeare's affinity with Ovid as a writer is well established, but in Tom Cain's discussion of Jonson's affinity with Horace (in his "Introduction" to the Revels *Poetaster*), he reminds us that these affinities can go far beyond literary techniques, styles, and borrowings. They can take on a biographical *imitatio* that may start with incidental similarities of their lives and evolve into "a programme of 'self-fashioning' : "It is hard now to appreciate the humanist commitment to *imitatio* as a strategy not only for writing but for living and dying by"(10). In this sense of life imitating not art, but another artists' way of being in the world, Shakespeare's affinity for Ovid is most suggestively deployed of in *Cymbeline*. While it does not happen to provide the audience with a shipwreck as such, it does include the exile of Posthumus paired with the cloistering of Imogen. The language of the description of Imogen watching the departing ship taking Posthumus into exile in Rome, directly echoes Ovid's description of Alcyone watching the departure of Ceyx on his fatal voyage in *Metamorphoses* (XI. 667-680). The "historical" Cymbeline, Cunobeline (ruled Britain c. 10-40CE) began his reign in the second year of Ovid's exile from Rome. That Posthumus leaves the northern edge of the Roman Empire in order to take up "exile" in the same city Ovid was exiled *from* as he was forced to go to the farthest eastern edge of Empire suggests that Shakespeare maybe exploring the very nature of exile and *nostos*—the deep desire of the exile to return to where he started, to be with his loved ones again, to rest by his own hearth. Ovid's home is Posthumus' exile, and Tomis would probably have looked much like London to the great poet's eyes, but what is constant is that both would rather be home than away. Touchstone's allusion to "Ovid among the Goths" lets us know

that Shakespeare was not just enchanted by the Ovid of *Amores* and *Metamorphoses*, but was also acutely aware of the lamentable ‘Ovid the Exile.’ Reconciliation, reunion, forgiveness, return—all the deep desires Ovid’s *Tristia* and *Letters from the Black Sea* give profound voice to—are the obsessions of the Shakespeare who wrote the late romances. Perhaps they adumbrate an account for the curious fact of a successful playwright retiring to his hometown while still at the height of his powers. Ovid longed to go home—perhaps Shakespeare did as well.

### Works Cited

- Bate, Jonathan. “The Elizabethans in Italy.” In *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare’s Time*. Ed. Jean-Pierre Maquerlot & Michele Willems. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996.
- Cain, Tom. “Introduction,” *Poetaster*. (Ben Jonson). Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995.
- Chaney, Edward. *The Evolution of the Grand Tour: Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations since the Renaissance*. London: Frank Cass, 1998.
- Fisher, Benjamin. *Profitable Instructions; Describing what special Observations are to be taken by Travellers in all Nations, States and Countries, Pleasant and Profitable.* London: Sign of the Talbot, without Aldersgate, 1633.
- Gillies, John. *Shakespeare and the Geography of Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Grendler, Paul F. *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning 1300-1600*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989.
- Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Harmondsworth & New York, 1996.
- Jonson, Ben. *The Complete Poems*. Ed. George Parfitt. New Haven: Yale UP, 1975.
- Kallendorf, Craig, Ed. & trans. *Humanist Educational Treatises*. (I Tatti Renaissance Library) Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP 2002.

- Mandelville, John. *The Travels of John Mandeville*. Trans. C. W. R. D. Moseley. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.
- Milton, John. "On Education." In *John Milton: Complete Poetry and Major Prose*. Ed. Merritt Y. Hughes. New York: Macmillan, 1985.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Charles Martin. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004.
- . *Poems of Exile: Tristia and the Black Sea Letters*. Trans. Peter Green. Berkeley: U California P, 2005.
- Parr, Anthony. *Three Renaissance Travel Plays*. (Revels) Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995.
- Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Ed. Alan Brissenden. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993.
- . *Cymbeline*. Ed. Roger Warren. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- . *Othello*. (Arden 3<sup>rd</sup>.) Ed. E. A. J. Honigmann. Walton-on-Thames: 1999.
- . *Othello*. Ed. Michael Neill. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- . *Twelfth Night*. (Arden 3<sup>rd</sup>) Ed. Keir Elam. London: Cengage, 2008.
- Sidney, Phillip. "Letter to the same purpose." In *Profitable Instructions; Describing what special Observations are to be taken by Travellers in all Nations, States and Countries, Pleasant and Profitable*." By Benjamin Fisher. London: Sign of the Talbot, without Aldersgate, 1633.