

CARDENIO'S VARIOUS FORTUNES

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This paper revisits a presumably lost Jacobean play, *The History of Cardenio*, attributed to John Fletcher and William Shakespeare. This adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes' story featured in the first part of *Don Quixote* has been the subject of many conjectures and hypotheses throughout the centuries, primarily because of Lewis Theobald's 1728 *Double Falsehood*, which he claimed was the lost play in question. Following Stephen Greenblatt's work on cultural poetics and cultural mobility – concerning issues of authorship, mobility of ideas and texts, the relationship between society and literature – we will first retrace the trajectory of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* from Spain to England in the early XVII century and examine its reception among the writers of the time. We will then focus on several notices that an adaptation of a story featured in *Don Quixote* was performed in the English playhouses of the time, a play later attributed to Fletcher and Shakespeare, which was never published and was considered lost up until the XVIII century and the publication of *Double Falsehood*. Finally, we will give a brief critical analysis of the several texts in circulation, a notice of the most recent findings and conclusions on the Cardenio issue, and an account of the XXI century adaptations of the play around the world, a project carried by Stephen Greenblatt.

Keywords: cultural poetics, reception, adaptation, Shakespeare, Cervantes

МНОГУТЕ ЖИВОТИ НА КАРДЕНИО

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Во овој труд се преиспитува прашањето за наводно изгубената јакобинска драма *The History of Cardenio*, која им се припишува на Џон Флечер и на Вилијам Шекспир. За оваа адаптација на приказната за Карденио од првиот дел на *Дон Кихот* на Мигел де Сервантес се поставувале многу хипотези низ вековите, главно поради *Double Falsehood* (1728) на Луис Теобалд, кој тврдел дека тоа дело е токму изгубената драма. Следејќи ги постулатите на Стивен Гринблат за поетиката на културата и на културната мобилност – кои опфаќаат прашања за авторството, за мобилноста на идеите и на текстовите, за врската меѓу општеството и книжевноста – прво ќе ја трасираме траекторијата на *Дон Кихот* на Сервантес од Шпанија во Англија на почетоките од 17 век и ќе ја истражиме рецепцијата кај писателите од тоа време. Потоа ќе се осврнеме на неколку показатели дека драмска адаптација на приказна од *Дон Кихот* била изведувана во англиските театри, драма што потоа ќе им биде припишана на Флечер и на Шекспир, но не била објавена и се сметала за изгубена сè до 17 век и објавата на *Double Falsehood*. Најпосле, ќе направиме кус критички осврт на неколкуте постојни текстови, ќе дадеме извештај за најновите истражувања и заклучоци за оваа проблематика, како и податок за адаптациите на оваа драма во светот во 21 век, проект предводен од Стивен Гринблат.

Клучни зборови: поетика на културата, рецепција, адаптација, Шекспир, Сервантес

1 Introduction

For Renaissance studies, the mobility of the text of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a veritable "swerve" in world literature, and in the context of England, Cervantes' novel leaves all sorts of traces from the very onset, especially in the theater. Stephen Greenblatt points out that the novel "must have been a literary sensation in London in 1613, when Shakespeare and Fletcher's play was first performed" (2009: 80). Proof of this is Randall & Boswell's 2009 compilation of Cervantine references that spans over 700 pages. It seems that the many adventures narrated in Cervantes' novel captivated the reading public of the time, whether for the adventure, the humor, the tragedy, the moral, or, perhaps more subtly, for the "attempt [...] of the individual mind to produce a vision and a system of its own, in a world that often seems to have lost a universal frame of reference and a fully satisfactory sense of the value and meaning of action" (Mack *et al* 1992: 1822). However the book was perceived, it certainly left a lasting, tangible impression in literature, language, and culture in general.

