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Word and Image Clusters in Shakespeare

Barbara Sträuli

In the course of the fifth act of *Othello*, Iago stabs Roderigo with the words

O murd'rous slave! O villain!

Roderigo, dying, answers:

O damned Iago! O inhuman *dog*! (V.1.61–62)¹

Othello, about to commit suicide, camouflages his preparations by telling an anecdote:

And say besides that in Aleppo once
Where a malignant and a turbaned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by the *throat* the *circumcised dog*
and *smote* him – thus. (Stabs himself) (V.2.352–56)

And Cleopatra, finally, prevented in her attempt at suicide after Octavian's soldiers have taken her palace, has the following exchange with Proculeius:

Quick, quick, good hands! [Draws a dagger]
Proculeius: Hold, worthy lady, hold! [Disarms her]
Do not yourself such wrong, who are in this
Relieved, but not betrayed.
Cleopatra: What, of *death* too,
That rids our *dogs* of languish?
(*Antony and Cleopatra*, V.2.39–42)

In all three passages the setting for murder or suicide on stage produces the word *dog* in the text. What we have here is a Shakespearean image

¹ Quotations are from *The Complete Pelican Shakespeare*, ed. Alfred Harbage (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969); the italics are mine throughout.

cluster with the components 'violent death' – 'knife' – 'dog' as central images. A further example shows that the murder or suicide need not even be enacted on stage, but may simply be referred to in the text:

Shylock:

...
 You call me misbeliever, *cutthroat dog*,
 And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,
 And all for use of that which is mine own.
 Well then, it now appears you need my help.
 Go to then. You come to me and you say,
 'Shylock, we would have moneys' – you say so,
 You that did void your rheum upon my beard
 And foot me as you *spurn a stranger cur*
 Over your threshold! ...

(*The Merchant of Venice*, I.3.107–115)

Another passage, presumably written about a year before the *Merchant of Venice*, shows the cluster in a similar context. Its subject matter is again hatred of strangers:

You'll put down *strangers*,
 Kill them, *cut their throats*, possess their houses,
 And lead the majesty of law in lyam
 To slip him like a *hound*; alas, alas, say now the King,
 As he is clement if th'offender mourn,
 Should so much come too short of your great trespass
 As but to banish you, whither would you go?
 What country by the nature of your error
 Should give you harbor? Go you to France or Flanders,
 To any German province, Spain or Portigal,
 Nay, any where that not adheres to England,
 Why, you must needs be *strangers*; would you be pleas'd
 To find a nation of such barbarous temper
 That breaking out in hideous violence
 Would not afford you an abode on earth,
 Whet their detested *knives* against your *throats*,
Spurn you like *dogs*, and like as if that God
 Owed not nor made not you, nor that the elements
 Were not all appropriate to your comforts,
 But charter'd unto them? What would you think
 To be thus us'd? This is the *strangers'* case
 And this your [mountainish] inhumanity.

(*Sir Thomas More*, Addition II,120–140)²

² Cf. G. Blakemore Evans' edition of the Shakespearean additions to the play in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974), pp. 1693–94.

The associated words 'stranger', 'cut', 'throat', 'dog/hound/cur', which are common to both texts, not only support the assumption that the above passage is really by Shakespeare, but also that it was written in the early or mid-nineties, around the time when the *Merchant* was produced, and not, as some critics have maintained, after 1600.³

Further research reveals that the death-dog cluster is not only linked to the element of knifing or stabbing but also to the equally violent death by hanging. The connecting word seems to be *throat*, the part of the body that is affected in both cases (cf. *cut-throat*):

Pistol [who is trying to save Bardolph's life]:
 Fortune is Bardolph's foe, and frowns on him;
 For he hath stol'n a pax, and *hanged* must 'a be
 A damnèd *death*!
 Let *gallows* gape for *dog*; let man go free,
 And let not hemp his *windpipe* *suffocate*.
 (Henry V, III.5.38–42)

Pistol is referring to the fact that it was still customary in the sixteenth century to punish animals for crimes (e. g. dogs for sheep-biting).⁴ The following passage from the *Merchant* is quite explicit:

Gratiano: [to Shylock]
 O be thou damned, inexecrable *dog*,
 ...
 Thy currish spirit
 Governed a wolf who, *hanged* for human slaughter,
 Even from the *gallows* did his fell soul fleet, ...
 (*The Merchant of Venice*, IV.1.128,133–35)

There remains little doubt now that in the following well-known lines spoken by *Lear*, the use of the word *dog* is not accidental but induced by association:

And my poor fool is *hanged*: no, no, no life?
 Why should a *dog*, a horse, a rat have life,
 And thou no breath at all?
 (*King Lear*, V.3.306–308)

As hunting to the dogs was one of the more important Elizabethan pastimes and a popular source for metaphors in Elizabethan love lyrics,

³ The different propositions that have been made concerning the date of the play are discussed by G. Blakemore Evans in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, p. 1684. *Sir Thomas More* is generally dated 1594–95, *The Merchant of Venice* 1596–97.

⁴ Cf. John Russell Brown's introduction to the New Arden edition of *The Merchant of Venice*, p. xxxiii.

it is quite natural that dogs in the Shakespearean text should occasionally be accompanied by the word *hart*:

Orsino:

That instant was I turned into a *hart*,
And my desires, like fell and cruel *hounds*,
E'er since pursue me.

