

# 17th International *Connotations* Symposium

## Textual Reasons for Canonicity

July 30 – August 2, 2023  
Kloster Schönenberg  
(Ellwangen, Germany)



From Whitney's *Choice of Emblems*, p. 171

**Book of Abstracts**

Laurie Atkinson (University of Tübingen): <b>'Let clerkis ken the poetis different': Translating Canonicity in Gavin Douglas's <i>Eneados</i> (1513)</b> .....	3
Neil Browne (Oregon State University Cascades): <b>A Passage between Canonical and Experimental: The Example of Hart Crane's <i>The Bridge</i></b> .....	3
William E. Engel (Sewanee: The University of the South): <b>Literary Anthologies and Deliberating Canonicity</b> .....	4
David Fishelov (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem): <b>And This Gives Life to Baby Shoes: Textual Reasons for the Canonicity of a Six-Word Story</b> .....	5
Beatrix Hesse (University of Bamberg): <b>Entering the Canon by Rewriting – Michael Cunningham's <i>The Hours</i></b> .....	6
Shelby Judge (University of Glasgow): <b>Multitextual Medea: Updating the Classical Canon</b> .....	7
Thomas Kullmann (University of Osnabrück): <b>Anthologizing Shakespeare's Sonnets</b> .....	7
Lena Linne (Ruhr University Bochum): <b>Landmarks of the Oral Tradition: What the Reception of Homer's Epics Can Tell us About Canonicity</b> .....	8
Lee Morrissey (Clemson College): <b>"Books are not absolutely dead things": Milton's Creative Relationships with Readers</b> .....	9
Wolfgang G. Müller (University of Jena): <b>Quotability as a Criterion of Canonicity</b>	10
Jonathan Nauman (Vaughan Association): <b>From Rivers to Fountains: Henry Vaughan's Secular and Sacred Inaugurations</b> .....	11
Francesca Pierini (University of Basel): <b>Now Tell Me what else it Means: Reflecting on Canonicity, Gender, and Genre in Contemporary Fiction</b> .....	11
Nesrin Aydion Satar (Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University, Turkey): <b>Consent of the Text: Textual Reasons for the Anti-Canonicity of Diaries</b> .....	12
Judith Saunders (Marist College): <b>Paradox as Closure: Canonicity in Lyric Poetry</b> .	14
Rachel Stenner (University of Sussex): <b>Is William Baldwin Canonical?: Anonymity, Distributed Authorship, and the Tudor Text</b> .....	15
Qingyu Wang (Peking University / Yale University): <b>Testing Canonicity with Historical Perspectives: A Comparative Study of Three "King John" Plays in Sixteenth-Century England</b> .....	16

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**'Let clerkis ken the poetis different': Translating Canonicity in Gavin Douglas's *Eneados* (1513)**

The Scottish poet, translator, and bishop of Dunkeld, Gavin Douglas (c. 1474-1522) was celebrated posthumously as Scotland's pre-eminent poet. Within a decade of his death, Sir David Lyndsay could lament 'for one, 'quhilk lampe wes of this land! [...] Abufe vulgare poetis prerogative, | Boith in practik and speculation', and Douglas was one of the first Scottish poets to appear in print. He owed his reputation to his translation – the first in English – of Virgil's *Aeneid*; but more than novelty was at work in ensuring for this work an almost immediate canonical status. This paper explores the textual strategies of self-authorisation in Douglas's *Eneados*, specifically, his claims in the Prologues to each of the thirteen books to have re-created Virgil for a contemporary Scottish audience. In the first Prologue, Douglas rehearses the arguments for Virgil's canonicity, then differentiates his translation from the earlier English versions of Chaucer and Caxton. His claim to recognition is based on his vernacular audience: '3it stude he [i.e. Virgil's *Aeneid*] nevir weill in our tung endyte'. The thirteenth Prologue is a meeting in a dream between a fictionalised Douglas and Maffeo Vegio (1407–1458), author of a Neo-Latin continuation of the *Aeneid*. 'Mapheus' and Douglas present opposing approaches to canonicity: Mapheus claims to have assimilated his continuation to Virgil's original – 'My buke and Virgillis morall beyn, bath tway'; by contrast, Douglas insists only on the consistency of *his translation* of Books 1-12 and 'Book 13' – 'Lat clerkis ken the poetis different'. He imagines the vernacular as able to erase difference, creating something truly new even as it re-creates an original text. I will close by considering how Douglas's self-authorisation relates to modern notions of canonicity, then suggest some reasons why his high reputation failed to endure beyond the sixteenth century.

