

To See or Not To See, That Is the Question:

The Elusive Riches of Literary Allusions

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Literary allusions can provide a double value. For the well-read, allusions give the pleasure of recognition, a sort of gratifying intellectual bonus. For the writer, a well-managed allusion is a convenient way to broaden the meaning of the text by bringing in an additional frame of reference, thus enriching the experience of reading. At the beginning of *Little Dorrit*, for example, Charles Dickens describes the confusion of the French trading port in the following way: “Hindoos, Russians, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Genoese, Neapolitans, Venetians, Greeks, Turks, descendants from all the builders of Babel, come to trade at Marseilles” (Ch. 1, 15). In addition to listing the wide variety of nationalities that frequent the busy port, Dickens also conveys the clamorous and confounded atmosphere among those who could not understand each other by adding the reference to Babel (*Genesis*, 11:1-9). By including the biblical name as a gloss on the geographical listing, Dickens broadens the scope of meaning by implying that the mutual

incomprehension of the multitude of tongues is a human limitation imposed by God. Allusions are thus able to borrow the evocative power of references to past literature, giving the present text more than appears on the surface by incorporating another level of meaning.

Allusion may be very broad, such as an appeal to or use of a long-established convention, as in an invocation to the Muse for inspiration. The invocation may be serious, as in Shakespeare—"Oh for a muse of fire, that would ascend / The brightest heaven of invention" (*Henry V*, 1.1.1-2)—or Milton—"Sing Heav'nly Muse" (*Paradise Lost*, Book I.6)—or it may be used for comic effect, as in Byron—"Hail Muse! et cetra" (*Don Juan*, III.1.1)—but most of the time allusions are more specific and much less obtrusively embedded in the texts. Allusions may appear in familiar titles and names, but more often they are more subtle, and it is up to the reader to notice the allusive words, phrases, descriptions, or images and make the connection that inspires a richer understanding of the text.

Somewhat ironically, two acknowledged pillars of modern English literature, James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), are both full of allusions to ancient literature. All eighteen episodes in *Ulysses* are parallel to the various adventures in Homer's *The Odyssey*.¹ The well-known opening lines of *The Waste Land* are an interwar-period version of the beginning of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, and the entire poem is strewn with allusions.² In this essay, however, I do not intend to analyze such extensive structural use of allusions. I am more interested in something much smaller, the allusions that appear in a text like little

grains of spices that provide savory adornments to the texts, ranging from the Romantic poets to current literature.

John Keats: Allusions to *Romeo and Juliet*

John Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale" (1819) is a thing of beauty in itself, but if we recall the second orchard scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, its poignancy is even more deeply felt. In this poem, the poet is intoxicated with the bird's evening song, and, in his intoxication, feels a sweet longing for death, but in the end, he has to say goodbye to the bird when he is recalled from the visionary to the real world:

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a muséd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that ofttimes hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?
("Ode to a Nightingale," st. 6-8)

A nightingale's song, a wish that the evening will never end, and the term "adieu" all serve to toll us back to the famous morning parting scene in *Romeo and Juliet*. They meet one evening, they proclaim their love the same night, and they secretly marry the next morning. Because Romeo is banished from Verona when he kills Tybalt, they are only able to spend their first (and last) night together. When morning comes, they have to say goodbye:

JULIET Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.

It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear.
Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree.
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

ROMEO It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

.....

JULIET O God, I have an ill-divining soul!
Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low,
As one dead in the bottom of a tomb.
Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.

ROMEO And trust me, love, in my eye so do you.
Dry sorrow drinks our blood. Adieu, adieu.

(Romeo and Juliet, 3.5.1-11; 54-59)³⁾

As this is the last time for Romeo and Juliet to be together in life, the unmistakable allusion suggests that this might be the last time for the poet to experience the hallucinatory world induced by the nightingale's song. The evanescent, sadly transitory quality of the night is enhanced by the effective allusion to Romeo and Juliet's brief moment together.

When he wrote "Ode to a Nightingale," Keats knew of his approaching death. In a letter he wrote the same year to his fiancée

Fanny Brawne, he uses another image from *Romeo and Juliet* to express his longing for death:

My sweet Girl,

...I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your Loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. I hate the world: it batters too much the wings of my self-will, and would I could take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of it. From no others would I take it. . . . (*Selected Letters*, 25 July 1819)

The expression “take a sweet poison from your lips to send me out of [the world]” is an obvious allusion to Juliet’s line in the Capulet vault scene, when Juliet, upon finding Romeo dead, tries to kill herself by kissing him:

JULIET What’s here? A cup clos’d in my true love’s hand?
Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end.
O churl. Drunk all, and left no friendly drop
To help me after? I will kiss thy lips.
Haply some poison yet doth hang on them
To make me die with a restorative.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.161-166)

As in “Ode to a Nightingale,” Keats expresses his longing for sweet death in this letter, using another poignant image from *Romeo and*

Juliet, and he clearly expects that his “sweet Girl” will recognize the allusion.⁴⁾

Jane Austen: Allusions to Shakespeare

Jane Austen’s novels are known to be broadly allusive to contemporary fiction in terms of characters, situations, and plot structures, but she also sometimes specifically refers to Shakespeare to give a further dimension to her stories. In *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), a fleeting mention of the title *Hamlet* seems merely incidental, but it later provides a deeper meaning. After the romantic rescue of Marianne by Mr. Willoughby, an open affection quickly develops between them, but then Willoughby abruptly visits the Dashwood’s Barton Cottage to take leave of them without giving any understandable reason. His weak explanation is that he is being immediately dispatched to London on business and will stay there for an indefinite period. The Dashwoods had assumed that an engagement between the two was at hand, so Marianne is deeply distraught, and Mrs. Dashwood and Elinor are greatly concerned for her. Her mother and sister avoid mentioning Willoughby in fear of upsetting Marianne, but one day Mrs. Dashwood drops his name when she sees a book they have been reading:

It was several days before Willoughby’s name was mentioned before Marianne by any of her family; Sir John and Mrs. Jennings, indeed, were not so nice; their witticisms added pain to many a painful hour;—but, one evening, Mrs. Dashwood accidentally taking up a volume of Shakespeare, exclaimed,

“We have never finished *Hamlet*, Marianne; our dear Willoughby went away before we could get through it. We will put it by, that when he comes again . . . But it may be months, perhaps, before *that* happens.”

