MANAGERIAL SHAKESPEARE AND TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

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Abstract

From the 1990s a new development has taken place within the framework of ‘Shakespeare in popular culture’, and more specifically of so-called ‘Self-help Shakespeare’, namely what Douglas Lanier has termed ‘the Shakespeare corporate-management manual’. What underlies them all is the notion that, if Shakespeare is famous for portraying universal human nature, he has a good deal to teach the world of business and management. To this effect, they provide quotations and discussions of a number of plays, particularly Henry V, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Julius Caesar and The Merchant of Venice. The value and usefulness of these manuals have been contested, but they could also be objected to as regards the scant attention paid to some other Shakespearean plays, such as Timon of Athens and Troilus and Cressida. It is our contention that, if we were to accept and follow the logic and aims of their authors, Troilus and Cressida could be at least as relevant to business and management as those other plays. This is so not only in its implications for managerial leadership and decision-making, but also on the grounds of more abstract but applicable notions of value and marketability, which are both defended—and opposed—in the play. This paper will seek to explain these notions both in an early-modern context and in their possible relevance to modern entrepreneurial activity.

Keywords: Shakespeare; Troilus and Cressida; management; value; prestige

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This article is necessarily speculative because it delves into areas—Management and Economics—which are largely unfamiliar to literary scholars. It therefore sets up a tentative model that can be revised, corrected and amplified in future work. We investigate what Douglas Lanier (2002) has termed ‘the Shakespeare corporate-management manual’, a phenomenon that first emerged in the 1990s in American business publications, and seems to have found some echo in Europe. According to Lanier, what underlies them all is the notion that, as Shakespeare is conspicuous for portraying universal human nature and its intricacies, he has a good deal to teach the world of business and management in corporate motivation, leadership and decision making. As argued in one of these manuals: ‘Business involves people, and people—fundamentally—don’t change. The essence of business is thus remarkably constant’ (Augustine and Adelman xii). To this effect, those who have used Shakespeare to illustrate principles of business management provide quotations and discussions of a number of plays, particularly *Henry V*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice*. Lanier notes that, unsurprisingly, *Henry V* emerges as the undisputed hero of all these manuals, one who being ‘new on the throne and forced to prove himself...uses time-tested leadership techniques to succeed most royally’ (Augustine and Adelman xvi). In another manual he is compared to Jack Welch, chief executive officer of General Electric, who became a model of dynamic corporate management because he began to ‘listen to his ‘subjects’ and learn from the people who really knew GE’s various businesses at their grass-roots’ (Corrigan 5). In other words, when Shakespeare talks and people listen, they learn.

Lanier points out that managerial Shakespeare is not really so new, but rather a reinvention of such previous self-help books as *Will Power!* *Using Shakespeare’s Insights to Transform your Life*, but what they purport to show is that Shakespeare’s genius is ‘as an anatomist of managerial technique in action’ (160). Be that as it may, Shakespeare has also been used in teaching. In 2007 the Said Business School in Oxford launched a management programme called ‘Politics,
Power and the Art of Influence’, which combines role play, modern management theory and Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. The UK Cranfield School of Management has offered similar programmes.¹ In the USA, there have been more such programmes and courses: true, the managerial Shakespeare phenomenon seems to be less present now than it was at the turn of the century, but the manuals are still in print and authors like Ken Adelman have led seminars on the topic for the corporate world itself.² The Oxford Said programme was developed using *Olivier Mythodrama*, an approach ‘for transformative leadership training’ based on Shakespeare and Mythology, created by Richard Olivier, son of Laurence Olivier, which is still operative.³ This is not to mention the string of online resources (websites and personal blogs) that have emerged in the wake of the 2008 financial crash and that appeal to Shakespeare as a possible authority on new and improved business practices, especially as regards the qualities of leadership.⁴

¹ On the courses available, see https://search.cranfield.ac.uk/s/search.html?collection=cranfield-metatab%5CAllDocumentsFill=All+Results&from=sm&q=shakespeare.
² Thus, Kenneth Adelman, co-author of *Shakespeare in Charge*, and his wife Carol have since 1997 run a successful course of Shakespeare-related seminars called ‘Movers and Shakespeares’ (https://www.moversandshakespeares.com/about-us-1).
³ For a recent application of theatrical practices to management, see founder and artistic director of the Australian Bell Shakespeare company John Bell (2021). With lessons on a variety of topics including ‘Courage, or How To Be a Leader in Times of Crisis’, ‘Decisiveness, Timing and Tough Decisions’ or ‘Charisma, Confidence and Humility’, Bell aims to transfer some of his directorial experience to managers in a post-crisis corporate world.