(*Twelfth Night*, I.1.22–24)

In associative thinking, the sound of a word may be more influential than its content. Thus, in the succeeding passage, *hart* is replaced by its homonym:

Cassio:

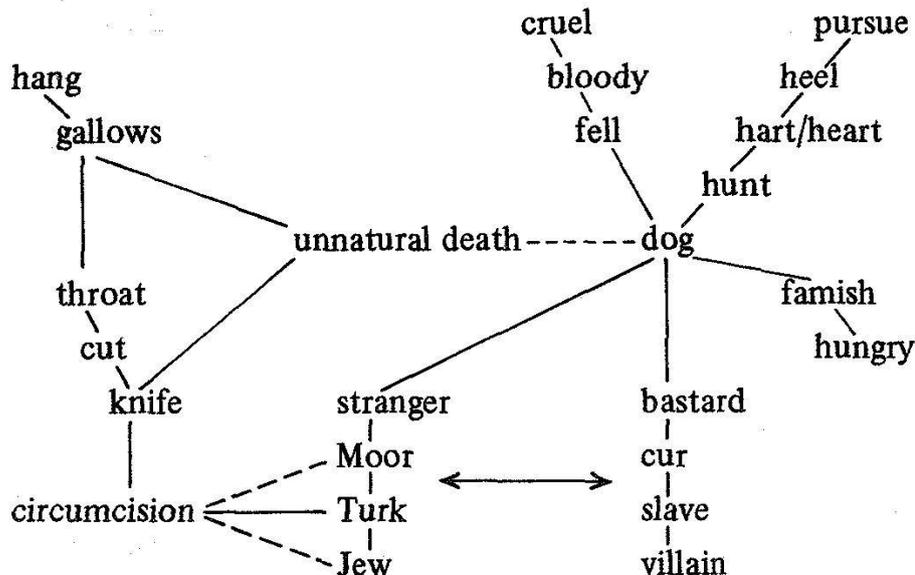
This [i. e. Othello's suicide] did I fear,
but thought he had no weapon;
For he was great of *heart*.

Lodovico [to Iago]: O Spartan *dog*,
More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea!

(*Othello*, V.2.360–62)

However conscious Shakespeare may have been in other places of this well-worn pun, he certainly did not use it intentionally here, while in the throes of composing the complex finale of *Othello*.

The dog-death cluster has not, to my knowledge, been described before. It occurs at least sixteen times,⁵ allowing us to draw a tentative model of the associative field connected with the central elements *dog* and *death* in Shakespeare's memory:



⁵ *Tit.A.* II.3.281, V.3.14; *Rich.III* IV.1.39, V.5.2; *Merch.V.* I.3.111, IV.1.128–138; *Sir Thomas More*, addition II, 119–140; *Hen.V.* ProL. 5–8, III.6.38–42; *Twel.N.* I.1.22–24 *Oth.* V.1.61–62, V.2.351–356, V.2.360–62; *Lear* V.3.306–08; *Anth.and Cl.* V.2.39–42; *Timon* II.2.80–85.

The same material arranged according to plays yields the following table:

Play	death (on stage or mentioned in the text)	dog	knife (on stage or mentioned in the text)	gallows	hunt	presence of, or reference to per- son of base be- haviour or origin
<i>Tit. A.</i> , II.3	murder	whelps	dagger			Tamora's sons
<i>Rich. III</i> , IV.1	death	curs				
<i>More</i> (Add. II)	-	dogs	cut	throat	heels	Richard III foreigners
<i>Merch. V.</i> , I.3	-	hound	knives	throats	slip	
<i>Merch. V.</i> , IV.1	murder	dogs	cut	throat		Jew
		dog	slaughter	hanged		Jew
		dog		gallows		Jew
<i>Henry V</i> , III.6	hanging	currish				
		wolf				thief
		dog		hanged		
<i>Twel. N.</i> , I.1	love/death	hounds		gallows	hart	
					pursue	
<i>Oth.</i> , V.1	murder	dog	dagger			Iago
<i>Oth.</i> , V.2	suicide	dog	circumcised	throat		Turk
			dagger			
<i>Oth.</i> , V.2	suicide	dog	dagger		Spartan	Iago
			dagger		dog	
<i>Lear</i> , V.3	suicide	dog				
<i>A. and Cl.</i> , V.2	suicide	dog	dagger	hanging		'my poor fool'
<i>Timon</i> , II.2	death	whelped				
		dog		hanged		servant

Whenever the cluster appears, two conditions are fulfilled:

a) Someone is killed on stage, or death is mentioned by one of the characters.

b) Someone is abused, a person of low or discriminated origin (servant, foreigner, Turk, Jew, thief, villain) is present on stage or mentioned by one of the characters.

A convincing explanation for the associative connection between the words *dog* and *knife* cannot be produced. Quite possibly, it has its origins in a personal experience of the dramatist. The presence of persons of low rank, their abuse, their bad reputation or scape-goat functions, on the other hand, can be related to the double meaning of the word *dog*, which is frequently used by Shakespeare as an epithet for baseness or a term of abuse.

The first to discover that certain words and images in Shakespeare's works are frequently connected beyond the 'natural' (as he called it) level of syntax, was Walter Whiter. Convinced that he had made a significant discovery, he published an essay (in 1794) with the title

An Attempt to explain and illustrate various passages of Shakespeare on a New Principle of Criticism, derived from Mr. Locke's doctrine of the Association of Ideas.⁶

However, those of his contemporaries who did react were less than enthusiastic.⁷ The phenomenon of associated words in Shakespeare was described a second time in 1923, by E. E. Kellett, who obviously had not read Whiter's essay, and who did not pursue the idea beyond the publication of his one article.⁸ After the Second World War, the British ornithologist E. A. Armstrong took the matter up again, and this time it received thorough treatment.⁹ Unlike his predecessors, Armstrong was armed with concordances and, by that time, considerably advanced knowledge in the field of memory processes. He succeeded in isolating large groups of associated images or word-chains in the text, and in demonstrating the re-occurrence of individual clusters in the Shakespearean plays over a time-span of up to twenty years. In nume-

⁶ In: *A Specimen of a Commentary on Shakespeare. Being the text of the first (1794) edition revised by the author and never previously published*, ed. Alan Over, completed by Mary Bell (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 59–207.

⁷ Cf. the introduction to Whiter's *Specimen* by Mary Bell, pp. xxix–xxxix.

⁸ E. E. Kellett, "Notes on a Feature of Shakespeare's Style," in *Suggestions. Literary Essays*. (1923; rpt. London: R. West, 1979), pp. 57–78.