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**A Passage between Canonical and Experimental: The Example of Hart Crane's *The Bridge***

T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H. D., and Wallace Stevens wrote canonical modernist long poems, modernist epics, lyric epics—attempting to unite the lyric poem with the epic. Their availing themselves of the epic, the grandest of poetic forms, represents a gambit for the canonic status of experimental, modernist poetry. Circumventing his peers by following Whitman's undisciplined lead, Hart Crane set

out to write the epic of the United States. So did Williams, for example, who took for his measure of the country a single place—Paterson NJ. Crane, while New York is central to his long poem, *The Bridge*, takes as its central symbol the Brooklyn Bridge. The concept of a bridge can be understood as Crane's passageway into canonicity.

So can *The Bridge*. *The Bridge*, as does its immediate predecessor—"For The Marriage of Faustus and Helen,"—attempts the merging of ancient and modern culture, of the canonical and the new. Crane writes, "I found that I was really building a bridge between so-called classic experience and many divergent realities of our seething, confused cosmos of today, which has no formulated mythology yet for classic poetic reference or for religious exploration."

The bridge, then, can be understood as both the passage and the ligament from epic to lyric, and Crane's perceived passage to canonical status. However, the power of *The Bridge* is felt most intensely in the tension between the expansiveness of the epic form and the particularity of Crane's lyric. Finally, the modern lyric derived from Whitman takes precedence over the classical form, which pits *The Bridge* against the dominant, standards of prominent critics such as Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, and R. P. Blackmur, whose concept of modernist poetry, modeled after Eliot and Pound, became hieratic and calcified. These powerful voices and others like them delayed the passage of *The Bridge* into canonical status for decades until critics began to see that this tension between epic and lyric, evident on many levels, is what makes the poem great, worthy of canonical status.

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### **Literary Anthologies and Deliberating Canonicity**

Anthologies promote and perpetuate what amounts to a canon. The roots run deep in the Western tradition, as with the agglutinative master-text at the heart of the first canon conclaves, The Bible, and the sly political subtext of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* preserving in Callimachean poetic diction over 250 ancient stories. Later, the *Anthologia Graeca*, a collection of Classical and Byzantine Greek literature, was modelled on Meleager of Gadara (1<sup>st</sup>c. BCE) who first used the term "flower-gathering" (ἀνθολογία) to describe this literary exercise in which his own works, along with forty-six others, were arranged as a garland--and, thereby, established a paradigm for the ages. The trope reached a kind of apogee in Elizabethan times, with Tottel's *Miscellany* (the first printed anthology of English poetry), Gascoigne's groundbreaking *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, and Isabella Whitney's *Sweet Nosegay, or Pleasant Poesy, Containing a Hundred and Ten Philosophical Flowers*.

The “anthology,” as such, raises important question about the curation, preservation, and afterlife of literary works notwithstanding shifts in aesthetic sensibilities and once-novel stylistic inventions. The decisions underlying the culling and arrangement of material for anthologies--most notably those produced and disseminated by corporate behemoths such as Norton, Longman, Oxford, and Cambridge, who impose their imprimatur on a wide range of “anthologies” and thus set standards for a generation at least--warrants closer scrutiny. As co-editor of two such anthologies (*The Memory Arts in Renaissance England* and *The Death Arts in Renaissance England*, both with Cambridge), my team experienced periodic crises of conscience when confronting the reality that our determinations implicitly were setting the canon for a period-specific collection of literary excerpts. We therefore sought intentionally to foreground our deliberations concerning canon formation and to articulate our principles for proceeding, resulting in a metacognitive approach to producing--what we insisted our publisher subtitle--“A Critical Anthology.”