(*Sense and Sensibility*, Vol. 1, Ch. 16, 74–75)

In the previous chapters, Marianne and Willoughby have enjoyed reading books together, so we can assume that before his sudden departure, he must have been reading *Hamlet* together with them. In retrospect, after we learn about Willoughby’s cruelty and Marianne’s resultant illness, which nearly claims her life, this choice of Shakespeare’s title conveys an ominous meaning. Hamlet’s cruel treatment of Ophelia eventually leads to her madness and death by drowning. In this case, the parallel seems obvious, for Willoughby’s similar cruel treatment of Marianne could have had—and nearly does have—fatal consequences. This is a clear example of how the seemingly innocent choice of a title can, through its implication, give the story a deeper meaning.⁵⁾

In *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), a phrase from *Twelfth Night* hints that a shared passion for books might lead to affection between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. When her sister Jane falls ill while visiting Netherfield, Elizabeth goes there to take care of her. After a few days, their mother and the younger sisters also come to see Jane. Mrs. Bennet’s shameless praising of her own daughter in front of Darcy and the Bingleys embarrasses Elizabeth, and she desperately tries to divert the conversation:

“ . . . When [Jane] was only fifteen, there was a gentleman at my brother Gardiner’s in town, so much in love with her, that my sister-in-law was sure he would make her an offer before we came away. But however he did not. Perhaps he thought her too young. However, he wrote some verses on her, and very pretty they were.”

“And so ended his affection,” said Elizabeth impatiently. “There has been many a one, I fancy, overcome in the same way. I wonder who first discovered the efficacy of poetry in driving away love!”

“I have been used to consider poetry as the *food* of love,” said Darcy.

“Of a fine, stout, healthy love it may. Every thing nourishes what is strong already. But if it be only a slight, thin sort of inclination, I am convinced that one good sonnet will starve it entirely away.”

Darcy only smiled. . . .

(Pride and Prejudice, Vol. 1, Ch. 9, 39-40)

Darcy’s gentle retort to Elizabeth’s criticism of poetry as a threat to love is a variation of Duke Orsino’s opening line in *Twelfth Night*:

ORSINO If music be the food of love, play on,
 Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,
 The appetite may sicken, and so die.

(Twelfth Night, 1.1.1-3)

Duke Orsino is sick of unrequited love for Olivia, so while listening to music, he despondently asks for more in order to abate his appetite for love. The brief exchange between Elizabeth and Darcy shows their equal knowledge of literature and her impressive ability to respond to his allusion quickly and aptly. She not only catches the reference to Duke Orsino's first line, but also makes witty use of the implications of the unspoken second and third lines. This visit provides the turning point of their relationship, as it grows from a strong prejudice towards each other into a subtly but steadily growing affection. Darcy starts finding Elizabeth's wit and outspokenness attractive, and this conversation shows both her qualities in sparkling fashion.

In *Emma* (1813), the heroine quotes from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the early part of the novel and from *Romeo and Juliet* much later, and the shift from a comedy to a tragedy also reflects Emma's mental development. After successfully encouraging a match between Mr. Weston and her former governess Miss Taylor, the rapturous Emma tries to play matchmaker between the village vicar, Mr. Elton, and her protégée, Miss Harriet Smith. Emma finds a cryptic love letter and assumes it is from Mr. Elton to Harriet. The letter can be interpreted to mean that Mr. Elton is courting Harriet, and Emma assures Harriet that it is so:

“ . . . You and Mr. Elton are by situation called together; you belong to one another by every circumstance of your respective homes. Your marrying will be equal to the match at Randalls [Weston's estate]. There does seem to be a something in the air

of Hartfield which gives love exactly the right direction, and sends it into the very channel where it ought to flow.

The course of true love never did run smooth—
A Hartfield edition of Shakespeare would have a long note on that passage.” (*Emma*, Vol. 1, Ch. 9, 65)

Here, Emma quotes Lysander’s line from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Hermia’s father takes the matter of his daughter’s marriage to the court of Theseus, Duke of Athens. Hermia is ordered to marry Demetrius, her father’s choice, and to choose Lysander, her lover, at the peril of her life. When Hermia and Lysander are alone, Lysander tries to console her:

LYSANDER

How now, my love? Why is your cheek so pale?

How chance the roses there do fade so fast?

HERMIA Belike for want of rain, which I could well

Beteem them from the tempest of my eyes.

LYSANDER Ay me! For aught that I could ever read,

Could ever hear by tale or history,

The course of true love never did run smooth. . . .

(*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 1.1.128-134)

To avoid the forced marriage to Demetrius, Lysander and Hermia decide to escape to the forest. Hermia tells her friend Helena about their elopement, which Helena later relates to Demetrius in the hope that he will give up Hermia and love her again.

If we know the play, we know that Puck's magic potion causes the four lovers to pursue the wrong person, so we should notice the irony in Emma's selection, which says the opposite of what she is insisting to Harriet. By choosing Lysander's line from all the quotations about true love, she is unwittingly suggesting the confusion that will happen afterwards among herself, Harriet, and Mr. Elton.

Much later in the story, after a bitter experience due to her misunderstanding and interfering in others' affairs, the chastened Emma learns that Mr. Frank Churchill has been secretly engaged to Miss Jane Fairfax. Mr. Weston and Mrs. Weston, Emma's former governess, worry great deal about Emma because they believe that she has been in love with Frank. To reassure them, Emma explains that, though at one time she thought she was, she is not pained to learn this new fact. Frank and Jane's secret engagement goes against the prevailing social decorum for their class, but Emma is sympathetic with Jane for having to endure the long secrecy:

... "If a woman can ever be excused for thinking only of herself, it is in a situation like Jane Fairfax's.—Of such, one may almost say, that 'the world is not their's, nor the world's law.'"

(Emma, Vol. 3, Ch. 10, 329)

The line Emma quotes here is a modified version of Romeo's line to the apothecary. Having learned of Juliet's death, Romeo tries to obtain illegal poison from an apothecary so he can kill himself and follow Juliet. At first the apothecary refuses to sell the poison because it is against the law and the punishment for its sale is death,

so Romeo has to persuade him:

ROMEO Art thou so bare and full of wretchedness,
 And fear'st to die? Famine is in thy cheeks,
 Need and oppression starveth in thy eyes,
 Contempt and beggary hangs upon thy back.
 The world is not thy friend, nor the world's law;
 The world affords no law to make thee rich;
 Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.
(Romeo and Juliet, 5.1.68-74)

The apothecary is poor because the world has not been fair with him, so why should he abide the law? Romeo, of course, now believes that the world has betrayed him. Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax's situation is far from this level of seriousness, but what Emma expresses here is the sympathy she feels toward Jane, even though Jane has flouted society's rules of propriety, and this feeling of sympathy is enhanced by her allusion to the desperate plight of the apothecary. It also shows Emma's developing maturity, her progress from self-confident playfulness to somewhat subdued wisdom.