This is not to mention the range of insights to be gleaned from the Anonymous and undated ‘William Shakespeare. Quotes Every Business Leader Should See’, *Quotes for Leaders* (https://quotesforleaders.com/shakespeare-quotes-for-leaders/).
In principle, there should be nothing wrong with using Shakespeare for specific purposes, all the more so if such use is free of errors. However, the value and usefulness of managerial Shakespeare have been questioned. One obvious objection is the danger of wrenching the quotations out of context, often attributing to Shakespeare himself ideas on, for example, leadership that are then undercut or disproved by the rest of the play (Newstok 8-9). But the strongest criticism levelled against them seems to have come from within management theory itself. Thomas McGrath, who completed a PhD at Leicester, in which he examined the ways Shakespeare is used in management and leadership training, spoke of misappropriation and exploitation, because Shakespeare didn’t write about real people, and because he was talking about a different type of management (McGrath 2005). McGrath, who himself taught a module on ‘Shakespeare and Management’ at the Leicester School of Management, complained that such approaches take Shakespeare out of context and comment on his plays simplistically. As he puts it: ‘If these management gurus want ‘solutions’ from drama, then they are looking at the wrong level. They need to appreciate the ‘shop floor’ person, the whistle-blower, the fool in King Lear, for example. If anyone has the answers they do’ (qtd. in Davies 226-227, n. 18).

The omission or scant attention paid to some Shakespearean plays among those chosen for commentary is also a weakness of Shakespeare and management studies. For example, if we were to accept and follow the logic and aims of some of their authors, Troilus and Cressida should occupy a far more prominent place in their choice of plays. Despite the play’s sardonic wit and multiple ironies, there is, for instance, Ulysses’ oft-cited ‘degree’ speech—a blueprint for Tillyard’s Elizabethan ‘world picture’, but also, arguably, a model for corporate management structure and international commerce:

O, when degree is shaked,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
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But by degree, stand in authentic place? (I.iii.101-108; emphasis added)⁵

The non-observance of the ‘specialty of law’ currently rife in the Greek camp has its business analogue in the neglect of the ‘natural’ hierarchies of corporate management —when the ‘general’s disdained / By him one step below,’ etc. (I.iii.129-130)—, which, the text seems to suggest, is an obstacle to entrepreneurial initiative. And though ‘enterprise’ is not being used here with its modern, post-19th-century sense of ‘business’, the applications of this to a traditional sense of management are obvious. Still more obvious is the effect on trade of such a disjointed structure: though comparisons with the current situation in Ukraine are odious, the idea of ‘peaceful commerce’, whether in gas or grain, has clearly suffered under the removal of ‘all line of order’ brought about by the war (as well as the West’s over-reliance on both). Of course, Ulysses’ diatribe is a roundabout way of attacking Achilles, who is singled out in the next speech as being the agent of such disorder. But the inferences for the kind of motivational purposes of the corporate-management manual are not to be easily dismissed.⁶

True, when the play is mentioned, it is the cunning Greek’s degree speech to the assembly of generals that tends to draw the most attention. Oddly enough, in John O. Whitney and Tina Packer’s Power Plays, Ulysses is presented as a credible persuader on the basis of what the authors call ‘a plodding, pedantic declamation’ with which, however, he puts forward a convincing ‘straightforward argument’, namely that the poor shape the Greeks are now in is not caused by the enemy, but by ‘internal disputes and disrespect for rank’ (183). His argument succeeds—the authors conclude—because it’s backed up ‘with one powerful asset: his credibility. Every business manager should work hard to build credibility’ (183-184). It may be so, but, once he has put forward his argument, Ulysses offers no solution. It’s Aeneas’ interruption of the meeting that leads him to the stratagem of choosing Ajax to fight Hector instead of Achilles. In doing so, he contradicts himself: if the axis of his speech is the importance of ‘degree’, he’s the first who breaks this principle in proposing oafish Ajax before eminent Achilles, thus fomenting the kind of rivalry he himself deplores. When he

⁵ All references to Troilus and Cressida are to the 1982 Routledge/Arden edition by Kenneth Palmer.
⁶ See, for example, Murty (2019), who nonetheless restricts comments the speech to a prefatory note in this handbook of useful Shakespearian exempla, in this case of ‘order’ (xvii).
suggests his plan to old Nestor at the end of the scene, we can see that the credible chief, counsellor and strategist has become a sort of conspirator.