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### **And This Gives Life to Baby Shoes: Textual Reasons for the Canonicity of a Six-Word Story**

In my presentation I will argue that it was the combination of several textual reasons that contributed to the canonicity of the six-word story "For sale: baby shoes, never worn" (wrongly attributed to Hemingway). These textual reasons include: (a) an elegant, rhythmical pattern of 2-2-2 words; (b) an ironic tension between the mundane form of a newspaper ad and the tragic, implied content; (c) a semantic density in which only six words hold plenty of meanings; (d) an aesthetically appealing combination of opaqueness (readers have to construe the missing tragic element) and transparency (the missing element is easily construed by most readers); (e) by alluding to the tragic death of a baby the story succeeds in evoking a strong emotional response; (f) the image of baby shoes and the use of the term "worn" are highly evocative. To avoid circularity in our argumentation we can compare the canonical "baby shoes" story with a very similar story published back in 1921: "For sale – A baby carriage, never used." The comparison reveals that the latter lacks (a) and (f), thus supporting the argument that it was the combination of several textual reasons that contributed to the canonicity of the former.

Whereas the above textual traits of the "baby shoes" story undoubtedly contributed to its canonicity, I will also argue that these traits should be considered as necessary but not sufficient conditions for canonization. To be truly canonized, the story

had to inspire many followers who used it as their model, thus creating the genre of six-word stories with the "baby shoes" story as its prototypical member.

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### **Entering the Canon by Rewriting – Michael Cunningham's *The Hours***

Some of the most highly revered texts in the literary canon, from *Don Quixote* to *Ulysses*, have defined themselves in relation to a previous literary work or tradition. In the postmodern period, literary texts increasingly attracted scholarly attention if they re-wrote canonical texts against the grain, frequently with a postcolonial agenda (e.g. Coetzee, *Foe*, or Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*). In consequence, some texts by writers that previously had been largely ignored entered university curricula because they were taught in comparison to a text already part of the syllabus.

My talk will discuss Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours* and the way it attaches itself to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* as a successful device for achieving both popular and scholarly attention. (It may be premature to accord "canonicity" to a text less than a quarter of a century old.) While Cunningham's previous novels show the same stylistic excellence, they remained comparatively unnoticed. *The Hours* retained a central theme of the earlier novels – the pursuit of happiness of mostly gay characters in a hostile environment – but treated the aspect of sexuality with greater restraint and endowed it with a certain respectability by linking it to the major cultural icon of Virginia Woolf.

*The Hours* is attached to *Mrs Dalloway* in two main ways: of the novel's three main plot strands, one is a biofictional rendering of Woolf's writing process, while another one is an updated rewriting of *Mrs Dalloway* set in late 20th-century New York. While the biofictional strand also poses intriguing questions, I will focus on the aspect of rewriting. In contrast to the postcolonial rewrites mentioned above, Cunningham does not challenge his model but writes from a stance of homage. Thus, he obviously invites stylistic comparison with *Mrs Dalloway*, which is interesting in terms of canonicity because of the inherent claim that his novel can compete with Woolf's.



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### **Multitextual Medea: Updating the Classical Canon**

Medea—the classical infanticidal witch—has captured the attention of writers throughout the centuries, from Euripides in Ancient Athens, to Shakespeare and Spenser in Early Modern England, to Christa Wolf, Rani Selvarajah, Jesmyn Ward, and Kerry Greenwood in the past 25 years. In one of her most famous lines in Euripides' play, Medea cries, "Men claim that we live safely in the home while they fight with the spear. Fools! I would rather bear a shield three times than bear a child once" (248—51). Heavey (2015) has argued that early modern authors were at once fascinated and repelled by Medea's terrible power, and they sought not only to represent but also to negotiate her ruthless cruelty, with a view to caution and to entertain their readers. Medea has since been taken up as a proto-feminist figure, leading to later, overtly feminist Medeas (van Zyl Smit 2002; Zuckerberg 2016). This paper will utilise a multitextual methodology to explore the ever-evolving attitudes towards Medea, with a particular focus on 21st Century adaptations of Medea. Hallett (1993) proposes an approach of multitextual readings of each myth, including canonical and non-canonical texts, across a variety of time periods. This would mean that dramas such as Aeschylus's *Oresteia* or Euripides' *Trojan Women* that specifically place women in the centre of the story, would be read alongside Homeric epics. In this case, Euripides' *Medea* will be read alongside recent, novelistic adaptations of the same myth, drawing in intervening texts where relevant, to demonstrate how the Classical canon can be problematised, parodied, politicised and, ultimately, expanded. Using Medea as a case study, this paper will ultimately argue that a multitextual approach to each myth is essential to a holistic approach to classical reception and a more diverse canon.