Agatha Christie: Allusions to Shakespeare

Agatha Christie, the Queen of Mysteries, likes to bring references to Shakespeare into her stories, too. In *Five Little Pigs* (1942)⁶, the blind love of the young Juliet and Desdemona is used to describe Elsa Greer. Hercule Poirot is asked to investigate a murder case of sixteen years ago by the now grown-up daughter of

the poisoned painter Amyas Crale, whose wife Caroline was found guilty of the crime and died of illness in prison. Poirot starts interviewing those who were involved in the case, and Mr. Caleb Jonathan, an old solicitor who had known the Crale family for a long time, recalls his feelings about Elsa Greer, Amyas's young model and latest mistress:

“Maybe it is because I am an old man, but I find, M. Poirot, that there is something about the defencelessness of youth that moves me to tears. Youth is so vulnerable. It is so ruthless —so sure. So generous and so demanding.”

Getting up, he crossed to the bookcase. Taking out a volume he opened it, turned the pages, and then read out:

“If that thy bent of love be honourable,
Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow
By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite,
And all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay,
And follow thee my lord throughout the world.”⁷⁾

“There speaks love allied to youth, in Juliet's words. No reticence, no holding back, no so-called maiden modesty. It is the courage, the insistence, the ruthless force of youth. Shakespeare knew youth. Juliet singles out Romeo. Desdemona claims Othello. They have no doubts, the young, no fear, no pride.” (*Five Little Pigs*, Book 1, Ch. 4, 60)

The old solicitor quotes Juliet's lines in the balcony scene, when she asks Romeo to marry her the next day if he truly loves her. Amyas brought Elsa Greer to live with his family while he was painting her, and she did not hide her bold intention to marry Amyas, even declaring it in front of his wife. Her passion, recklessness, and lack of concern about other people are described in comparison to Juliet, who decides to marry Romeo on the same evening she meets him, and Desdemona, who secretly marries the Moor general Othello without her father's consent. The old solicitor's later somber comment, "at the last moment—death steps in—and the living, ardent, joyous Elsa died also" (61), reflects on the fate of all three young women, even though in Elsa's case the death is that of a young woman's soul.

In *The Moving Finger* (1943), the hero Jerry Burton first becomes attracted to Megan Hunter, a young woman whose appearance is initially not that attractive, when she makes an intriguing comment on the two evil daughters in *King Lear*. Jerry Burton has recently moved into the village of Lymstock with his sister Joanna, and he is in the process of getting acquainted with some of the villagers. One morning he meets this peculiar-looking, twenty-year-old step-daughter of the Symmington family, and Megan begins complaining about her school:

“ . . . And all the blathering stuff Shelley wrote, twittering on about skylarks, and Wordsworth going all potty over some silly daffodils.⁸⁾ And Shakespeare.”

“What's wrong with Shakespeare?” I inquired with inter-

est.

“Twisting himself up to say things in such a difficult way that you can’t get at what he means. Still, I like *some* Shakespeare.”

“He would be gratified to know that, I’m sure,” I said.

Megan suspected no sarcasm. She said, her face lighting up:

“I like Goneril and Regan, for instance.”

“Why these two?”

“Oh, I don’t know. They’re *satisfactory*, somehow. Why do you think they were like that?”

“Like what?”

“Like they were. I mean *something* must have made them like that?”

For the first time I wondered. I had always accepted Lear’s elder daughters as two nasty bits of goods and had let it go at that. But Megan’s demand for a first cause interested me.

“I’ll think about it,” I said.

(The Moving Finger, Ch. 2, 35-36)

When he first sees her that morning, Jerry’s assessment of Megan is that she is “a tall awkward girl” who looks “much more like a horse than a human being” (31), but after this thought-provoking conversation about King Lear’s two daughters, his impression of her starts to change, and later he becomes strongly attracted to her. People analyze Cordelia all the time, but Megan’s peculiar interest in Goneril and Regan suggests that there is more to her

—such as literary insight—than at first appears.

Immediately following this encounter, Jerry sees the village beauty, Elsie Holland, the attractive nursery governess for the Symmingtons:

Along the pavement towards me there came floating a goddess. There is really no other word for it.

The perfect features, the crisply curling golden hair, the tall exquisitely shaped body! And she walked like a goddess, without effort, seeming to swim nearer and nearer. A glorious, an incredible, a breath-taking girl! (*The Moving Finger*, Ch. 2, 41)

Jerry is fascinated by this attractive young woman, but the moment she speaks a few words, “the magic died completely before the flat, competent voice” (41-42):

A nice healthy-looking well set-up girl, no more.

I fell to reflecting what would have happened if the Gods had given Helen of Troy exactly those flat accents. How strange that a girl could trouble your inmost soul so long as she kept her mouth shut, and that the moment she spoke the glamour could vanish as though it had never been.

I had known the reverse happen, though. I had seen a little sad monkey-faced woman whom no one would turn to look at twice. Then she opened her mouth and suddenly enchantment had lived and bloomed and Cleopatra had cast her spell anew.

(*The Moving Finger*, Ch. 2, 42)

Christopher Marlowe's celebrated lines, "Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships / And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?" (*Doctor Faustus*, 5.1.90-91), proclaim Helen of Troy to be one of the most beautiful women on earth. To the smitten Jerry, Elsie Holland might momentarily appear the equal of Helen, whose beauty led to the destruction of the ancient city of Troy, but Jerry finds her flat accents unattractive enough to extinguish his momentary fascination for this goddess. It is not what Elsie Holland said, but *how* she said it, and the abrupt juxtaposing of these two instances of appearance countered by utterance brings out the charm of what Megan says. And the mention of Cleopatra, whose beauty makes Marc Anthony abandon Rome—"Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch / Of the ranged empire fall!" (*Anthony and Cleopatra*, 1.1.34-35)—enhances the contrast of the situations.

A. S. Byatt: Allusions to Austen and Coleridge

A. S. Byatt's *Possession* (1990) is, if it is not absurd to say so, a *very* literary novel. The main characters are two scholars, Maud Bailey and Roland Michell, whose research subjects are Victorian poets, Christabel LaMotte and Randolph Henry Ash, respectively, so accordingly the novel is strewn with quotations from their poems. However, there are also allusions to actual literary works, and their titles and contents are obviously chosen for a purpose. At London Library, Roland finds and steals the hidden drafts of love letters by Henry Ash to an unknown woman, and he conjectures the woman is LaMotte, which leads to his encounter with Maud Bailey, a leading LaMotte scholar. They visit Seal Court, a remote manor in Lincoln-

shire, where LaMotte lived and died, and the present owner Sir George Bailey shows them the poet's long-abandoned room:

Roland turned his eyes back to the shadowy desk. He did not feel the presence of the dead poet in the room, but he did have a vague excited sense that any of these containers—the desk, the trunks, the hat-boxes—might contain some treasure like the faded letters in his own breast-pocket. Some clue, some scribbled note, some words of response. Only that was nonsense, they would not be here, they would be wherever Randolph Henry Ash had put them, if they had ever been written.