2 Ur-Cardenio

Several months after the publication of *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, in August 1605, a curious copy made its way into the Oxford University library. The acquisition was made possible thanks to a donation to buy Spanish books by none other than Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton (Randall and Boswell 2009: 1), the man whose life is inseparable from Shakespeare's biography. He was, as Ardila suggests, one of his "many friends who relished things Spanish" (2009: 6). Shakespeare must have at the very least heard of Cervantes much earlier than the publication of the first translation of *Don Quixote* into English in 1612 by Thomas Shelton, who based his translation on the 1607 Brussels edition of the Spanish original. Curiously enough, 1612 seems too late a date to start tracing the trail *Don Quixote* left. As early as 1607 we encounter a curious reference to fighting with windmills in George Wilkins' *The Miserie of Enforced Marriage*, as well as in Thomas Middleton's *Your Five Gallants* and several others (*ibid*, 3), especially in the plot of Francis Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, dated from the same year (Fuchs 2013: 39-54). This might be explained by the fact that Shelton had translated the book several years before he gave it to the printer, as stated by himself in the prologue to the first edition of the translation, and it had probably circulated in manuscript form among friends and in literary circles ever since. Exactly how and when Shakespeare was first acquainted with the adventures of Don Quixote cannot be pinpointed, but all the historical evidence seems to support the claim that Shakespeare had first heard of Cervantes and his knight quite recently upon the publication of the book in Spanish.

To the many literary references to *Don Quixote* we may add the following: in 1613, a play called either *Cardenno* or *Cardenna*, author unknown, was performed twice on festive occasions in Shakespeare's theater company, The King's Men. The name of the play, although uncertain, points to the story of Cardenio in the first part

of *Don Quixote*. Someone had, obviously, made a theatrical adaptation of Cervantes' story, the text of which is missing. Then the trail goes cold for forty years, up until 1653, when a play called *The History of Cardenio* was registered to be printed by Humphrey Moseley. This time, though, the title had two authors attached to it: "Mr. Fletcher & Shakespeare." (Chartier 2013). The co-authorship with John Fletcher should come as no surprise, as two other plays, now proven to be written in collaboration with that author, have passed down to us: *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. What is surprising, however, is that the manuscript for this play had been lost for so many years and had suddenly appeared ready for printing. The story becomes even more bizarre if we scrape further through these documents, only to find that the same register attributes even more plays to Shakespeare in 1660. This makes Moseley's account particularly unreliable and weakens the case for *Cardenio*. Further proof is that all these later additions to the canon of Shakespearean apocrypha were never printed and are lost, for reasons unknown. *Cardenio*, for what it's worth, appeared in neither Shakespeare's nor Fletcher's oeuvre.

3 'As I pronounced it to you'

What might have seemed a dead end in the search for Cardenio proved to be just the beginning, as the real story was about to unfold. Lewis Theobald, an 18th century erudite, published a play titled *Double Falsehood; or The Distrest Lovers* in 1728, claiming to be "Written Originally by W. Shakespeare", and that he only "revived and adapted" it. Prior to publication, in 1727, the play was successful on the London stage. Its plot: the story of Cardenio, adapted from Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

Theobald, a fervent philologist, one of the earliest editors of Shakespeare, had proven to be careful when tackling texts, collating manuscripts and sifting through errors. His seven-volume edition of the works of Shakespeare was unparalleled at the time and surpassed Alexander Pope's edition, which Theobald had harshly criticized. But a play called *Double Falsehood* does not appear in any theater's or printer's registry. This title appeared out of the blue, ushering in skepticism even from Theobald's contemporaries. He replied to these comments in the preliminaries of the edition of the play: to those who said that he was the author, he replied that they were "blinding paying Me a greater Compliment than either They design, or I can merit [...] I should esteem it some Sort of *Virtue*, were I able to commit so *agreeable a Cheat*" (Graham 1920: 27). Indeed, it was Pope himself who had accused him of forgery, although later admitted that he thought the play was indeed from Shakespeare's time (ibid, 10).¹ In the preface, Theobald claims possession of three manuscripts of the play. Furthermore, he responds to objections concerning chronology – some had said that it was impossible for Shakespeare to have known about the story of Cardenio, but Theobald pointed to the early edition of Shelton's translation. Another comment had to do with "the *Colouring, Diction, and Character*" being nearer to Fletcher than to Shakespeare, but Theobald leaves that to "the

¹ In a letter to Hill, Pope writes: "What you have observed in your letter I think just, only I would acquit myself in one point ; I could not have the least pique to Mr. Theobald in what is cited in the treatise of the Bathos, from the play which I never supposed to be his. He gave it as Shakespear's, and I take it to be of that age" (*The Works of Alexander Pope*, ed. Elwin and Courthope, X, p. 53).

Determination of better Judgements” and acknowledges that his wish for it to be Shakespeare’s might have made him partial (*ibid.*, 30).