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### **Anthologizing Shakespeare's Sonnets**

While it is debatable to which extent it is due to textual features that literary works become canonical, we may certainly ask ourselves why certain poems from canonical collections are so often chosen to represent their poet in anthologies.

The prime example of a canonical collection of poetry is, of course, Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. In poetry anthologies the same poems are reprinted again and again, while the bulk of the 154 sonnets can only be accessed in editions of the complete collection. The formal similarity of the sonnets should enable us to determine features which led to their presence or absence in anthologies.

My suggestion is that the preference anthologies give to a limited number of sonnets is indeed due to textual reasons. We can assume that some sonnets stand out for their simplicity of argument and structure, while sonnets containing arguments of a certain complexity or references to specific circumstances are avoided. Preference may also have been given to poems conveying wisdom on central issues of life and love (60, 116; perhaps 97 may be added). Others may have been chosen for the poetological statements they contain (18, 55, 130). Most significantly, however, sonnets which focus on, or at least start with, first-person messages are frequently anthologized (30, 73, 129, 146), while sonnets which focus on second-person messages, or imperatives, are rarely chosen (no anthology prints 8, 31 etc. etc.; sonnet 2 presents a special case: evidently a favourite of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>-century readers, it was never anthologized since). This is all the more remarkable as second-person addresses clearly constitute the majority of the 154 sonnets of the collection. Since the nineteenth century, anthologies, perhaps informed by Romantic poetology, clearly convey a biased picture of the Swan of Avon's poetical genius.

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### **Landmarks of the Oral Tradition: What the Reception of Homer's Epics Can Tell us About Canonicity**

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are canonical for a variety of reasons, most prominently their position at the beginning of Western literature, the outstanding role they were attributed in the literature of the ancient world and the universal nature of their themes. Their canonical status is among the reasons why twenty-first-century authors have produced a considerable number of feminist rewritings. Novels like Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) and Madeline Miller's *Circe* (2018) seize upon the classical epics precisely because of their canonical status, which allows them to "write back" against the patriarchal canon.

In my paper, however, I will show that rewritings of this kind can also tell us something about the formal features of the Homeric epics and how these have contributed to the epics' canonical status. I want to argue that the epics' canonicity is also due to their stylistic features, which have long since been perceived as alien and strange. Bearing the characteristics of an oral literary tradition, the epics feature stock epithets, formulas, repetitions and epic similes. Having the touch of the "other" or "foreign," these characteristics have always been conveniently drawn upon by authors as references to the epics. Since these unique textual elements are immediately recognized by informed audiences as references to the epics, they are frequently alluded to, imitated,



quoted and played with. I will illustrate my claim with a selection of examples from Atwood's, Barker's and Miller's novels, which use the epics' distinctive stylistic features for a variety of purposes; I will show that the remnants of the oral tradition continue to contribute to the epics' canonical status because they can be drawn upon easily as references to the epics – to be subverted, played with or revered.

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### **“Books are not absolutely dead things”: Milton's Creative Relationships with Readers**

Peter Sloterdijk has defined humanism as a contestant in a media struggle. Canonical humanist texts, then, must enact that media struggle, and, in order to thrive going forward, show how verbal representation can survive. To achieve that, canonical texts embody, repeatedly over time, tensions between contrasting modes of verbal representation. In my paper, I explore how for John Milton, the blind poet who spoke *Paradise Lost*, the tension is between print and orality (not just writing and speech). With reference to specific lines in the poem (which I will project for the audience to read for themselves) I will explore how *Paradise Lost* hosts and describes an expansive plurality to which each reader potentially contributes. Joseph Wittreich calls *Paradise Lost* “a compendium of contradictory interpretations,” which it is; but it is also made up thereby of material for further construction.

*Paradise Lost* generates polarized readings. Over the centuries, it has been understood contradictorily as a poem about Satan and as a poem which narrates orthodox Christianity. Similarly, accused by Samuel Johnson for displaying a “contempt of females,” *Paradise Lost* is instead a poem by “feminist Milton” (to use Joseph Wittreich's phrase describing the poem's reception by female contemporaries of Samuel Johnson). These polarized readings sustain the poem. In my paper, I will explore how the contrasts between the poem's sights and sounds, between its horizontal lines and its vertical sentences, and between the narrative and the order of its telling, contribute to these sustaining contradictions. With reference to several specific examples from *Paradise Lost*, including an acrostic which spells “SATAN,” I will explore how the meanings are not simply a matter of choosing or selecting; rather, the contradictory possibilities sustain the creation of different readings, and, as a result, the continued canonicity of *Paradise Lost*. One's interpretation of *Paradise Lost* hinges, first, on how one reads the poem, literally: left to right, or top to bottom? With its many homophones, interpreting *Paradise Lost* also requires, though, attending to how one hears what one sees, or synesthesia in a word. The interactive problem of how to read *Paradise Lost*