Moreover, Whitney and Packer had begun this section on Ulysses with the example of Dr. W. Edwards Deming, a legendary business consultant, who, when he advised manufacturers, would spend hours listening to the workers, and then ‘hit the top executives with his opinions based on what he had learned’ (181). Now this is not what Ulysses does in *Troilus and Cressida* if he is credible at all, his credibility limits itself to the narrow circle of the aristocratic generals. Beyond it, he does not appear to be any more worthy or respectable than the other Greeks, and, as Thersites reveals in his role of ‘thematic spokesman of the play’ (Kermode 183), Ulysses’ plan about Ajax has turned out to be completely useless: ‘O’th’other side, the policy of those crafty swearing rascals—that stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese Nestor, and that same dog-fox Ulysses—is not proved worth a blackberry’ (V.iv.9-12). In other words, when Ulysses’ famous degree speech is taken out of context, you may present him as a model of the credibility every businessman ‘should work hard to build’, but, when read in the context of the action, he and his speech appear otherwise. Perhaps these authors might well have warned their managers about corporate disorder and indiscipline by listening to Thersites, ‘the ‘shop floor’ person, the whistle-blower’ in the play.

In *Shakespeare in Charge* the only comment on *Troilus and Cressida* reads: ‘Shakespeare’s activists invariably attract attention, since “things in motion sooner catch the eye than what stirs not”’ (Augustine and Adelman 213). As is known, this quote comes towards the end of Ulysses’ famous speech ‘Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back’ (III.iii.145-190, here 183-184), which is actually a crafty manoeuvre to get Achilles out of his tent. Appealing to the importance of taking the ‘instant way’, Ulysses conjures up the image of Achilles being overtaken by his rivals and of forsaking all his supposed virtues to ‘envious and calumniating time’. If this were not a sufficiently obvious nod towards the (post-early-modern) notion of competitiveness and the need to keep abreast of the latest developments, Ulysses insists cynically on the transient ‘populuxe’ allure of the commodity (‘all with one consent praise new-born gauds. [...] The present eye praises the present object’), declaring Ajax to be the latest object of Greek worship. At any rate, the brief comment on the very brief quote couldn’t be more

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7 On the application to *Troilus and Cressida* of the ‘populuxe’, a term coined in the 1950s and 60s to refer to the dressing up of regular consumer goods as luxury items, see Yachnin (2005).
simplistic, as the quote forms part of a richer body of meaning which, as we shall see, is relevant to management, but is not discussed in the book. Meanwhile, *Troilus and Cressida* doesn’t feature at all in the group of discussed plays in *Othello, Hamlet & Co.*, and the author limits himself to offering five short quotations from it in his list of ninety quotes for managers, the meaning of them being too general to be relevant to management (Breitenstein).

*Troilus and Cressida* does fare a little better in *Power Plays*. The authors devote some scattered comments to the role of Ulysses in the play, as he is said to be the paragon of persuasive communication, which is necessary in business and management (Whitney and Packer 166). Thus his idea of the Greeks behaving like merchants in showing ‘foul wares’ first (I.iii. 358-361) to support his proposal that they send Ajax instead of Achilles to fight Hector is used to discuss ‘truth in advertising’ and ‘deceptive advertising’, but the discussion is too brief and not substantial enough to avoid the simple conclusion that customers ‘don’t trust advertisers to tell the truth’ (Whitney and Packer, 226). In fact, had they cared to, the authors could have found a far more persuasive example of the risks of advertising in the play’s odious go-between, Pandarus, who, significantly, both begins and ends the play. It is Pandarus who we find at the beginning trying to convince Troilus of Cressida’s worth. Part of the play’s dubious sexual politics, the casual objectification of Cressida (‘An her hair were somewhat darker than Helen’s…’; ‘an she were not kin to me, she would be as fair on Friday as Helen is on Sunday’ [I.i.41-42, 75-77]) and his apparent refusal to taken any interest in the matter (‘let her to the Greeks’), are both strategies employed by Pandarus to sell the ‘idea’ of Cressida to her impatient lover. In the very next scene it is brand ‘Troilus’ he is flogging to Cressida, the progress of Trojan heroes eclipsed, as in modern instances of ‘comparative advertising’, by the latest ‘prince of chivalry’:

Mark him; not him. O brave Troilus! Look well upon him, niece: look you how his sword is bloodied, and his helm more hacked than Hector’s, and how he looks, and how he goes! O admirable youth! he ne’er saw three and twenty. Go thy way, Troilus, go thy way! Had I a sister were a grace, or a daughter a goddess, he would take his choice. O admirable man! Paris? Paris is dirt to him; and, I warrant, Helen, to change, would give an eye to boot. (I.ii.234-243)

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8 For a definition and evaluation of ‘comparative advertising’ as a marketing strategy, see Grewal et al (1997).
That Cressida is a shrewd consumer and sees through Pandarus’s patter (‘more in Troilus thousand fold I see / Than in the glass of Pandar’s praise may be’ [I.ii.289-290]) offers a valuable insight into both her character as a free-willed woman and, for management purposes, the flaws in Pandarus’s ‘sodden business’ and the ‘deceptive advertising’ it involves. As John Drakakis has put it: ‘The reduction of exchange and community to a venal trading in flesh, reaches its apotheosis in the figure of the pander, the facilitator whose activity both encourages and threatens to undermine the very acts of reciprocity that guarantee the health of community’ (Drakakis 12-13). It is indeed the latter inference that may be drawn from the play’s epilogue, significantly spoken by Pandarus, who laments the advertiser-cum-bawd’s sad lot as those ‘poor agent[s]’, ‘[b]rethren and sisters of the hold-door trade,’ who have nothing to bequeath but their own ‘diseases’—a far more explicit condemnation of the trading in ‘false wares’.

II

What is striking in the manuals discussed is not only the omission or scant attention paid to a play like Troilus and Cressida, but the particular omission of two concepts dealt with in it which are arguably crucial for executives and managers. The first is ‘value’. In II.ii Priam and his sons meet to discuss whether they should return Helen to the Greeks and this way end the war. The arguments for and against could be summarized in Hector’s opinion and Troilus’ objection:

HECTOR
Brother,
She is not worth what she doth cost the keeping.
TROILUS
What’s aught but as ‘tis valued? (II.ii. 51-53)

What has happened at this point is that the debate about the Helen issue has moved over to the meaning of ‘value’ and ‘valuing’. The course of the debate confirms that, for Hector, the value of something or somebody is absolute and intrinsic and, therefore, independent of who values or of how—‘value dwells not in particular will; / It holds his estimate and dignity / As well wherein ‘tis
precious of itself / As in the prizer’ (II.i.54-57). On the other hand, Troilus holds
that value is relative and extrinsic and, therefore, no being and no thing has value
in itself. If, as he puts it, Helen is ‘a pearl / whose price hath launched above a
thousand ships / and turned crow’d kings to merchants’ (II.ii.82-84), the
implication is that the particular circumstances of her being kept in Troy have
raised her ‘price’ and made her an object of supreme worth. W.R. Elton has
explained that in this debate Shakespeare echoes the transformation of value
philosophy from Thomas Aquinas to Thomas Hobbes (Elton 1966). For the
former, the basis of value is ‘being’, which mankind doesn’t create, but discovers:
all that exists possesses value, whether humanly perceived or not. For Hobbes,
however, value is both relative and quantified: ‘The value or worth of a man is, as
of all other things, his price ... and therefore is not absolute, but a thing
dependant on the need and judgment of another’ (Elton 101).9

In Troilus and Cressida, the terms ‘value’ (3 matches), ‘price’ (2 matches)
and also ‘worth’ (an obsessive 32 matches) are used chiefly in this ‘subjective’
sense. Thus, despite Hector’s protestations that ‘value dwells not in particular
will’, the play seems to devote itself to proving the opposite, with hardly anyone
resisting—either engaged in or subject to—the dynamics of ‘pricing’. It is
precisely the perception of the division between ‘valour’s show and valour’s
worth’ in I.iii that triggers Ulysses’ previous reflexions on degree and how (with
the disrespectful Achilles very much on his mind) ‘degree being vizarded, / The
unworthiest shows as fairly in the mask’. Similarly, Agamemnon’s complaints to
Patroclus about Achilles’ no-show insist upon the latter’s declining value in the
Greeks’ eyes (if not Achilles’ own):

Much attribute he hath, and much the reason
Why we ascribe it to him; yet all his virtues,
Not virtuously on his own part beheld,
Do in our eyes begin to lose their gloss [..]
Go tell him this, and add,
That if he overhold his price so much,
We’ll none of him... (II.iii.118-136)

9 For the adoption of a Hobbesian perspective to assess the play’s thematic foregrounding of risk
and distrust, see also Scott (2012).
The idea that Achilles somehow ‘overholds’ his price—the deliberate attempt to inflate his own market-value, redolent of sharp business practices in both Shakespeare’s and our own times—is echoed in Ulysses’ attribution to him of an ‘imagined worth’ (II.iii.173), thus setting up the contrast with the ‘real’ worth of the unsightly but useful Ajax: ‘Nature, what things there are / Most abject in regard and dear in use! / What things again most dear in the esteem / And poor in worth!’ (III.iii.127-130). Though part of Ulysses’ plot to mobilize Achilles against Hector, the comparison would seem to confirm Hobbes’ ‘subjective’ account of value to the letter.