What makes the case all the more interesting is the lack of consensus on whether Theobald had any knowledge of Moseley’s records. Chartier says it is “unlikely” – if he had known about the record, he would have used it to further corroborate his claims. But, if Theobald knew nothing of the Moseley ascription, it would be a wild, almost impossible coincidence, that he picked that exact story from *Don Quixote*, forged it, made some of it pass as Shakespeare’s (rather convincingly), with a hint of Fletcher’s (again, convincingly) for no particular reason.² For all intents and purposes, it does seem that Theobald had a manuscript of some sorts that contained a version of the Cardenio story. Whose pen exactly wrote (most of) it and what role did Theobald (and the theater people he worked with) play in the final version he named *Double Falsehood* has puzzled scholars for centuries.

4 ‘These fragments’

The question of authorship remains open and is still being researched, but the claim that Shakespeare did, in fact, author at least some parts of the play has been gaining momentum. Recent corpus-based studies have suggested that the “psychological signature” of all three authors – Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Theobald – is present in the play, and that Shakespeare’s signature is prevalent (Boyd and Pennebaker 2015).³ For the *Norton Shakespeare*’s one-page chapter “Cardenio: a brief account”, as well as for past editions of the *Oxford Shakespeare*, the Oxford editors had concluded that “most of the dialogue seems un-Shakespearean. Though the play deserved its limited success, it is now no more than an interesting curiosity” (Greenblatt *et al.* 1997: 3109). However, the most recent Oxford edition, *The New Oxford Shakespeare* (2016), includes fragments of the play, meticulously edited by Gary Taylor, thereby settling the debate for the time being: the consensus seems to be that parts of the manuscript that became *Double Falsehood*, the Jacobean adaptation of Cervantes’ story of Cardenio, are indeed by Fletcher and Shakespeare. This new edition literally picks up the pieces of the lost manuscript, excluding large chunks of text from the posterior edition that are believed to be the work of Theobald or his colleagues. The reader is left with a skeleton, bits and pieces of text followed by many empty spaces – a veritable post-modern text that silently invites the reader to fill in the gaps and be the co-creator. Indeed, as far as *Cardenio / Double Falsehood* is concerned, this is where the story leaves us today, in the realm of adaptations.

² Gary Taylor has penned a lengthy criticism of the Theobald-as-forger theory, concluding: “If Theobald wrote these lines [an extract of *Double Falsehood*], we must recognize him as one of our greatest dramatic poets, the greatest literary chameleon of all time, and the only forger in history who perfectly copied the style of a writer who had been dead for more than a century. I find it simpler to assume that these lines, and others like them scattered throughout the first half of *DF*, are the remains of Shakespeare’s contribution to a play performed by the King’s Men in 1613.” (Bourus and Taylor 2013: 161).

³ Whether problems of this kind can be successfully and unequivocally resolved by computer analysis of pure text, disregarding all other aspects, is debatable. Of the 54 texts used in the corpus, the vast majority are by Shakespeare. What this means for the conclusion of the study is a question that exceeds our expertise and the scope of this paper. Also, Deborah C. Payne notes that, in analyses of this kind: “[p]lot and dramatic design, with a couple of notable exceptions, tend to be ignored” (in Payne 2016: 124).

Such question of authorship certainly did not bother Shakespeare's audience or contemporaries that much. They were used to collaborations of all sorts. They were used to picking up plots left and right. The concepts of authorship, literature, culture, were all very different from the ones we know today.

5 The nature of culture

Shakespeare and his contemporaries were partial to adaptation and collaboration, or what Stephen Greenblatt has broadly termed "cultural mobility". He seeks to deconstruct the idea that culture is something fixed and stable by analyzing how patterns of thought and behavior have been constantly revisited throughout human history. Humanity, for most of its history, has thrived thanks to both metaphorical movements of ideas and physical movements of people, phenomena that are inevitably linked. In other words, the precedence that recent human history has given to "ethnocentrism, racism, and nationalism" (Greenblatt 2009: 6) has artificially fixed the hierarchical superposition of native versus nomad. However, cultures have always been in constant "languid motion", as Montaigne says (*ibid*, 5), and Greenblatt sketches the way Rome was transported and transformed into its successors, or the hermeneutic interpretations of *figurae* in the Bible that helped link the Old and the New Testaments. For these interpretations, he argues that they "left things standing in place and at the same time emptied them out, in order to claim that a full actualization of the precious cultural resource – in this case, the religion of Israel – could only be realized in the religion that had come to displace and triumph over it" (*ibid*, 13). And in literature, the concept of cultural mobility is inextricably linked to Goethe's concept of *Weltliteratur*, his "canny insight into the restless process through which texts, images, artifacts, and ideas are moved, disguised, translated, transformed, adapted, and reimagined in the ceaseless, resourceful work of culture" (*ibid*, 4). Thus, the concept of mobility has been always around, in society, religion, literature, culture in its integrity – it is only the general acceptance of the concept that has had ebbs and flows throughout human history. For this reason, Greenblatt proposes a manifesto for cultural mobility studies (*ibid*, 250-253), with the idea of, roughly put, seeking the global in the local, and vice versa.