thus represents the pluralistic variety (and the problem of pluralistic variety) the poem sets out to engage. This poetics is connected to Milton's 1643 essay, *Areopagitica*, in which Milton describes a productive (even creative) relationship between books and readers.

In *What is World Literature?* David Damrosch's claims that "world literature is literature that gains in translation." Even if one could translate the complicated, recursive narrative of *Paradise Lost*, its full linguistic potentials—e.g., homophones, linguistic paradoxes, and print-dependent arrangements—cannot be translated. Milton's self-conscious entry into the canon (rewriting Genesis), raises, I will argue, important questions about the differences between canonical and world literature (often thought to overlap). In *The Reason of Church Government* (1641), when he was thirty-three years old, John Milton first publicly declared his intention to write an English epic. He wanted to do "what the greatest and choicest wits of Athens, Rome or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old did for their country." That is, in Damrosch's terms, Milton sets out to join world literature, "but content with these British islands as my world," did so in a way that counters Damrosch's provocative thesis—by loading contradictory English linguistic possibilities spoken into a poem printed for readers by a blind poet in his own personal humanist contest of media.

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### **Quotability as a Criterion of Canonicity**

Great literary works frequently contain statements which are recalled whenever the works are referred to in whatever contexts. Examples would be "To be or not to be, that is the question" (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*), "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" (Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn"), Micawber's "Something will turn up" in Dickens' *David Copperfield* or, in the form of a one-word sentence, "Nevermore" (Poe's "The Raven"). The proposed paper argues that this phenomenon can be regarded as a sign of the canonicity of the respective texts. The starting-point of the argument is Aristotle's definition of a proposition. Aristotle speaks of "logos apophantikos". A proposition or apophantic statement is an assertion which may be true or false. This definition accords with the article "Proposition" in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Nuchelmann: 1989). A proposition can be an ordinary predication like "The sun is shining" or a philosophical judgement like "Man is a thinking being" or a moral statement like "Man has a predisposition to be good or evil." The propositions relevant in the context of the proposed paper are memorable statements, utterances which are, on account of their specific form and expressive force, liable to be remembered and

quoted. They can be conspicuous utterances, mottos, sententiae, maxims, aphorisms etc. It is the aim of the paper to categorize such statements, to examine them as to form and meaning, to ask what makes them quotable and to demonstrate in which way they contribute to the canonicity of literary works. A specific form of quoting memorable statements can be observed when the quotation appears in a subsequent literary work for instance in Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. This particular form of intertextuality can produce fascinating encounters of canonical authors and their works.

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### **From Rivers to Fountains: Henry Vaughan's Secular and Sacred Inaugurations**

In 1647 Henry Vaughan prepared what he intended to be his second published collection of poems, a volume entitled *Olor Iscanus*, which apparently was meant to further his literary reputation among the Jonsonian classicist coteries to which he had been attracted during student years in Oxford and London. The opening lyric of this collection, "To the River *Isca*," delivers an elaborate and explicit literary genealogy clearly meant to join the poet's current efforts to the works of established poets from antiquity to the present. Becoming canonical in this context involved merging Vaughan's local Usk river with Apollo's Eurotas, Orpheus's Hebrus, Ausonius's Mosella, Sidney's Thames, Habington's Severn.

Vaughan's production of *Olor Iscanus* seems to have been brought to a temporary halt by the death of the poet's brother and a new inclination to write sacred verse. The inaugural lyric to *Silex Scintillans*, "Regeneration," offers an internal topography that implicitly gestures toward the sacred pastoral of St. Paulinus of Nola and the emblematic scenery of some of George Herbert's poems. Here Vaughan poses visionary spiritual explorations using the splendors of nature as inherently significant tools. Classicist canonicity gives way to literary interaction with the sacred canonical text of the Bible, the poem being presented as a personal gloss on a Scriptural citation from *Canticles*.