“Do you know,” Roland said, turning to Sir George, “whether there were papers? Is there anything left in that desk? Anything of hers?”

“That was cleared, I suppose, at her death,” said Sir George.

“May we at least look?” said Roland, imagining perhaps a hidden drawer, and at the same time uncomfortably aware of the laundry lists in *Northanger Abbey*. (*Possession*, Ch. 5, 81-82)

This is a straightforward allusion to Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818), in which the heroine Catherine Morland, who loves to read Gothic novels, is invited by her acquaintances to their home, Northanger Abbey, where she expects something mysterious will happen. On the first night in her room, she notices a large cabinet and decides to investigate what is inside:

... she was struck by the appearance of a high, old-fashioned

black cabinet, which, though in a situation conspicuous enough, had never caught her notice before. . . . She took her candle and looked closely at the cabinet. . . . The key was in the door, and she had a strange fancy to look into it; not however with the smallest expectation of finding anything. . . .

Catherine's heart beat quick, but her courage did not fail her. . . . It was some time however before she could unfasten the door, the same difficulty occurring in the management of this inner lock as of the outer; but at length it did open; and not vain, as hitherto, was her search; her quick eyes directly fell on a roll of paper pushed back into the further part of the cavity, apparently for concealment, and her feelings at that moment were indescribable. Her heart fluttered, her knees trembled, and her cheeks grew pale. . . .

(Northanger Abbey, Vol. 2, Chapter 6, 147-48)

The better to examine the roll of paper she has found in the cabinet, she snuffs the wick to make it brighter, inadvertently extinguishing the candle. Now she has to wait until morning, enduring the anticipation-filled night in the dark alone as "the wind roared down the chimney, the rain beat in torrents against the windows" (147). When the housemaid opens the window-shutters in the morning, Catherine finally gets to read what is on the mysterious paper:

Her greedy eye glanced rapidly over a page. She started at its import. Could it be possible, or did not her sense play her false?—An inventory of linen, in coarse and modern characters,

seemed all that was before her! If the evidence of sight might be trusted, she held a washing-bill in her hand.

(*Northanger Abbey*, Vol. 2, Ch. 7, 150)

To her disappointment, Catherine finds that the roll of paper contains no dark ancient secret but is a mere commonplace laundry list. By alluding to Catherine Morland's expectation and disappointment, this scene shows both Roland's expectant excitement about finding something linked to the dead poet and, at the same time, also his realization of absurdity of its actually happening. Here, Roland seems to prepare himself for an anticlimactic result. Austen's *Northanger Abbey* itself is a mocking allusion to Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and, intentionally or unintentionally, the mention of the title *Northanger Abbey* heightens the Gothic atmosphere at Seal Court, especially in LaMotte's long-unvisited room, where they will eventually find, hidden inside the dolls' bed, two bundles of old letters exchanged between the two dead poets.

Towards the end of the novel, several researchers of Henry Ash and Christabel LaMotte get together and retrieve a box containing the belongings that Henry Ash's wife buried with him. Among them is a sealed letter from LaMotte to Ash, in which LaMotte informs the dying Ash that he has a daughter with her who was born twenty-eight years ago and who does not know that they are her parents. She was raised as a daughter of LaMotte's sister at Seal Court. At the end of the letter, LaMotte tells Ash about their grandson Walter, who has a precocious liking for poetry, an aptitude which was not realized in their daughter:

My dear—my dear—

They tell me you are very ill. I do ill to disturb your peace at this time, with unseasonable memories—but I find I have—after all—a thing which I must tell you. You will say, it should have been told twenty-eight years ago—or never—and so maybe it should—but I could or would not. And now I think of you continuously, also I pray for you, and know—I have known for these many years—that I have done you wrong.

You have a daughter, who is well, and married, and the mother of a beautiful boy. I send you her picture. You will see—she is beautiful—and resembles, I like to think, both her parents, neither of whom she knows to be her parent.

.....

I must give up this writing. One more thing. Your grandson (and mine, most strange). His name is Walter and he chants verses to the amazement of his stable- and furrow-besotted parents. I have taught him much of the Ancient Mariner: he recites the passage of the blessing of the snakes, and the vision of the glittering eye of the ocean cast up to the moon, most feelingly, and his own eyes are bright with it. He is a strong boy, and will live.

I must close. If you are able or willing—please send me a sign that you have read this. I dare not ask, if you forgive.

(Possession, Ch. 28, 499; 503)

Byatt's choice of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798) seems to be particularly significant here.

The parts of the poem the grandson of two poets recites relate to the removal of the curse on the mariner, which occurred when he shot the guiding albatross with an arrow. The wind stopped, the ship was becalmed, and the dead albatross was hung from the mariner's neck as a punishment. One night, while looking out at the ocean, the mariner notices water-snakes in the sea:

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The self-same moment I could pray;

And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell, and sank
Like lead into the sea.

(“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Part 4, 272-91)

SECOND VOICE

“Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.”

(“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” Part 6, 414-21)

When the mariner celebrates the beautiful living things, he feels forgiven, the albatross falls from his neck, and the moon starts to guide the ship. By writing to Henry Ash about the daughter and grandson she has kept hidden from him, LaMotte apparently wishes to remove their own curse. They have sinned together in their love affair, and she has sinned alone in keeping knowledge of the daughter and grandson from him, but in facing Ash’s approaching death, she wishes some kind of forgiveness, even though she concludes the letter by saying “*I dare not ask, if you forgive.*” Again, an allusion is significant, for LaMotte’s penance is more acutely felt here if we are

aware of these particular parts of “The Ancient Mariner.”

Ian McEwan: Allusions to *Lolita* and *Macbeth*

In Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* (2001), one fifteen-year-old girl is named Lola, and, in the light of what happens later, a realization of the writer’s intention in choosing this name makes the story more threatening. Cecilia Tallis and her childhood friend Robbie Turner succumb to their long-resisted sexual temptation before a Tallis dinner party. Cecilia’s thirteen-year-old sister Briony’s vivid imagination goes amok after she observes Cecilia and Robbie’s strange tension beside the fountain, reads Robbie’s sexually explicit and misdirected letter, and then comes across their love-making in the library. Briony feels betrayed—she is jealous of her sister and disgusted by Robbie, whom she thought of as *her* friend—and after the dinner party, when Lola is found raped in the garden, Briony testifies that it was Robbie who raped Lola. Robbie is sent to prison, later to France as a soldier, and he dies at Dunkirk.