⁹ E. A. Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination. A Study of the Psychology of Association and Inspiration* (London, 1946; rpt. with revisions Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1963).

rous cases, he furnished explanations for apparently random associations.¹⁰

The reaction to Armstrong's book was reserved. He was taxed with showing rather more interest in the workings of the mind than in the qualities of the Shakespearean text, but in the fifties, such criticism may still have been infused by a latent fear that a method as dangerously near psychoanalysis as Armstrong's might unearth something of Shakespeare's dirty mind. One point, however, which had already been discussed by Whiter, could not be ignored: image clusters can be used as supportive evidence in the ascription of doubtful passages. Thus, with convincing argumentation based exclusively on the play's image clusters, Karl Wentersdorf was able to refute the hypothesis that *The Taming of the Shrew* had been written in collaboration.¹¹ Another method of putting clusters to practical use was developed by Ernst Leisi, who restored several corrupt passages by means of word collocations, using the new knowledge of Shakespeare's associative habits in the procedure. This method invalidates the older emendation practice, which consisted in choosing words with the appropriate number of syllables and a content that was in keeping with the general trend of the passage concerned. Leisi rightly maintains that a word is likely to be the original expression if it is 'cluster-prone', i. e. if it is found elsewhere in Shakespeare, in a similar collocation with the surrounding words of the crux.¹²

The fact that association processes can be observed with such clarity in a great author's literary output has far-reaching implications. It seems that we are given insight into areas of the creative process that are gener-

¹⁰ Thus Armstrong found an explanation for the frequent alliance of birds of prey, especially the kite, with bed vocabulary such as *sheets*, *linen* etc. The kites, which circled in large numbers over the city of London, living on offal, had the habit of padding their nests with little pieces of linen hung out to dry. The key to this association is, among others, Autolycus' line "My traffic is sheets, when the kite builds, look to lesser linen". (*Wint.T.* IV.3.23-24).

¹¹ Karl Wentersdorf, "The Authenticity of *The Taming of the Shrew*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, V (1964), 11-32, and "Imagery as a Criterion of Authenticity: A Reconsideration of the Problem," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XXIII (1972), 231-259.

¹² Ernst Leisi, "A Possible Emendation of Shakespeare's Sonnet 146," *English Studies*, 47 (1966), 271-285; "Die Töchter von Harfleur: Zu einer Emendation in *Henry V* III.3.35," in: *Festschrift für E. Mertner* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968), 169-171; "Some New Readings in *As You Like It*," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch 1969*, 143-151 (together with Christine Trautvetter); "'Now entertain conjecture of a time'. Sprachliche Probleme in *Henry V*, Chorus IV," in: *Festschrift Rudolf Stamm* (Bern/München: Francke Verlag, 1969), 117-124.

ally hidden from view, and that the discoveries to be made here may also be pertinent to the workings of other writers and to other art forms.¹³ Research will consequently have to be extended to the question of artistic creation and thinking processes, besides investigating what the clusters tell us about how Shakespeare functioned as a writer. How much can be gleaned about Shakespeare's biography is, perhaps, of secondary importance here.

I should like to address myself to the following questions: How many more clusters are there besides those discovered by Armstrong? How many of those are of literary origin and what are their sources? Which collocations or parts of clusters are general knowledge and may also be found in the classical authors or in the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries?¹⁴ Since the scope of this article does not permit a comprehensive treatment of the problem, I shall try to shed more light on it by discussing one cluster not yet described by Armstrong. A brief elucidation of the laws of association ruling the formation of a cluster will be helpful here.

The features of an image cluster

For Armstrong the image cluster is defined

as a group of unconsciously associated words (or pictures) which has accumulated in the writer's mind and which may be called up by reference to any of its component units.¹⁵

Whiter speaks of

words and ideas which have been suggested to the mind by a principle of union unperceived by himself [i. e. the poet], and independent of the subject to which they are applied.¹⁶

¹³ Very revealing in this context is H.-G. Clouzot's documentary film *Le mystère Picasso* (1956). In it, the painter is seen to produce a series of pictures within a very short time-span, using a limited number of motifs in an apparently unlimited number of variations. The conditions for this style of production are obviously a thorough mastery of the craft as well as a large catalogue of motifs stored in the artist's memory. These motifs he produces at will, without paying special attention to them, while his conscious effort is directed towards the problem of the composition as a whole.

¹⁴ Cf. also the programme for future imagery and cluster research outlined by Kenneth Muir in "Shakespeare's Imagery – Then and Now," *Sb. Survey* 18 (1965), p. 55.

¹⁵ Walter Whiter, *Specimen*, p. lx.

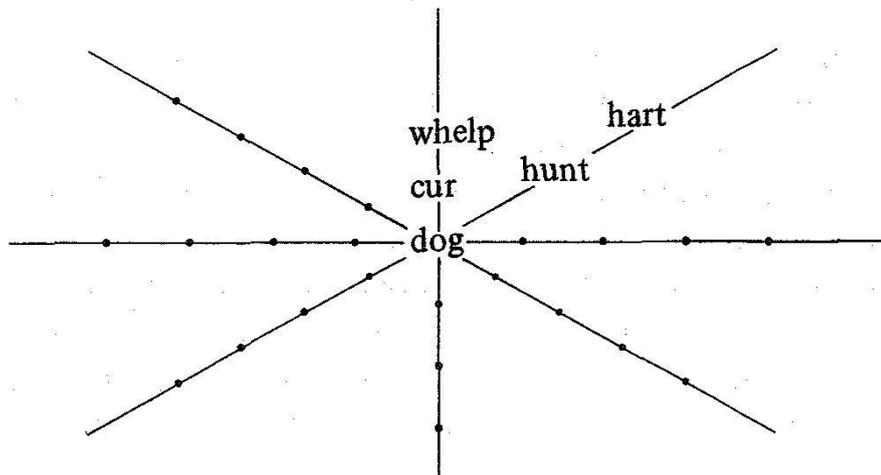
¹⁶ Walter Whiter, *Specimen*, pp. 62–63.

As opposed to the single associative link or collocation the cluster consists of a larger group of words or images which occurs several times (in fact, up to 20 times) in Shakespeare's plays and poems. The arrangement of the words in such a cluster could be pictured as a net or three-dimensional structure in which each word or image represents a node connected to several others by association. These associative links occur neither in fixed numbers nor in definite order. The description de Saussure gave of the paradigmatic relations in language can easily be extended to the associative field constituted by an image cluster:

A particular word is like the center of a constellation; it is the point of convergence of an indefinite number of coordinated terms.¹⁷

Thus, the net of associations in the text is a continuum without beginning or end, and the isolation and description of a cluster is, in fact, arbitrary. This does not quite coincide with the findings of Armstrong and Wentersdorf, who propose a hierarchic order of the cluster images, with some strong key images at the centre attracting weaker, subordinate images.¹⁸ However, de Saussure speaks of all the potential associations a word may have whereas Armstrong describes the actual realization, where some images are more emotionally 'loaded' or richer in accompanying elements than others, because of their content.