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### ***Now Tell Me what else it Means: Reflecting on Canonicity, Gender, and Genre in Contemporary Fiction***

This article is based on a close reading of three different texts belonging to different genres – a short story, a novel, and a book chapter – that focus on a young female

protagonist who strives for a modicum of emancipation and agency within a social context governed by rules that appear to have been set in place to penalize and mortify her. The first two texts, A.S. Byatt's "Christ in the House of Martha and Mary" (1998), and Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring* (1999), have been mostly read and analysed (White 2005; Eidt 2008) as instances of ekphrastic narratives that, in quintessentially postmodern fashion, shift the reader's attention from the work of art they draw inspiration from, to its interpretation.

The third text, Jennifer Donnelly's book chapter "Anna of Cleves," from the young adult historical fictional work *Fatal Throne: The Wives of Henry VIII Tell All* (2018), is the account of Anna of Cleves' marriage to Henry VIII, told by the queen herself on her deathbed.

If the first two texts centre on celebrated works of art of the Western tradition, the third retells, for a young readership, one of the most popular pages of English history. Remarkably, all narratives mobilize pictorial perspective as the most accomplished (and eminently male) expression of a worldview in which women are "made," celebrated, and manipulated, in function of a specific artistic and/or political design. All texts consolidate a cluster of values and (artistic) standards at the same time as they create further meanings and discursive trajectories – mostly concerned with gender politics – that essentially question them, and that will constitute the focus of this article. This article will take into consideration the different usages Byatt, Chevalier, and Donnelly make of ekphrasis in order to evince its functionality to the discursive trajectories mobilized in and by the narratives. It aims at bringing to the surface the complex function of ekphrasis as a form of intertextuality that honours a given literary, historiographical, and/or artistic tradition, at the same time as it may question its fundamental tenets, shedding light on the contradictions upon which it rests.

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### **Consent of the Text: Textual Reasons for the Anti-Canonicity of Diaries**

Some researchers interpret diaries as "extraordinary" or "neglected" because of their generic characteristics. Indeed, diaries stand in a very unique place compared to the genres of autobiography and memoir which can be considered related to diaries in terms of content, only because of the textual features unique to the genre of diary. For example, the writer of an autobiography writes his work "consciously", thinking that he is attributing it to a public readership. On the other hand, this state of consciousness is better understood when the borders of the autobiography text are clear,

understandable, and formal, and the isolated, scattered, and informal language of the diaries are compared.

This study argues that the neglect of diaries especially by the determinants of the literary canon and not being treated as much as autobiography and memoir in literary and critical studies are related to the textual features of the genre. Moreover, it explains that these characteristics are based on the fact that what encourages the writer to write a diary is often related to personal, hidden, suppressed events and facts. Furthermore, this study explores how the narrative and linguistic features that make diaries "private texts" prevent the genre from attaining a canonical and thus "possessed" position to the public, a particular aristocratic group, or political power.

Diaries are not considered as much as autobiographies and memoirs by literary canon determinants such as writers, intellectuals, critics, literary historians, and academics. William Matthews also describes the diaries as a "neglected genre"<sup>1</sup>. The fact that the diaries cannot reach a canonical position as much as memoirs and autobiographies in the literary world is due to some textual contradictions. The main reason for such an inference is that diaries contain more personal and private elements than the aforementioned genres. Diaries are texts that are not designed, edited, not worried about form, and are not written to reach any conclusion because they are written just after the events and facts experienced by the author. Thus, it seems certain that they reflect the individual, unmediated, real thoughts of the authors. The fact that the diaries are not well-organized and designed works is reflected in their textual features. Irina Paperno, who defines the diaries as a "generic matrix", also explains that these texts are complex and unusual due to their unique structural features.<sup>2</sup> With all this uniqueness, diaries differ from the literary genres accepted by the male-dominated literary world in terms of form, content, and purpose. Cynthia Huff introduces diaries as a "feminist genre".<sup>3</sup> Compared to other canonical genres, diaries are treated as a "lesser genre", in Huff's terms.<sup>4</sup>

In this study, the diaries of the authors are used while giving examples of the textual traces of all these evaluations of the diaries. Throughout the article, although the features of the textual field presented by the diaries as a literary genre are generally focused on, some examples are given from the diary writers who have contributed to

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<sup>1</sup> William Matthews, "The Diary: A Neglected Genre." *The Sewanee Review* 85 (1977).