So too would the play’s presentation of the unequal treatment given to its two female protagonists, Helen and Cressida. As mentioned above, it is Helen’s right to a place in Troy that brings Hector’s and Troilus’ opinions of value into collision in II.ii. If Helen, in a subtle reworking of Marlowe, is the ‘pearl, / Whose prize hath lauch’d above a thousand ships’ (82-83; emphasis added), it is equally the case that, like pearls and also precious metals, her market-value is both superior to, and independent of, the substance of which she is made. Much the same applies to Cressida, whose virtues are so extolled by Pandarus but who, once the exchange with Antenor is approved and she falls into the lustful hands of Diomedes, becomes subject to a whole new economy of values where former ‘worth’ counts for nothing:

TROILUS [to Diomedes]
Grecian, thou dost not use me courteously,
To shame the zeal of my petition to thee
In praising her: I tell thee, lord of Greece,
She is as far high-soaring thy praises
As thou unworthy to be call’d her servant...

DIOMEDES
O, be not moved, Prince Troilus:
Let me privileged by my place and message,
To be a speaker free; when I am hence
I’ll answer to my lust: and know you, lord,
I’ll nothing do on charge: to her own worth
She shall be priz’d...(IV.iv.119-132)
In a play full of contradictions, Gayle Greene and others have seen Cressida’s subsequent (and unavoidable) subjection to the desires of Diomedes and the rest of the Greek camp as the marker ‘[w]here worth and esteem part company once and for all’ (Greene 279). But given the volatility of value as the play presents it, she is merely part of a process that absorbs almost everyone in the pricing game.

If we now return to the subject of this article, it should be obvious that Troilus’ and Hobbes’ conception of value is the basis and *raison d’être* of the modern market economy, so much so that ‘value’ is virtually synonymous with ‘market value’, subject to the law of supply and demand and, at any rate, conceived of in terms of profit, which is the key factor in Economics. Let us hasten to add, however, that the concept of value can be complex and that ‘value’ and ‘price’ are interrelated—and often confused—, but that, despite the various theories between schools, there is a basic consensus that the qualities or characteristics attached to ‘value’ are attributed to an object by a person or a social group, which therefore makes ‘value’ subjective and, among other things, susceptible of ‘creating value’.¹⁰

You cannot expect managers and executives not to know this—however academic it may sound—, less so to ignore it. Perhaps the very obviousness of its meaning is what could explain the absence of comments on the value debate in the Shakespeare-for-managers manuals. But, however obvious, the practical and potential implications of the debate could have been used in these manuals in terms of insights, advice or warnings for managers. Their authors surely know that the examples and cases that could be provided are legion. For want of better ones, we offer these:

**The present revival of vynil records**

As we know, these and record players almost disappeared after the emergence of the compact disc around 1980. Both had almost lost their ‘market presence’, and therefore their market value. However, in recent years companies have found a ‘gap in the market’ for them, i.e., a consumer need, basically on the merits of the vynil format, which may be justifiable or not in terms of superior technical and

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¹⁰ For example, the value of land is attributed depending on whether it’s agricultural or urban, which is why speculators hope for reclassification of cheaply bought agricultural areas to become building land. It goes without saying that ‘creating value’ is fundamental in the economy of consumer production and marketing.
musical quality. They have thus created a ‘market awareness’ about them, made them attractive and not only rescued their value, but in some cases increased it considerably.

The case of Schwinn bicycles
These bicycles became a legend when, after the 1929 crash, the company devised new tyres for them—balloon tyres—, which made them more solid, comfortable and cheaper. There was therefore an increase in the demand for Schwinn bicycles, and therefore their value was high. In the 1950s and 60s Schwinn dominated the market in the USA, but around 1980 their bicycles began to lose their value. Lower-priced bicycles manufactured by the Chinese—apparently taught by the Schwinn company—began to appear in American shops, particularly the new mountain bikes. The company didn’t pay attention to what had become a development that had found a gap in the market and created a new demand, with the result that the Schwinn company went bankrupt in 1992. Later on it managed to revive and offer a renewed line of bicycles, which included the mountain bike, still around, but, after its fall, of nothing like the value enjoyed in the 1950s and ‘60s.