Near the conclusion of the story, it is suggested that the rapist was Paul Marshall, a guest at the dinner party, who had shown an intense interest in Lola during the day. Once this suggestion arises, the reader is startled into a recognition of the foreshadowing significance of the scene earlier in the novel when Paul Marshall goes to the nursery where the precocious Lola and her younger twin brothers are staying:

... Now he saw that the girl was almost a young woman, poised and imperious, quite the little pre-Raphaelite princess with

her bangles and tresses, her painted nails and velvet choker.

He said to her, “You’ve jolly good taste in clothes. Those trousers suit you especially well, I think.”

She was pleased rather than embarrassed and her fingers lightly brushed the fabric where it ballooned out across her narrow hips. “We got them in Liberty’s when my mother brought me to London to see a show.”

“And what did you see?”

“*Hamlet*.” They had in fact seen a matinée pantomime at the London Palladium during which Lola had spilled a strawberry drink down her frock, and Liberty’s was right across the street.

“One of my favourites,” Paul said. It was fortunate for her that he too had neither read nor seen the play, having studied chemistry. But he was able to say musingly, “To be or not to be.”

“That is the question,” she agreed. “And I like your shoes.”

(*Atonement*, Part 1, Ch. 5, 60-61)

Paul admires Lola’s trousers, and Lola responds with the shortened and modified version of the story how she bought them, trying to sound more adult than she actually is. Later, when we become sure that Paul had been sexually attracted to Lola from the first, we suspect that Ian McEwan named his character Lola because of the sensual opening of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* (1955):

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul.

Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps down the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

She was Lo, plain Lo, in the morning, standing four feet ten in one sock. She was Lola in slacks. She was Dolly at school. She was Dolores on the dotted line. But in my arms she was always Lolita. (Part 1, Ch. 1, 7)

Lola is one of Lolita's nicknames, and one short sentence in particular—"She was Lola in slacks"—suddenly leaps out because of its significance in relation to this scene in *Atonement*. Paul Marshall makes Lola conscious of her trousers, and her half-true, half-dishonest account of them makes Lola appear more flirtatious. In the film *Atonement* (2007), Paul Marshall's line from the novel, "Those trousers suit you especially well, I think," is altered to the succinct "Jolly nice slacks" (*Atonement*, Film Ch. 3), and this choice of the American word "slacks" is an even more overt tribute to *Lolita*.⁹

There is another allusive image in the following scene in which Paul Marshall gives Lola a chocolate product from his family-owned factory. It is called "Army Amo," named for soldiers, with a drab green sugar casing over a milk chocolate center. Lola quickly responds to this candy's name by citing the inflection of the Latin verb for "love"—"Amo amas amat" (62)—thus furnishing further evidence of her flirtatious nature. The following passage, in which Lola licks and bites on the chocolate, loosely alludes to the beginning of *Lolita*, where Nabokov sensually describes the movement of the tongue against the palate and teeth when Lolita's name is pro-

nounced:

... They [Lola's twin brothers] watched her tongue turn green as it curled around the edges of the candy casing. Paul Marshall sat back in the armchair, watching her closely over the steeple he made with his hands in front of his face.

He crossed and uncrossed his legs. Then he took a deep breath. "Bite it," he said softly. "You've got to bite it."

It cracked loudly as it yielded to her unblemished incisors, and there was revealed the white edge of the sugar shell, and the dark chocolate beneath it. (*Atonement*, Part 1, Ch. 5, 62)

This description of Lola's tongue and teeth, coupled with Paul's fascinated gaze at them, make us think of *Lolita* and Humbert Humbert, and the allusion to *Lolita* becomes shudderingly evocative in hindsight after we learn who raped Lola.

In the film version of *Atonement*, there is a scene that contains a visual allusion to *Macbeth*. The grown-up Briony is a nurse, and we see her washing her hands obsessively after she cleans bedpans, mops the floor, and scrubs empty beds, while at the same time we hear her voice reading a letter to her sister Cecilia, asking forgiveness for having wronged Robbie Turner and thus Cecilia: "No matter how hard I work, no matter how long the hours, I can't escape from what I did and what it meant, the full extent of which I am only now beginning to grasp" (*Atonement*, Film Ch. 15). This combination of the image on the screen and the voice-over confession makes Briony look as if she is trying to cleanse herself of guilt by washing her

hands.

Driven by the three witches' prophecy and Lady Macbeth's harsh encouragement, Macbeth murders King Duncan. After the deed, he returns to his chamber, his hands and two daggers covered with the king's blood:

MACBETH

What hands are here? Ha! they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red. (*Macbeth*, 2.2.58-62)

Lady Macbeth takes the daggers from the dazed Macbeth and carries them back to the king's chamber. When she returns, she says: "My hands are of your colour" (2.2.63). Later in the play, when she becomes insane, she suffers from the hallucinatory stains and smell of the king's blood on her hands:

LADY MACBETH Out, damned spot! out, I say!—One;
two: why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky. . . .

. . . —Yet who would have thought the old man
to have had so much blood in him?

. . . —What, will these hands ne'er be clean?—

Here's the smell of the blood still: all
the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little
hand. Oh! oh! oh! (*Macbeth*, 5.1.36-37; 40-41; 44; 51-53)

For both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, the king's blood is something they cannot remove from their hands. An ocean of water cannot wash it away, and all the perfumes of Arabia cannot mask it, for the stain they perceive is testimony to the hideous crime that condemns them forever. By inserting a scene of Briony washing her hands as if possessed, her remorse is intensified visually by its association with the blood imagery in *Macbeth*.

Television Series: Allusions to Classic Literature

In the 1980s, the so-called heritage films started becoming popular in England, and their popularity has been increasing.¹⁰ Such films regularly adapt classic literature of the 19th and early 20th centuries or depict the England of the pre-World War II decades, usually portraying the lives of the upper classes and aristocracy. One currently popular drama series, *Downton Abbey* (2010-), exemplifies this recent genre, so it is no wonder that it also carries a distinctly literary flavor.

It is set in Downton Abbey, a Yorkshire estate that has been owned by the aristocratic Crawley family for generations. This is the post-Edwardian era, but the aristocracy still suffers from the effect of the centuries-old entailment law, which prohibits daughters from inheriting estates.¹¹ As in the Austen novels, the *Downton Abbey* series begins with the heirless family's desperate endeavour to

find suitable marriages for their three daughters. The eldest daughter Mary was engaged to a distant male member of the family, but he died in the *Titanic* disaster. Her father then manages to locate another distant male cousin, Matthew Crawley, in Manchester, and her parents hope that Mary will marry him and thus be able to keep residing in Downton Abbey.¹²⁾

From this point, the story becomes loosely parallel to *Pride and Prejudice*: from their first meeting, Mary and Matthew feel a distinct prejudice towards each other, and through pride—Mary as a rich and spoiled daughter, Matthew as a self-reliant, independent lawyer—they cannot get along well. However, in the course of various events, just like Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, they become increasingly attracted to each other. Before she falls in love with Matthew, driven by her rebellious and adventurous spirit, Mary loses her virginity to a handsome houseguest one night, and this impulsive act casts a shadow over her future.