The idea of non-exclusivity is a constant in Greenblatt's work in the field of cultural poetics, and the inclusion of "cultural mobility" only broadens the scope of the initial design. Cultural phenomena exist in circulation and are mutually inclusive, so that all things that shape our existence seem reflected in each other, and their interplay constitutes what Greenblatt calls "cultural poetics". Art is dependent on society and vice versa, which implies that the analysis of any one of them must take into account the other. Greenblatt defines the work of art as "the product of a set of manipulations" (2007: 212), personal and communal, internal and external, "the product of a negotiation between a creator or class of creators, equipped with a complex, communally shared repertoire of conventions, and the institutions and practices of society" (*ibid*, 213). If we define art in this fashion, we get a clearer image of the undertaking that led to *The History of Cardenio*, *Double Falsehood*, and all posterior *Cardenios*.

6 The many faces of Cardenio

Cervantes was, above all, a storyteller, and in all his novels tended to interpolate stories within the frame narrative. The first book of *Don Quixote* features several such stories seeped in reality, which perhaps function as an antidote to Don Quixote's illusory world. One of the stories, a tale of intrigue and deception, has to do with Cardenio, an Andalusian, who has taken to the mountains on the verge of madness because of a series of unfortunate incidents. He tells of his love for Luscinda and how he was deceived by Fernando, who had also fallen in love with her and had arranged to marry her. Cardenio was not the only one deceived by Fernando: he had lied to a farmer's daughter, Dorotea, by promising that he would marry her if they slept together, only to leave her afterwards. On the wedding day of Luscinda and Fernando, her planned suicide is thwarted by a sudden fainting. She has a letter saying that she cannot be anybody but Cardenio's wife, but Cardenio escapes before witnessing the outcome. Dorotea disguises herself as a shepherd, and Luscinda goes to a monastery.

The story is narrated almost as a four-act play and is full of dramatic potential. Cardenio tells the first part of his tale to Don Quixote and Sancho, but is interrupted – after asking explicitly not to be – and leaves in a fury. He then meets Sancho, the priest and the barber, who hear the rest of his story. Then follows Dorotea's account of Fernando's deception and the aftermath. Finally, a happy end in an inn (preceded by the priest's story of the Curious Impertinent): all four meet there, Fernando repents and will marry Dorotea, and Cardenio and Luscinda end up together at last.

The plot of *Double Falsehood* oversimplifies or exaggerates the story and eliminates the context. The names have been changed, in all probability by Theobald and the editors of the edition: Cardenio is now Julio, Luscinda is Leonora, Fernando is Henriquez and Dorotea is Violante. Julio and Violante are indeed deceived by Henriquez, but in this story, Henriquez rapes Violante and, although feeling remorseful, woos Leonora and wants to marry her. The marriage attempt fails in a similar fashion as in Cervantes' story, after which all three – Julio, Leonora and Violante – leave the place. A major addition is the importance given to the fathers of the three characters, as well as to Roderick, Henriquez's older brother. In the end, it is Roderick who manages to get all of them back together to resolve the conflict. Theobald's adaptation has left us this version of the *History of Cardenio*, which, to any well-read eye, does seem weirdly simplistic for a play of its period. There are no subplots, many threads are left loose, and it is plagued by a jumble of different styles.

Gary Taylor's version in the *New Oxford Shakespeare* (2016: 3133-3177)⁴ is a commendable editing effort. He restores the original title of the play, *The History of Cardenio*, by John Fletcher and William Shakespeare (in that order), and tentatively restores the original names of the characters, except for Violante's,⁵ which should be Dorothea, as in Shelton's translation, just like Luscinda has been adapted

⁴ It is preceded by his complete adaptation of the play, published with explanatory notes to the editing, 'unadapting', and creative processes, in *The Creation and Re-Creation of Cardenio* (2013).