In a modification of de Saussure's model of the associative family (as he called the paradigmatic relations)¹⁹, cluster associations could be represented as follows:

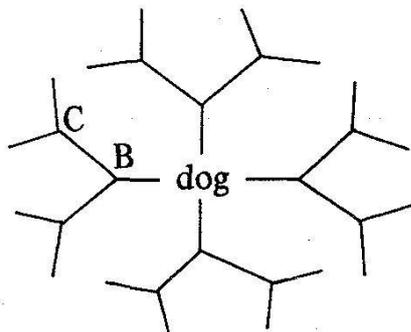


¹⁷ F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 126.

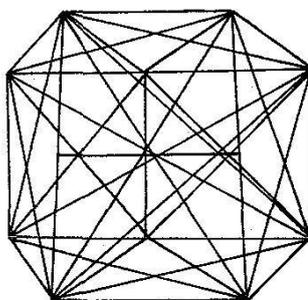
¹⁸ Karl Wentersdorf, "Imagery as a Criterion of Authenticity: A Reconsideration of the Problem," p. 241.

¹⁹ F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 126.

However, this model is not quite adequate, since each word may be linked to more than just one other word, as shown below:



And finally, if we take into account that the words of the C-generation may be linked to both A and B generation words, we arrive at the following diagram to illustrate the connections in a cluster.



Types of association

The starting point in our description of the associative process is de Saussure's division of the word into visual form or sound on the one hand, and content on the other.

Because of this dual nature of words, there are three possible types of association:

- 1) The association of the whole word, which speaks for itself.
- 2) The association of the content alone. The word 'tiger', for instance, is frequently, though not exclusively, associated with *hunger*, but it also occurs with several other expressions from the same semantic field:

<i>Play</i>	<i>key image</i>	<i>associated element 1</i>	<i>associated element 2</i>
<i>Tit. A.</i>	tiger	ravenous	(Lavinia enters)
<i>Son. 19</i>	"	devouring	---
<i>King J.</i>	"	fasting	woman
<i>Rom. & J.</i>	"	empty	lady
<i>3 Hen. VI</i>	"	hungry	queen
etc.			

We can imagine the cluster as a batch of empty association slots ('hunger' being one in our example, 'woman of high standing' another) which can at each materialization of the cluster be filled with any word from the field concerned. It is this mobility on the selection axis which makes the recognition of clusters difficult, and a collection of cluster data by means of a computer almost impossible. The associative chain *tiger-queen-face* (*3 Henry VI*), for instance, contains the same cluster elements as *Hyrceanian beast-complexion-Hecuba* (*Hamlet*), only the tokens differ.

3) The association of the *form* (visual or sound) alone. Here, the meaning is ignored by the writer, only the visual or acoustic form of the word is associated. The word *tear*, e. g., is very frequent in the tiger cluster, it occurs for the first time in *3 Henry VI*:

But you are more inhuman, more inexorable –
O, ten times more! – than *tigers of Hyrcania*.
See, ruthless queen, a hapless father's *tears*. (I.4.154–56)

In *The Rape of Lucrece*, it is the homonym that appears in a similar context. Lucrece is cursing Tarquin:

Stone him with hard'ned hearts harder than stones,
And let mild women to him lose their mildness,
Wilder to him than *tigers* in their wildness.
Let him have time to *tear* his curled hair,
Let him have time against himself to rave... (978–82)

4) There is a fourth type of association as well. Not only a word in the text, but also an object on stage can belong to the cluster. We have already established that a dagger on stage sometimes draws the word *dog* in its wake. Another example is the figure of the warrior covered in blood, who seems to be part of the tiger-cluster. In *Macbeth*, the appearance of Banquo's ghost at the king's banquet soon brings the word *tiger* to Macbeth's lips:

What man dare, I dare.
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The armed rhinoceros, or th'*Hyrcean tiger*;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble. (III.4.99–103)

The black box

The image cluster is composed partly of associations that are general knowledge – in the case of the tiger words like 'claws' and 'teeth' or

literary commonplaces such as 'swift' and 'fierce'. But there are also those whose origin cannot be detected unless luck comes to our aid. They may stem from an author's personal experience (as the bed-kite cluster does), in which case their unveiling is purely accidental; or they may be of literary origin, which means that a source can be found. Caroline Spurgeon and E. A. Armstrong were perhaps somewhat led astray by the idea that Shakespeare's image clusters had their sources primarily in his biography or in Elizabethan everyday life. Our improved knowledge of the rhetorical tradition and the grammar-school system of the period now leads us to the assumption that literary influences were far more significant than was held possible in the thirties and forties. Unfortunately, we lack the Elizabethans' knowledge of the ancient authors that would enable us to retrieve immediately the associative links stored in the black box of the author's memory; more often than not they remain a puzzle. What connects the dog and the knife, the tiger and the queen, the ship and the idea of rivalry?

There are two different procedures which, combined, guarantee a certain amount of success:

A thorough survey of all the passages containing a certain cluster very often brings to light the key to its main association – generally it is to be found in the early plays. If a cluster element is suspected to be of literary, i. e. classical origin, it usually pays to check it carefully in the concordances of the more important Latin authors such as Virgil, Ovid and Seneca. However, if the expression chosen is neither rare nor conspicuous, the search will be extremely time-consuming.

Triggering off the cluster

Armstrong describes the cluster as being tied to memory and emotion. Feelings like repulsion, fear or pleasure arising during the act of writing, whether they are the emotions of the author or those expressed by his characters, are often accompanied by a specific image cluster. Thus, the goose-cluster is linked to feelings of revulsion, the dog-candy-cluster to disgust at abject servility, and the contemplation of murder or suicide may, as we have seen, produce the dog-knife cluster.