When her mother unexpectedly becomes pregnant, Mary refuses Matthew's proposal because she cannot risk the chance that the baby might be male, thus reducing Matthew to the status of a nobody rather than heir to the estate. Her mother soon miscarries the baby, but it is too late to retrieve Matthew's affection. Matthew gets engaged to a rich London solicitor's daughter, Lavinia Swire. At a dinner party at Downton Abbey, Matthew announces his plan to marry Lavinia, and the camera shows Mary's dazed expression and her mother's pained concern. A few days later, Mary's grandmother, the Dowager Countess Lady Violet, tries to make Matthew reconsider the possibility of marrying Mary instead:

LADY VIOLET Mary is still in love with you.
MATTHEW What?
LADY VIOLET I was watching her the other night, when
 you spoke of your wedding. She looked like
 Juliet on awakening in the tomb.
(Downton Abbey, Season 2, Episode 7, Ch. 5)

Lady Violet alludes to *Romeo and Juliet* to convey Mary's shock and agony on hearing about Matthew's marriage plan, and if we recall Juliet's devastating discovery of Romeo's death—waking up in the family vault from her forty-two-hour death-like slumber to find Romeo has poisoned himself beside her, instead of seeing him alive and happy and ready to take her away—we are reminded of how painful it was for Mary to listen to the announcement and still behave as normal at the dinner, making herself smile and congratulate Matthew and Lavinia.

Matthew loses Lavinia to Spanish flu. Mary has been pressured into an engagement with the rich newspaper proprietor Sir Richard Carlisle, who has obtained information about Mary's lost virginity and uses the threat of exposure to compel her to marry him. Matthew's affection towards Mary rekindles when he realizes how much Mary has been suffering from being with a man she dislikes. When he tries to persuade Mary to end such an unhappy engagement, she has to confess her past mistake:

MARY I'm Tess of the D'Urbervilles to your Angel Clare.
 I have fallen, I am impure.

To See or Not To See, That Is the Question

(*Downton Abbey*, Season 2, Christmas Special, Ch. 9)

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) relates the story of Tess, who is sent to the D'Urbervilles family by her father, whose casual encounter with a parson has convinced him that he is related to the aristocratic family. Tess is seduced by Alec D'Urbervilles and abandoned. Later she falls in love with an apprentice farmer, Angel Clare, but when she confesses her past on their wedding night, he cannot forgive her. Judging from Matthew's shocked expression, Mary must have told him of her transgression with the houseguest, but we are only shown his face as he hears Mary's brief statement, and we realize that Matthew has fully understood the implication of Mary's allusion to the novel.

Soon afterward, after a dinner at Downton Abbey, Matthew hears a heated argument between Mary and her fiancé, and he enters the room to intervene:

MATTHEW Mary, are you quite all right?

CARLISLE Oooh here he is, the man who can smile and smile and still be a villain. Is she not to be trusted even to get rid of me without your help?

MATTHEW I heard shouting.

(*Downton Abbey*, Season 2, Christmas Special, Ch. 9)

Carlisle here borrows from Hamlet's line after his encounter with the ghost of his father, who tells him that he had been poisoned by his brother, who became king in his place and married Hamlet's mother,

Queen Gertrude. Hamlet swears to take revenge and utters his hatred toward his uncle:

HAMLET O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
 My tables!—Meet it is I set it down
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain—
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.

(*Hamlet*, 1.5.106–09)

In this instance, the allusion is highly ironical because we all know the villain is Carlisle himself, not Matthew. The absurd misapplication of Carlisle's borrowing causes us to recoil and hope that Mary will banish him much quicker than Hamlet's prolonged revenge.

The appearance of literary allusions in a period drama such as *Downton Abbey* is certainly within our expectations, but it is unexpectedly fascinating to find that the monumental *Star Trek* science fiction series, which depicts the 23rd- and 24th-century future, is also studded with quotations from and allusions to classic literature. Some of the *Star Trek* episode titles refer to Shakespeare's plays: "Dagger of the Mind" (*The Original Series*, 1966) to *Macbeth* (2.1.38); "By Any Other Name" (*The Original Series*, 1968) to *Romeo and Juliet* (2.2.44); "Sins of the Father" (*The Next Generation*, 1990) to *The Merchant of Venice* (3.5.1–2); "Remember Me" (*The Next Generation*, 1990) to *Hamlet* (1.5.91); "Heart of Stone" (*Deep Space Nine*, 1995) to *Twelfth Night* (3.4.200); "The Dogs of War" (*Deep Space Nine*, 1999) to *Julius Caesar* (3.1.273); and "Mortal Coil" (*Voyager*, 1997) to *Hamlet* (3.1.67). The film title *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* is a

reference to a part of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy that describes the afterworld as "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns . . ." (*Hamlet*, 3.1.79–80).

Other episode titles, lines, and situations are taken from a wide range of literature. "Through the Looking Glass" (1995) and "Paradise Lost" (*Deep Space Nine*, 1996) are obvious. "Shattered Mirror" (*Deep Space Nine*, 1996) reminds us of Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (1832), and "Elementary, Dear Data" (*The Next Generation*, 1988) is a parody of Sherlock Holmes' pet phrase to Dr. Watson.¹³ In a *Next Generation* episode, "Hide and Q" (1987), Q, a character who is able to travel instantaneously anywhere in the universe, wittily declares "All the galaxy is a stage," his variation of Jacques' oft quoted soliloquy on the seven ages of man: "All the world's a stage" (*As You Like It*, 2.7.139). In *The Next Generation*, one of Captain Jean-Luc Picard's treasures is a copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, and in several *Next Generation* episodes some of the characters enact parts of various Shakespeare plays as a recreational activity. In the film *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* (1982), we see a copy of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) on a bookshelf, and right afterwards we meet the vengeful character called Khan, whose gloved right hand makes him a notable visual counterpart of the maimed Captain Ahab.¹⁴ In each case, the allusion represents a central theme in the episode.

In the earlier part of *The Wrath of Khan*, Mr. Spock gives Captain James T. Kirk a book, and Kirk reads the first sentence:

KIRK By the way, thank you for this.

SPOCK I know of your fondness for antiquities.
KIRK “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.”
Message, Spock?
SPOCK None that I am conscious of. Except, of course,
happy birthday. Surely the best of times.
(*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, Film Ch. 3)

The book’s title is never mentioned, but if we love literature, we know that the line Captain Kirk reads is from Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and it is one of the most celebrated beginnings of an English novel:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way. . . .