<sup>2</sup> Irina Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diary?" *The Russian Review* 63 (2004): 571.

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Huff, "The Profoundly Female and Feminist Genre: The Diary as a Feminist Practice," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 17 (1989).

<sup>4</sup> Huff, "The Profoundly Female and Feminist Genre: The Diary as a Feminist Practice," 7.

Turkish and English literature. Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar<sup>5</sup>, Nigâr Hanım<sup>6</sup>, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Pepys are among these authors.

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### **Paradox as Closure: Canonicity in Lyric Poetry**

Clearly there is no single aesthetic design or technique that guarantees canonical status for a literary text, no matter what its genre, but some persistently successful strategies can be identified. In lyric poetry, for example, closure evoking paradox can be found in a significant number of historically significant, widely valued texts. It is not hard to understand why this is so. Poems that conclude with apparent contradictions or reversals in logic, expectation, or statement can extend the reading experience beyond the page: they compel readers to wrestle with oppositional forces, feelings, or ideas ... and then to reconcile these in the context of a poem's subject matter. Surprised, intrigued, and challenged by a juxtaposition of antitheses, readers go on pondering the issues at stake in the poem. Poets thus reap the rewards of compactness even as they invite pursuit of meaning and create a lingering sense of mystery. Famous examples abound: Dickinson defines the interior of the human psyche as "finite infinity" ("There is a Solitude of Space") Yeats insists that "nothing can be sole or whole / that has not been rent" ("Crazy Jane Talks to the Bishop"); one of Millay's speakers claims to be "most faithless when . . . most true" ("Oh, Think Not I am Faithful to a Vow!"); Frost describes a bird who "knows in singing not to sing" ("The Oven Bird"); Stevens asks us to imagine seeing "nothing that is not there and the nothing that is" ("The Snow Man"); Donne explains salvation in terms of violence, begging God to "imprison me, for I / Except you enthrall me, never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me" ("Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God"); Carew conjures up a woman with "June in her eye, in her heart January" ("The Spring").

Establishing counterpoint between mutually resistant perspectives, poems like these conclude dynamically rather than with thematic stasis. The rhetorical techniques

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<sup>5</sup> Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar was a Turkish poet, novelist, literary scholar, and essayist, widely regarded as one of the most important representatives of modernism in Turkish literature. His diaries were published in 2007, 45 years after his death with the title *Günlükleri Işığında Tanpınarla Başbaşa* (*In Broad Daylight: Face to Face with Tanpınar*). The "new Tanpınar" in the diaries has been quite sensational for the author's canonical position in Turkish literature.

<sup>6</sup> Nigâr Hanım was an Ottoman poet, who pioneered modern Western styles in a feminine mode. She is a major figure in post-Tanzimat Turkish poetry. Her diaries were published in 2021 as *The Diary*:



used to generate satisfyingly contradictory final lines in lyric poems involve linguistic choice, grammatical usage, syntactic arrangement, line structure, and rhyme. This paper will investigate the various means poets have employed to compose some of their most famous last lines, at the same time illustrating how ubiquitous the use of paradoxical closure has been in English poetry. In addition to those named above, poems to be examined include work by William Blake, Percy Shelley, Matthew Arnold, Gerard Manley Hopkins, T.S. Eliot, Gwendolyn Brooks, Elizabeth Bishop, W. H. Auden, Countee Cullen, John Suckling, Anne Bradstreet, John Keats, and others.

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### **Is William Baldwin Canonical?: Anonymity, Distributed Authorship, and the Tudor Text**

Is William Baldwin canonical? The fact that readers may not recognise his name probably indicates the answer. Yet, in recent years Baldwin has become the most celebrated author of the mid-Tudor period. His 1552 novel, *Beware the Cat*, is claimed as the first English novel; his collection of poems based on the Song of Songs is claimed as the first printed collection of lyric poetry in the language; and, moreover, he might have written the first English epistolary novel.<sup>7</sup> There are several reasons for Baldwin's formerly marginal position, C.S. Lewis' dismissal of the mid-Tudor period as the 'drab age' being not least among them.<sup>8</sup> Revisionary scholarship on the period has sought to redress this balance, particularly informed by book history and historical formalism. Both of these approaches are amenable to the formal experimentalism and topicality of Baldwin's writing.