According to Armstrong, either the emotion present in the mind of the author or the chance appearance of a cluster word will suffice to trigger off the whole cluster concerned. I should like to take the problem a step further. A closer look reveals that it is neither a single word nor an isolated emotion that makes a cluster appear, but rather a whole complex

of conditions on stage and in the text. Thus, although the cluster is organized sequentially in time (when spoken) or space (when written), we have to assume the simultaneous presence of associated words, emotions and images. Underlying the cluster is a remembered *situation*, the ghost-like reenactment of a recurrent scene by faceless protagonists. Special attention shall be paid to this phenomenon in the following chapter.

The tiger-cluster

The tiger is, to my knowledge, one of the few animals which has not yet been treated in cluster-research. Its cluster can be traced through sixteen plays, the two longer poems and the sonnets, appearing for the first time in *3 Henry VI* and for the last, in a somewhat weakened state, but still recognizable, in *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (V.1, a scene firmly attributed to Shakespeare).²⁰ Regrettably, the lack of space does not allow for the presentation of the full textual evidence or for a portrayal of the individual cluster elements. The cluster's most important associative links are: the tiger, a reference to a child-parent relationship (i. e. mother, father, son, daughter, child), a reference to a wild animal or monster (lion, bear, wolf, but also phoenix, dragon, leviathan), a reference to a noblewoman (queen, lady), the words *eyes, tears, weep, wind, blow, stone, marble, hard, pity*, and many others. The three passages quoted below, composed by Shakespeare over an extended period of time, shall serve as introductory examples:

3 Henry VI,

York:

Thou art as opposite to every good

As the Antipodes are unto us

Or as the South to the Septentrion.

O *tiger's* heart wrapped in a *woman's* hide!

How couldst thou drain the lifeblood of the *child*,

To bid the *father* wipe his *eyes* withal,

And yet be seen to bear a *woman's* face?

Women are soft, mild, *pitiful* and flexible;

Thou stern, obdurate, *flinty*, rough, remorseless.

²⁰ Spevack lists 31 instances of the word *tiger* in his concordance. Only three of those are not accompanied by any of the associated elements that constitute this large cluster. They are: *Com. Err.* III.1.95, *Tr. and Cr.* I.3.49 and *TNK* IV.2.131, the latter belonging to a part of the play generally ascribed to Fletcher.

Bid'st thou me rage? Why, now thou hast thy wish,
 Wouldst have me *weep*? Why now thou hast thy will.
 For raging *wind blows* up incessant showers,
 And when the rage allays the rain begins.
 These *tears* are my sweet Rutland's obsequies,
 And every *drop* cries vengeance for his death...

...
 That *face* of his the *hungry* cannibals
 Would not have touched, would not have stained with blood;
 But you are more inhuman, more inexorable –
 O, ten times more! – than *tigers of Hyrcania*.
 See, ruthless *queen*, a hapless *father's tears*.

(I.4.134–148, 152–56)

The Rape of Lucrece

'To show the *beldame daughters* of her daughter,
 To make the *child* a man, the man a child,
 To slay the *tiger* that doth live by slaughter,
 To *tame* the *unicorn* and *lion wild*,
 To mock the subtle in themselves beguiled,
 To cheer the ploughman with increaseful crops
 And *waste* huge *stones* with little *water-drops*.

...
 'Disturb his hours of rest with restless trances;
 Afflict him in his bed with bedrid groans;
 Let there bechance him *pitiful* mischances
 To make him moan, but *pity* not his moans.
 Stone him with *hard'ned* hearts *harder* than *stones*,
 And let *mild women* to him lose their *mildness*,
Wilder to him than *tigers* in their *wildness*.

'Let him have time to *tear* his curled hair,
 Let him have time against himself to rave,...

(953–59, 974–82)

King Lear, IV.2.29–53

Albany: O *Goneril*,
 You are not worth the dust which the rude *wind*
Blows in your *face*. I fear your disposition:
 That nature which contemns its origin
 Cannot be bordered certain in itself.
 She that herself will sliver and disbranch
 From her material sap, perforce must wither
 And come to deadly use.

Goneril:
 No more; the text is foolish.

Albany:

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;
 Filths savor but themselves. What have you done?
Tigers not *daughters*, what have you performed?
 A *father*, and a gracious aged man,
 Whose reverence even the head-lugged *bear* would lick,
 Most *barbarous*, mosts *degenerate*, have you madded.
 Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
 A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
 If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
 Send quickly down to *tame* these vile offenses,
 It will come,
 Humanity must perforce *prey* on itself,
 Like *monsters* of the *deep*.
Goneril: *Milk-livered* man,
 That bear'st a cheek for *blows*, a head for wrongs;
 Who hast not in thy *brows* an eye discerning
 Thine honour from thy suffering;...

(IV.2.29–53; the Pelican text here follows Q₁. In F₁ lines 30–50 are missing).

In all three passages, a lady or queen is speaking or addressed on the subject of pity, there is talk of a child-parent relationship and of monsters, and the words *hard*, *mild*, *tears*, *blow*, *face* occur in various combinations, but we are given no explanation for this strange assembly of elements.

The clue to the cluster's origin is provided by the word *Hyrkania* (3 *Henry VI*), which, like 'Tartar', 'Phrygian', 'Scythian' and all the other exotic ethnica so popular among early Elizabethan dramatists, must have been borrowed from classical literature. The concordance to Virgil furnishes us with the source text: Shakespeare's tiger-cluster is the reworking of a well-known passage from the fourth book of the *Aeneid*. Aeneas has just told Dido that he is forced to leave her, obeying the gods who have ordered him to set sail for Italy. Dido's response is bitter:

"nec tibi diva parens, generis nec Dardanus *auctor*,
 perfide, sed *duris genuit te cautibus* horrens
Caucasus, Hyrcanaeque admorunt *ubera tigres*.
 nam quid dissimulo aut quae me ad maiora reservo?
 num *fletu ingemuit* nostro? num *lumina* flexit?
 num *lacrimas* victus dedit aut *miseratus* amantem est?

[False one! no goddess was thy mother nor was Dardanus founder of thy line, but rugged Caucasus on his flinty rocks begat thee, and Hyrcanian tigresses gave thee

suck. For why hide my feelings? Or for what greater wrongs do I hold me back? Did he sigh while I wept? Did he turn on me a glance! Did he yield and shed tears or pity her who loved him?]²¹

The cluster elements 'mother', 'father', 'hard', 'rock', 'weep', 'tears', 'pity' are all there, as well as the queen (who does not appear in the text, but is the person speaking).