(*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book I, Ch. 1, 35)

In this novel, Dickens deals with Paris and London at the time of the French Revolution, and this anaphoral beginning embodies the good and evil of that time. In the early scene in *The Wrath of Khan*, a copy of *A Tale of Two Cities* seems like an innocent choice of a birthday gift, but we later learn that the central issue of this story is a revolutionary project called “Genesis,” the experimental terraform-

ing of a dead planet. If we have noted that the book is *A Tale of Two Cities*, we might realize that the two stories are connected thematically.

Towards the end of the film, Mr. Spock sacrifices himself to save the ship and its crew. When his funeral is held, his coffin is ejected from the ship, and it lands on the newly regenerated planet. As Captain Kirk looks out at the planet which has received Spock's body, he again quotes from *A Tale of Two Cities*, this time a slightly altered version of the final serene thoughts of Sydney Carton as he goes to meet his death at the guillotine:

KIRK It is a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done before. A far better resting place that I go to than I have ever known.

CAROL Is that a poem?

KIRK Something Spock was trying to tell me on my birthday.

(*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, Film Ch. 16)

Kirk changed the word “rest” in Dickens to “resting place” to better match the situation, but if we are aware that what Kirk quotes here is the closing line from the novel Spock gave him on his birthday, the sorrow in the scene becomes more acute. Moreover, Sydney Carton is a sacrifice to an era of turmoil, so his death can be linked thematically to Spock's, and we feel like applauding the screenwriter for the choice of *A Tale of Two Cities*.¹⁵⁾

This novel appears again years later (a century later in the story)

in a *Deep Space Nine* episode, “Extreme Measures” (1999). Early in the story, Dr. Bashir is seen reading *A Tale of Two Cities*. He has been trying to find a cure for the mysterious disease his shape-shifter friend Odo is suffering. He suspects a secret section of the Federation has engineered a fatal and genocidal virus to infect shape-shifters out of fear that shape-shifters have been aiming to achieve domination over every species.

Dr. Bashir tricks a secret agent named Sloan into visiting the station in order to obtain the crucial information, but during the interrogation, Sloan kills himself to protect the secret. In a desperate attempt to find the cure, Dr. Bashir and his friend Chief O’Brien get into Sloan’s still remaining mind by using an illegal mind probe—in effect, they enter another world, the world within Sloan’s mind—and they have to exit Sloan’s mind before his brain dies completely. At one point when Dr. Bashir thinks they have exited Sloan’s mind safely, he finds himself reading the first page of *A Tale of Two Cities* repeatedly, which makes him realize that they are still in the parallel world. Because of that realization, they manage to avoid being trapped in Sloan’s dying mind forever and are able to bring back the information required for the cure.

Beside the fact that the beginning of *A Tale of Two Cities* is one of the most recognizable passages in English literature, there seems to be a thematic reason for the choice of this title. The “Extreme Measures” episode deals with two worlds, the real world and the world in the dying Sloan’s mind. As the title *A Tale of Two Cities* clearly suggests, the cities of London and Paris are worlds apart at the time, but, more importantly, Paris contained the violently clash-

ing worlds of the French aristocracy and the revolutionaries, and each side, convinced their cause was just, resorted to extreme measures, graphically represented by the guillotine. In “Extreme Measures,” Dr. Bashir desperately seeks for the cure for his dear friend, but the virus is the result of the Federation’s desperate search for a way to annihilate another species in order to protect themselves. Although we side with Dr. Bashir and Odo, the Federation is certain it is taking its extreme measure for a justifiable reason.

At the end of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*, the old ship and its aged crew are ordered back to the spacedock to be decommissioned. They decide, however, to go for a last cruise, and when asked for the course heading, Captain Kirk playfully orders: “Second star to the right and straight on till morning” (Film Ch. 14).¹⁶ For Captain Kirk to repeat Peter Pan’s direction to Neverland lends this very last scene of the original series a feeling of rejuvenation, giving the fans a reassuring sense that the saga will go on forever. From Shakespeare through children’s fantasy, the *Star Trek* series is a treasure-house for allusion hunters. After all, Mr. Spock’s characteristic, instantly recognizable Vulcan farewell phrase, “Live long and prosper,” is actually an allusion to Romeo’s parting line—“Live and be prosperous, and farewell, good fellow”—to his loyal servant Balthasar before entering the Capulet vault (*Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3. 42). Classic literature is deeply ingrained in the *Star Trek* series, the science fiction epic about future interstellar adventures, and the unexpected effects of these anachronistic combinations open up new vistas of mental exploration for us.

In its overall conception, C. S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) is based on the biblical account of Judas's betrayal, Christ's crucifixion, Mary's sorrow, and Christ's resurrection, but there are also small but instructive allusions to myth and classic literature in the work. When Edmund eats the Turkish Delight offered by the White Witch, his soul is captured by her, and this eventually leads to his betrayal of his siblings and Aslan (the Christ figure). This may remind us of the Greek myth of Persephone, who, in eating six seeds from a pomegranate Hades offers her, is cursed to stay in the lower world for six months of the year. When Mr. Tumnus, the faun, starts crying, Lucy kindly gives him her handkerchief, but this handkerchief later causes him to be suspected of an alliance with human beings, and the White Witch turns him to stone. This calls to mind Desdemona's handkerchief, which Iago uses as a device to heighten Othello's suspicion about his wife's infidelity. Small allusions such as these provide an intellectual treat and spice up the story, but on a deeper level, they make us realize that one's reading experience can be linked to the entire accumulation of myth, legend, and literature.

We now have the luxury of looking at the parting scene of *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," an enrichment denied to Shakespeare. We can project the intoxicating image of Keats' nightingale into the poignant scene of Romeo and Juliet's parting. For the unfortunate pair, their first night together is like a blissful but fleeting world that will vanish all too soon, and by knowing both texts, the dream-like quality of the wedding night is enhanced by Keats' experience "on the viewless wings of Poesy."

Moreover, Juliet's desperate wish for the nightingale to keep singing forever intensifies Keats' sorrow at having to bid his nightingale adieu. The cycle of allusions does not have to stop, and when Juliet tries to persuade Romeo that the singing bird is a nightingale, not a lark—

Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree.

Believe me, love, it was the nightingale. (3.5.4-5)—

we might think again of Persephone and the pomegranate that doomed her. From the very beginning of the play, we know Romeo and Juliet are cursed by Fate—"a pair of star-cross'd lovers" (Prologue, 6)—and the choice of the tree in Juliet's line suggests a subtle connection to the mythological curse, making this scene even more darkly foreboding. It might be argued that this is reading too much into the text, but, to see or not to see, that is the question—and we are entitled to choose to see.