⁵ Elsewhere, Taylor explains: "Violante would be another example. For its associations with flowers, violence, and deflowering, see Leigh 2012, 258-259. These associations are even clearer if we adopt the odd spelling of the name that occurs twice in the first editions of Shakespeare's plays, 'Violenta' (*All's Well that Ends Well* 3.5.0.1, *Twelfth Night* 1.5.160.1). Moreover, unlike Dorotea, 'Violenta'

to Lucinda. *Double Falsehood*'s duke Angelo is now simply an unnamed 'duke of Andalusia in Spain'. Furthermore, he identifies the characters of Fabian and Lopez, which appear in Act 2, scene 2, as "possibly originally Quixote and Sancho?" (ibid, 3137), with the explanation that "their speeches here closely resemble those in *Don Quixote*, when Quixote and Sancho encounter the mad Cardenio, and the adaptation seems to have used material from a scene later in the original play" (ibid, 3145). Similarly, the two unnamed gentlemen that appear in Act 4, scene 2 alongside Julio/Cardenio have been tentatively identified as the curate and the barber, with the assumption that "the Jacobean play was closer to the novel, where these two characters are prominent" (ibid, 3166). Also included are three songs by Robert Johnson, the composer who wrote songs for some of Shakespeare's later plays: "For ever let thy heavenly tapers", "With endless tears that never cease", and "Woods, rocks, and mountains, and ye desert places". Many comments by the editor point to discrepancies, misplaced lines, possible censorship of innuendoes, and additions that seem out of place or character. Taylor 'unadapts' Theobald's *Double Falsehood* by stripping everything that the editor deemed un-Shakespearean or un-Fletcherian.

The result of this striking editorial undertaking is not necessarily discouraging. It is simply an invitation to consider new ways of reading and performing Shakespeare, an approach that has been practiced even with this canonical works for decades. It points to the fact that Theobald and his colleagues did the same – they adapted the manuscript to the horizon of expectations of their time.

Of the several adaptations of *Cardenio* that have been made within the last two decades, Stephen Greenblatt's "The Cardenio Project", explained as "an ongoing experiment in cultural mobility" ("The Cardenio Project", web), deserves special mention. It was inaugurated with Greenblatt and Mee's adaptation of *Cardenio*, with the main idea being to let the process, not their actual adapted text, travel around the globe, in order to see how it would work in different settings and cultures. Greenblatt and Mee's *Cardenio*, set in modern Umbria, gathers up the remnants of anything Shakespearean-ish from *Double Falsehood* and presents it as a play-within-a-play, wrapped in the main story which is a modern adaptation of the "Curious Impertinent" from the same novel. Adaptations have been written and performed in Brazil, South Africa, Spain, Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Turkey, Egypt, India, and Japan. Spain's metatheatrical production is particularly interesting because of the provenance of the original story and the inclusion of the characters of Quixote and Sancho, with quotations from the novel, a decision Fuchs subtly criticizes (2013: 109-114). Other productions, like the Japanese *Motorcycle Don Quixote*, are more playful with both the process and the story – as Greenblatt himself analyzes the play, it is not so much about negotiation or appropriation, but about cultural misunderstanding (2009: 90-95).

Regardless of the decisions made by the playwrights that participated in this project, the "experiment" of cultural mobility has put forth thought-provoking results that reflect on the very beginning of this story. The idea of cultural mobility is the background on which Shakespeare, Fletcher and their contemporaries worked. Similarly, it is the background of Cervantes' works – a tapestry of many cultures

echoes the other three lovers' names: -enta, -inda, -den, -nando, the 'l' in 'Lucinda', the associated V- and F-." (2016b: 363).

finely tuned to the Spanish horizon of expectations. The works of these writers would go on to 'conquer' the cultural world, as it were, bringing back the influences, projections and expectations to their roots and creating something new, a fresh perspective that paves the way towards a new cycle of the process.

We have traced the beginnings of the story of Cardenio, interwoven in Don Quixote's whimsical world of lost manuscripts, authors, editors, translators, and even a forgery. Cervantes playfully puts Don Quixote's world in the words of Cide Hamete Benengeli, an Arab writer whose manuscript he accidentally stumbles upon and has it translated. The story of Don Quixote is written, lost and found, translated, commented, adapted, and forged, both within and without the realm of fiction. How suitable that a Jacobean play, directly inspired by this book, has had a similar fortune throughout the centuries. Even today, the open nature of the text leaves room for new adaptations, new translations, and new takes on the story of Cardenio.

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