The fourth book of the *Aeneid* is probably the one translated most frequently in Latin classes, be it in the 16th or the 20th century. After Chaucer had used the material in his *Legend of Dido*, the story gained special importance in England and became detached from the Virgilian epic. Chaucer was greatly influenced by Ovid, who, in his *Heroides*, presents the events through the eyes of the unhappy queen, his main interest lying in the artistically successful description of her extreme emotional state.²² Ovid's influence can be measured by the fact that in Elizabethan grammar schools Dido's lament was one of the textbook examples. The pupils were asked to create free speeches in the imagined persona of a famous figure from ancient literature.²³ The baroque content of Virgil's lines could not have been better suited to the taste prevailing in the drama of the early nineties. 'How that beast, the tiger,' Harry Levin writes in *The Question of Hamlet*, 'goes ramping through Elizabethan drama, as the proverbial embodiment of hardness of heart, a glance at any concordance will show.'²⁴ Two passages from non-Shakespearean plays may serve to illustrate this remark. One is from Marlowe's *Dido, Queene of Carthage*, the other from the anonymous atrocity play *Selimus*. They were, incidentally, printed in the same year (1594) as *3 Henry VI*, Shakespeare's first play which contained the tiger cluster.

²¹ Virgil, *Aeneid*, IV. 365–370; trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1934).

²² Cf. Rudolf Sühnel, "Vergil in England," in: *Festschrift für Walter Hübner*, ed. Dieter Riesner and Helmut Gneuss (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1963), pp. 123–24.

²³ "One of the schoolroom exercises familiar to the Elizabethan school-child (and based on antique school exercises) was the imaginary speech: the histrionic monologue in the imagined persona of a famous figure from ancient literature. The textbook example of such a speech was Dido's lament for the departed Aeneas; second to this came Hecuba's outpouring of grief for the fallen Priam. Both are based on episodes from the *Aeneid* and both are familiar reference points in Elizabethan literature to invoke intense and majestic female suffering." Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters. Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*. (London: The Harvester Press, 1983), p. 192.

²⁴ Harry Levin, *The Question of Hamlet* (1959; Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 149.

Dido:

And wilt thou not be mov'd with Dido's words?
Thy mother was no Goddess perjur'd man,
Nor Dardanus the author of thy stocke:
But thou art sprung from Scythian Caucasus,
And Tygers of Hircania gave thee sucke:
Ah foolish Dido did forbear this long!

(*Dido, Queene of Carthage*, V.1.155–60)²⁵

Zonara:

Thou art not false groome son to Baiazet,
He would relent to heare a woman weepe,
But thou wast born in desert Caucasus,
And the Hircanian tygres gave thee sucke,
Knowing thou wert a monster like themselves.

Acomat:

Let you her thus to rate us? Strangle her.
(They strangle her)

(*Selimus*, 1234–1239)²⁶

Marlowe and the anonymous author of *Selimus* quote the passage practically verbatim, while Shakespeare breaks up its syntax, reduces its vocabulary to significant elements and rearranges the whole in various combinations. In addition, he not only remembers the Virgilian key words, but the circumstances accompanying them as well. In his 'adaptation' the situation 'wronged queen complaining' is no longer tied to the original character involved, but split up into the smaller situational elements 'presence of queen', 'wrong committed' and 'accusation raised against someone'. These situational elements assume, in the three texts quoted, the nature of slots that can be filled ad libitum. Thus York accusing queen Margaret of having killed his son, Albany accusing Goneril of treating her father badly and Lucrece lamenting the rape committed by Tarquin are all instances of the same. In each case the conditions of 'queen/lady present', 'wrong committed' and 'accusation being raised against someone' are fulfilled and the cluster appears.

An inventory of the instances when the tiger-cluster emerges in Shakespeare's works reveals that the visualizations or situational 'stills' underlying the cluster are not limited to that of the wronged queen. Especially in the later plays, the cluster is often accompanied by the

²⁵ Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe; *Dido, Queene of Carthage*. in Vol. I of *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Ed. Fredson Bowers, Cambridge University Press 1971).

²⁶ *The Tragical Reign of Selimus* (1594). Ed. W. Bang (The Malone Society Reprints, 1908, rpt. Oxford University Press, 1964).

description or appearance on stage of a warrior-figure steeped in blood and sometimes endowed with almost ghostly or robot-like features. In addition, there is frequently talk of the siege, fall or burning of a city.

Let me list a few examples:

1) Henry V encourages his soldiers in a fierce harangue to storm the walls of the besieged city of Harfleur. In peace, he says, 'modest stillness and humility' becomes a man

But when the blast of war *blows* in our ears,
 Then imitate the action of the *tiger*:
 Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
 Disguise fair nature with *hard-favoured* rage;
 Then lend the *eye* a terrible aspect;
 Let it pry through the portage of the head
 Like the brass cannon; let the *brow* o'erwhelm it
 As fearfully as doth the galled *rock*
 O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
 Swilled with the *wild* and *wasteful ocean*.
 Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
 Hold *hard* the breath and bend up every spirit
 To his full height! On, on, you noble English,
 Whose blood is fet from *fathers* of war-proof,
Fathers that like so many Alexanders
 Have in these parts from morn till even fought...

(*Henry V*, III.1.5–20)

The cluster here is inscribed into a text in which man is seen to transform himself into a war-engine of curious rigidity, half beast, half weapon. Significantly, it emerges at the moment when Henry's soldiers are about to break into a city.

2) As has already been mentioned, the appearance of Banquo's ghost in the banquet scene in *Macbeth* evokes the tiger cluster:

Macbeth:
 What man dare, I dare.
 Approach thou like the rugged Russian *bear*,
 The armed *rhinoceros*, or th' Hyrcan *tiger*;
 Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
 Shall never tremble. Or be alive again
 And dare me to the *desert* with thy sword.
 If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
 The *baby* of a girl....

(*Macbeth*, III.4.99–106)

Here, too, we are dealing with the intrusion of a soldier figure into a round, as the ghost is sitting down among the guests seated around the table. Banquo is covered in blood (l.50) and would, on stage, show certain dehumanized features that mark him as no longer living.