More than critical taste, problems of authorship, this paper argues, have excluded Baldwin from the canonical limelight. The paper's focus is the role of anonymity, and distributed authorship in Baldwin's output. Several key works (including *Beware the Cat*, the *Image of Idleness* (1555), and the contested 'Westerne Wyll' poems (from 1552)) were published anonymously or pseudonymously. And the works his early modern readers made most popular - *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (from 1547), and *A Mirror For Magistrates* (from 1563) - inhabit modes of composite authorship through either

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<sup>7</sup> See William A. Ringler, Jr., and Michael Flachmann eds, *Beware the Cat: the First English Novel* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1988) and Michael Flachmann, 'The First English Epistolary Novel: *The Image of Idleness* (1555): Text, Introduction, and Notes', *Studies in Philology* 87.1 (1990), 3-74.

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 64.

piracy, collaboration, or continuation. If canons need named authors, Baldwin offers a complex case.

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### **Testing Canonicity with Historical Perspectives: A Comparative Study of Three “King John” Plays in Sixteenth-Century England**

Shakespeare’s *King John* largely dominated the images of the medieval tyrant at the end of the sixteenth century, while the two other plays written on the same historical figure have receded into oblivion ever since. In this paper, by a comparison of three “King John” plays in sixteenth-century England, namely Shakespeare’s *The Life and Death of King John*, George Peele’s *The Troublesome Reign of John, King of England*, and John Bale’s *King Johan*, I demonstrate that historical research adds a new dimension of evaluating the canonicity of literary texts.

I compare three critical dramatic moments -- killing Arthur, repelling Papacy, and the assassination of King John -- in historical contexts of both King John’s reign and each play’s literary creation. This comparative method not only facilitates formal analysis, but reveals each author’s historiography. The term canonicity loses its rigidity once each text is examined in its historical and cultural milieu, because historical knowledge endows a new layer of significance with each work. Those less-researched texts are similarly, if not more, formally complicated and aesthetically intriguing, than the canon in comparison. A work of Shakespeare is not automatically canonical.

Informed by larger corpora of historical connections, the reader can sympathize historically with literary moments while keeping a distance of artistic appreciation. See in this light, the seemingly polemicist agenda within a play is not restricting, but liberating -- it shows what is historically idiosyncratic is truly universal.

Canons are defined by OED as “a body of literary works *traditionally* regarded as *the most* important, significant, and worthy of study.” However, traditional canonicity is not unchallengeable. What is more important than defending timeless canons is to understand truly why they remain canonized, especially for pedagogic purposes, and historical perspectives enrich the standards of canonicity.



## **“And this gives life to thee”: Textual Reasons for Canonicity**

Recent debates on canonicity have focused on how canons are a product of social and historical conditions as well as of reception. Texts become canonical when they are felt to embody the spirit of an age or to voice concerns considered universal at a particular moment. But what about the texts themselves? Can any text become canonical in any way? Or are there any specific textual reasons for such an elevated status? This latter question is what our symposium wishes to address.

Textual strategies of self-authorization may well be one of those reasons. When Shakespeare ends his Sonnet 18 on the notion of its ongoing life – “So long as eyes can see and men can breathe / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee” – he anticipates that neither his (ironically unnamed) addressee nor his own work will ever be forgotten. This is one example of how a speaker – and, by implication, an author – may promote the canonicity of a text.

A second group of reasons may have to do with the choice of subject matter. Do texts just recycle well-known material or are they innovative? Is there a balance to be struck between repetition and innovation as a textual recipe for canonization? Subject matter also comes in with the ways in which texts make offers to identify their relevance. This may have to do with the way in which a text combines the particular and the general.

Furthermore, textual reasons of canonicity may be sought in formal, rhetorical, and aesthetic features of a work. What is the energy of a story, play, or poem that “keeps children from play and old men from the chimney corner” (Sidney) and therefore makes it likely that it will be considered meaningful beyond its own time and place? We invite contributions that address these and further dimensions and combine the detailed study of individual literary texts written in English with wider theoretical perspectives regarding the textual reasons of canonicity. They may include questions of methodology: how is it possible to arrive at such reasons by analyzing texts that have been assigned a canonical status? Do we need to compare texts, and/or does it make sense to work with larger corpora to come up with plausible results?

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