Notes

- 1) For example, in *Ulysses* (Episodes 4 & 18), Leopold Bloom's wife Molly is likened to Calypso, who confines Odysseus for seven years, and also to Penelope, Odysseus' virtuous wife in *The Odyssey*; the bar-maids at a hotel (Episode 11) are likened to the Sirens, whose songs are known to capture men; and a brothel (Episode 15) is the counterpart of the witch Circe's house, where she turns Odysseus' men into swine.
- 2) T. S. Eliot begins *The Waste Land* with the same image as *The*

Canterbury Tales: April rain brings forth life, and a throng of people set off on their journey—except that Eliot’s people are dead people crossing London Bridge, whereas Chaucer’s are pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. Here are the beginnings of the two poems:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

(*The Waste Land*, “The Burial of the Dead,” 1-4)

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power
As brings about the engendering of the flower. . . .

(*The Canterbury Tales*, “The Prologue,” 1-4)

- 3) In the film *Shakespeare in Love*, this scene is parodied in one in which Will Shakespeare and Viola De Lesseps have the following exchange after spending a night together for the first time:

VIOLA You would not leave me?
WILL I must. Look—how pale the window.
VIOLA Moonlight!
WILL No, the morning rooster woke me.
VIOLA It was the owl—come to bed—
WILL Oh, let Henslowe wait.
VIOLA Mr. Henslowe?
WILL Let him be damned for his pages!

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VIOLA Oh—no, no!
WILL There is time. It is still dark.
VIOLA It is broad day! The rooster tells us so!
WILL It was the owl. Believe me, love, it was the owl.

(*Shakespeare in Love*, Film Ch. 14)

- 4) Unlike Keats, the metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell seems to use an allusion to the Capulet vault scene as an antithesis of his *carpe diem* optimism in “To His Coy Mistress”:

But at my back I always hear
Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honor turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave’s a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

(“To His Coy Mistress,” 21-32)

This is like a counter-argument to what Romeo says to Juliet in the Capulet vault:

ROMEO Ah, dear Juliet
Why art thou yet so fair? Shall I believe

That unsubstantial Death is amorous,
And that the lean abhorred monster keeps
Thee here in dark to be his paramour?
For fear of that I still will stay with thee,
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again. Here, here will I remain
With worms that are thy chambermaids. O, here
Will I set up my everlasting rest
And shake the yoke of inauspicious stars
From this world-wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last.
Arms, take your last embrace! And lips, O you
The doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss
A dateless bargain to engrossing death.

(*Romeo and Juliet*, 5.3.101-115)

While Romeo is satisfied to remain in the vault embracing a Juliet who will have worms as her chambermaids, Marvell declares that a marble vault is not a place for an embrace and implores his mistress not to preserve her virginity for worms. We can strongly suspect that Marvell, who was writing just a few decades after Shakespeare, was thinking of the vault scene of *Romeo and Juliet* when he wrote these lines.

- 5) In a film version of *Sense and Sensibility*, literature and literary figures are more frequently mentioned. When Marianne and her mother Mrs. Dashwood talk about Edward Ferrars, a possible suitor of Elinor, Marianne criticizes Edward's impassive way of reading literature:

MARIANNE

But there is something wanting. He's

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- too sedate. His reading last night . . .
- MRS. DASHWOOD But Elinor has not your feelings. His reserve suits her.
- MARIANNE Can he love her? Can the soul really be satisfied with such polite affections? To love is to burn—to be on fire, like Juliet or Guinevere or Eloise.
- MRS. DASHWOOD They made rather pathetic ends, dear.
- MARIANNE Pathetic? To die for love? How can you say so? What could be more glorious?
- MRS. DASHWOOD I think that may be taking your romantic sensibilities a little far.

(Sense and Sensibility, Film Ch. 6)

Here, Marianne's romantic sensibility is heightened by her references to the heroines of the tragic love stories she adores.

Willoughby rescues Marianne in the drenching rain, and the next day when he visits the cottage, they recite together Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, and their disagreement about whether the word is storms or tempests also adds charm to the scene (Film Ch. 12). Later, the abandoned Marianne again recites this sonnet in the rain while looking at Allenham, where Willoughby used to live (Film Ch. 24).

- 6) A number of Agatha Christie titles are taken from Mother Goose: *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* (1940), *Five Little Pigs* (1942), *Hickory Dickory Dock* (1955) in the *Hercule Poirot Series*; *A Pocket Full of Rye* (1953) in the *Miss Marple Series*; *And Then There Were None* (1939), *Crooked House* (1949); and the short stories: "Sing a Song of Sixpence" (1934), "Three Blind Mice" (1950), "Four and Twenty Blackbirds" (1960), and "How Does Your Garden Grow?" (1974). The

contents of these nursery rhymes are incorporated in the stories.

- 7) *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.143-48.
- 8) P. B. Shelley's "To a Skylark" (1820); William Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807).
- 9) The film *Atonement* was directed by Joe Wright, who is considered one of England's "literary" movie directors. He has also directed *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), *Anna Karenina* (2012), and the forthcoming *Pan* (2015), which is based on J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*.
- 10) Well-known heritage films are: *Chariots of Fire* (1981); *Another Country* (1984); *A Passage to India* (1984); *A Room with a View* (1985); *Maurice* (1987); *Little Dorrit* (1988); *A Handful of Dust* (1988); *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1991); *Howards End* (1992); *Shadowlands* (1993); *The Remains of the Day* (1993); *Sense and Sensibility* (1995); *Emma* (1996); *Vanity Fair* (2004); *The Madness of King George* (1994); *Pride and Prejudice* (2005); *Oliver Twist* (2005); *Becoming Jane* (2007); *The King's Speech* (2010); *W.E.* (2011); and *Great Expectations* (2012). BBC has also produced numerous TV mini-series based on works by Austen and Dickens.
- 11) The law limits the inheritance of a family estate to only one of the sons or at least a male member of the family. This was to prevent the land and property from being dispersed through daughters' marriages into other families.
- 12) The family name Crawley appears in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). Becky Sharp becomes a governess to the Crawley family and later secretly marries the second son Rawdon Crawley. Julian Fellowes, who created *Downton Abbey*, previously wrote the screenplay to *Vanity Fair* (2004).
- 13) However, Arthur Conan Doyle never penned the line "Elementary, my dear Watson," which became established as Holmes' signature

phrase in later films and TV dramas.

- 14) In his final moments, Khan quotes Captain Ahab as he attacks Kirk's ship: ". . . to the last I will grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee." (*Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, Film Ch. 15; *Moby Dick*, Ch. 135 "The Chase: Third Day")
- 15) The concluding sentence of *A Tale of Two Cities* is as memorable as the first: "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known." (Book III, Ch. 15)
- 16) This is what the eternally youthful Peter Pan answers when Wendy asks where he lives, and he repeats the direction when they are nearing Neverland. (*Peter Pan*, Ch. 3; Ch. 4)

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