3) Menenius has failed in his mission, which was to persuade Coriolanus not to attack the city of Rome. The fall of the city seems imminent. Menenius describes how he found Coriolanus:

This Marcius is grown from man to dragon. He has wings;
he's more than a creeping thing.

Sicinius: He loved his *mother* dearly.

Menenius: So did he me; and he no more remembers his *mother* now than an eight year old horse. The tartness of his *face* sours ripe grapes. When he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He is able to pierce a corslet with his *eye*; talks like a knell and his hum is a battery. He sits in his state, as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne in.

Sicinius: Yes, *mercy*, if you report him truly.

Menenius: I paint him in the character. Mark what *mercy* his *mother* shall bring from him. There is no more *mercy* in him than there is *milk* in a male *tiger*.

(*Coriolanus*, V.4.12–28)

4) The key passage explaining the presence of the warrior in the tiger-cluster is one of the intertextually more complex passages in Shakespeare: it is the player's speech in *Hamlet*. Hamlet is searching his memory for the speech he 'chiefly loved':

'Twas *Aeneas*' tale to *Dido* and thereabouts of it especially
where he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it lives in
your memory, begin at this line – let me see, let me
see:

'The rugged Pyrrhus like th'*Hyrceanian beast*',...

(II.2.434–37)

No doubt, the Hyrcanian beast occurred to the writer after Dido had been mentioned. The fact that, according to Hamlet, the line is the wrong opening in no way prevents the cluster from unfolding in the sequel:

'Tis not so; it begins with Pyrrhus:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couchèd in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black *complexion* smeared
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot
Now is he total gules, horridly tricked
With blood of *fathers, mothers, daughters, sons*,
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and a damnèd light

To their lords's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,
 And thus o'ersizèd with coagulate gore,
 With *eyes* like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
 Old grandsire Priam seeks.'
 So, proceed you.

Player

'Anon he finds him,
 Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,
 Rebellious to his arms, lies where it falls,
 Repugnant to command. Unequal matched,
 Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide,
 But with the whiff and *wind* of his fell sword
 Th'unnervèd *father* falls. Then senseless Ilium,
 Seeming to feel this *blow*, with flaming top
 Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo! his sword,
 Which was declining on the *milky* head
 Of reverend Priam, seemed i'th'air to stick.
 So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood,
 And like a neutral to his will and matter
 Did nothing.

But as we often see, against some storm,
 A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
 The bold *winds* speechless, and the orb below
 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
 Doth rend the region, so after Pyrrhus'pause,
 Arousèd vengeance sets him new a work,
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
 On Mars' armor, forged for proof eterne,
 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
 Now falls on Priam.

Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,
 In general synod take away her power,
 Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
 And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
 As low as to the fiends.'

Polonius This is too long.

Hamlet It shall to the barber's, with your beard. –
 Prithee say on. He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he
 sleeps. Say on; come to *Hecuba*.

Player

'But who (ah woe!) had seen the mobled *queen* –'

(*Hamlet*, II.2.439–490)

The full chain of associations runs from Aeneas to Dido and the tiger, from there to the burning of Troy and the death of Priam through the hands of the ghastly warrior Pyrrhus. The logic behind this ordering of events in Shakespeare's memory is that it corresponds more or less to the organization of the first four books of the *Aeneid*.

Arrival in Carthage. Aeneas meets Dido	Aeneas' tale: the destruction of Troy	Aeneas' tale: his wanderings	Dido's love Tiger-passage A. leaves by ship Dido's death
Bk. I	Bk. II	Bk. III	Bk. IV

The story opens with the landing of Aeneas' ships in Carthage. Its sequel is, in imitation of the Homeric *hysteron-proteron*, a flash-back: Aeneas tells Dido of the events accompanying the destruction of Troy. We can assume that Virgil's tale was present in the minds of Shakespeare's more educated contemporaries and that it was reproduced in a variety of texts, shorter versions and as exercise pieces. Shakespeare himself tells us, in the most abbreviated form of the story imaginable, how its elements were placed in his memory.

Speak, Rome's dear friend, as erst our ancestor,
When with his solemn tongue he did discourse
To lovesick Dido's sad-attending ear
The story of that baleful burning night
When subtle Greeks surprised King Priam's Troy.
(*Titus Andronicus*, V.3.80-84)

The same order can also be found in other passages. Pieces of rhetorical lament or the mention of a tiger sometimes evoke the burning city in the writer's mind. Lucrece, who, after being raped, bitterly laments her fate, twice mentions the tiger in connection with Tarquin's pitilessness, only to turn her attention in the end to a tapestry depicting the taking of Troy by treason. 'Rome is a wilderness of tigers,' cries out Titus Andronicus. When, immediately afterwards, his raped and mutilated daughter Lavinia enters, he refuses to lament (which means, in terms of cluster-thinking, that the idea of lament has been expressed) and continues thus:

Speak, Lavinia, what accursed hand
Hath made thee handless in thy father's sight?
What fool hath added water to the sea
Or brought a fagot to *bright burning Troy*?
(III.1.66-69)

In as late a play as *Coriolanus*, the city and the tiger are still mentioned together. Menenius opposes the tribunes who want to put Coriolanus to death because killing him would mean for all 'a brand to th'end of the world' (III.1.303). When the tribunes insist, Menenius says that they are driven by *tiger-footed rage*.

The identification of Dido with Hecuba in the memory of the dramatist is probably responsible for the tenacious link between the tiger and the fall of Troy. At the same time, certain of the original circumstances accompanying the passage in the Virgilian text are suppressed. Aeneas' disreputable behaviour, the fact that he leaves Dido, has never formed part of the cluster.

Thus, it can be said that the tiger-cluster is attached not only to the circumstances of its source text (i. e. Dido lamenting) but also to an array of situational elements from the first four books of the *Aeneid*. Like the individual words of the cluster, these elements give the impression of being involved in a game of musical chairs, as their number varies each time the cluster appears.

The mechanics of fantasy

Obviously, Shakespeare commands a vast multitude of associations on the preconscious level, which are activated as soon as the corresponding memories, emotions and situations come into play. As if by magnetic attraction, the cluster elements rise to the surface and arrange themselves into patterns dictated by the surrounding text. This phenomenon has much in common with the mechanics of dreaming or day-dreaming. Had Armstrong's attitude towards Freud been less defensive, he might have developed a more comprehensive model of the organization of clusters. Unfortunately, he firmly believed that Freud's concerns were strictly pathological and not applicable to the creative side of human thought and emotions. Accordingly, he tried somewhat desperately to keep the two apart in his essay, so that Shakespeare's character should not be sullied with the suspicion of pathological tendencies.²⁷ I need not discuss the artificiality of such a distinction, as a great deal has since been written on the subject of art and madness, which have long been known to spring from the same source. I shall, instead, try to show briefly that the Freudian model applies to the emergence of clusters as much as to dreams and day-dreams.

Language into image

As far as can be ascertained, a cluster includes words and also a kind of underlying vision of an action or event. I will start from the assumption that language is first and the visualization second, and that there are no

²⁷ Cf. E. A. Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination*, pp. 148–49, 174–180.

archetypal patterns involved. As Freud remarked, in dreams and related processes, language has to be translated back into pictures, as they are the material basically used in the process:

There is no need to be astonished at the part played by words in dream-formation. Words, since they are the nodal points of numerous ideas, may be regarded as predestined to ambiguity; and the neuroses (...), no less than dreams, make unashamed use of the advantages thus offered by words for purposes of condensation and disguise.²⁸

The situational elements underlying the cluster, e. g. the image of the queen, the warrior, the burning city, can be compared to the visualizations in dreams, the only difference being that they are of literary rather than biographical origin. Like dream images, they are detached from their original surroundings and linked to the memory and the cluster only by emotional and associative bonds. It would follow that they are subject to the same changes as are our ideas in dreams, namely to condensation and displacement, and in fact, examples of both processes abound in the context of the tiger-cluster.

Displacement

In the earlier plays the tiger is several times connected with a wronged woman, in the later plays with a warrior breaking into a city. These two situations actually have the same source. What happened in the course of Shakespeare's writing career was that the tiger moved along the chain of associations rooted in the landscape of the *Aeneid*, from Dido to Pyrrhus, from the victim to the aggressor, the raped to the raper. The transition was facilitated by the fact that Shakespeare related both situations to the great field of metaphors taken from love and war. Thus, the body of Lucrece is compared to a besieged city, whereas in *Henry V*, the French cities spared by the English king are described as being "girdled with maiden walls that war hath never entered" (V.2.308-9).

Condensation

Cluster images, like dream images, are usually concocted of various elements, the main condition being that there are points of resemblance.

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Second Part). Vol. V of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, gen. ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), pp. 340-41.

Dido and Hecuba, for instance, who according to Elizabethan rhetorical tradition share the same characteristics, are frequently merged into one. It is more difficult to explain, however, why Shakespeare's cruel queens such as Tamora, Margaret and Goneril, who have precious little in common with their tearful counterpart, also elicit the tiger-cluster. The answer may be found in a second source text, the legend of Tereus and Procne from Ovid's *metamorphoses*, which Shakespeare used in *Titus Andronicus*. Here, a queen behaves 'like a tigress', when she kills her own son in an act of revenge:

Without more words she dragged Itys away, as a tigress drags a suckling fawn through the dark woods on Ganges' banks. And when they reached a remote part of the great house, while the boy stretched out pleading hands as he saw his fate, and screamed 'Mother, mother!' and sought to throw his arms around her neck, Procne smote him with a knife between breast and side – and with no change of face.²⁹

Several elements in this passage coincide with the tiger-cluster engendered by the Virgilian text: the tigress, the mother-child relationship, the queen. New are the motif of the murder and the word *face*. Especially the immutable or mask-like face becomes one of the most frequent cluster-satellites. The very first tiger-cluster in Shakespeare (*3 Henry VI*) also seems to be indebted to these two sources; Virgil provides the vocabulary and Ovid the situational elements: child-murder and a cruel queen.

Although the processes of displacement and condensation are features of all human thinking and imagining, Shakespeare's habit of cluster-forming appears to be rather unusual, its peculiarities being due not only to his outstanding ability, but to the nature of his schooling as well. As the study of the clusters clearly shows, the poet produces them without conscious effort, in an act akin to day-dreaming, while consciously concentrating on other parts of his composition. Like all skilled workers, he no longer has to grapple with the basic form. The cluster elements must have been internalized at an earlier stage of his career by means of much

²⁹ "Nec mora, traxit Ityn veluti Gangetica cervae
lactentem fetum per silvas *tigris* opacas,
utque domus altae partem tenuere remotam,
tendentque *manus* et iam sua fata videntem
et "mater! mater!" clamantem et colla petentem
ense ferit Procne, lateri qua pectus adhaeret
nec *vultum* vertit."

Metamorphoses, VI, 636–642; ed. and trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1971).

training and repetition. The two institutions that could provide this type of training were the grammar school and the theatre. As research done on Elizabethan education has established, the knowledge provided by the grammar schools was extremely formulaic;³⁰ the ancient texts, the *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides* among them, were learnt by heart, translated into English, backtranslated, dissected into their grammatical and rhetorical parts, reassembled, and finally used as models by the students to compose their own speeches in the same style. On leaving school, the pupil had acquired a considerable store of texts, lines, turns of phrase and commonplaces which could be recalled at wish and which certainly also influenced his associations.³¹ At the theatre Shakespeare must have heard his own texts repeated innumerable times, without even actively listening. Thus, the auditive transmission may have played a role in fixing first the cluster elements and later his own clusters in his memory, whereas the training at grammar school may have reinforced the (natural) tendency to associate a certain set of words with an emotionally defined situation.

³⁰ On techniques employed in assimilating the classical texts see, for instance, R. R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 271–275, 295–301. The formulaic nature of the knowledge transmitted in the grammar schools and the strong share oral reproduction had in Elizabethan teaching are discussed by Walter J. Ong in his article "Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style," *PMLA* LXXX (1965), 145–154.

³¹ On Shakespeare's grammar school studies of Virgil and Ovid cf. T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944), II, pp. 417–95. Baldwin comes to the conclusion that Shakespeare had a firm knowledge only of the second, fourth and sixth book of the *Aeneid*, which include the fall of Troy, the grief of the forsaken Dido and the 'infernal machinery of Hades'.