If both products show the variability of the whole concept of ‘value’ and its complex relation to ‘price’, there is no clearer antecedent than in the treatment of Helen and Cressida in the sexual ‘marketplace’ that is Shakespeare’s Troy. Corporate instructors would have done well to heed and apply the message.

The second concept which these manuals could well have considered citing and implementing is put forward—though not as explicitly as the first—in III.iii. It forms part of the manoeuvre devised and displayed by Ulysses to persuade Achilles to leave his tent and fight. It will suffice to concentrate on the central stage of the manoeuvre. Having brought Achilles round to agreeing with him—in an echo of Troilus’ argument—that a person’s glory has no fixed and internal value, but needs to be communicated outwardly to receive external applause, Ulysses then argues that one’s glory cannot bestow eternal distinction, but needs to be continually confirmed and enhanced in action. His argument is expounded in the famous speech ‘Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back’, first in the notion that ‘Perseverance, dear my lord, / Keeps honour bright’ (III.iii.150-151), since passivity leaves you ‘quite out of fashion’ and useless, however
impressive your 'honour', i.e. fame or glory (OED, 1.c.). That's why he asks Achilles to stop his inaction ('Take the instant way'), because

Honour travels in strait so narrow
Where one but goes abreast. Keep then the path;
For emulation hath a thousand sons
That one by one pursue; if you give way
Or hedge aside from the direct forthright,
Like to an enter'd tide they all rush by
And leave you hindmost. (III.iii.154-160)

And he insists on the limitations of former glory and the uselessness of aspiring to present rewards for previous laurels: 'O let not virtue seek / Remuneration for the thing it was' (III.iii.169-170). He then reinforces his idea of constant action and explains why:

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin—
That all with one consent praise new-born gauds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past. (III.iii.175-177)

In other words, you have to be constantly active because, all men being alike, they love the new unanimously, even when it's not so new, but a 'thing past' re-made to look new.

Clearly, Ulysses' argument seems to be relevant to many walks of life—think, for example, of sports—, but this last observation of his proves to be of particular relevance to the way our market economy works. However successful and prestigious, no company can afford to sleep on its laurels. It needs not only to achieve 'market visibility' through a constant exercise of 'market awareness'—i.e., following the market trends to keep up to date—, but more so through constant innovation, at least by adaptative changes in product development or re-branding, which, like the 'new-born gauds', can be rather renewed than new—think of present consumer products like household appliances or cars which cannot always justify their supposed novelty. And if, as Ulysses suggests, excellence must be externalised to be valued, consumer products—whether

\footnote{OED, 5.a. = Excellence, merit.}
renewed or really new—must be subject to ‘market exposure’—through marketing, market strategies or targeted market campaigns—, as in a market economy you have to be aware of the competition factor—the hundred sons of ‘emulation’.

Many cases could be offered to illustrate the relevance of Ulysses’ argument to present-day management. Of the two discussed earlier, the present revival of vinyl records could also be an example of positive market awareness and market visibility, and the losses of the Schwinn company around 1980 one of failure to keep abreast of such awareness and visibility—the reason being that ‘value’ cannot be detached from other economic concepts in the workings of a market economy. Two more examples will help to illustrate Ulysses’ point a little more specifically:

The case of Kodak
It may be difficult to explain to young people what Kodak meant in the 20th century. It had begun by launching ‘the first Kodak’ in 1889. Later on, the pictures taken of the moon by Apollo XI were Kodak, OLED technology was invented by Kodak, the films for so many Hollywood pictures were Kodak, etc. However, after having created such a legend, they went bankrupt in 2012. Oddly enough, Kodak was famous as a pioneering company in research and technical development, and for its high number of patents, which enabled it to meet the advancements of the competition (Polaroid, Fuji, etc.). Paradoxically, it was one of its own innovations that reportedly caused their fall. In 1975 one of their engineers created a machine that could store images in an electronic format that could then be seen on a monitor. In other words, they had invented the electronic camera, but, apparently, they were so attached to their successful rolls of film that they didn’t think their invention viable and sold their digital prototype too early. When they eventually joined the far more successful digital photography trend, it was too late: they had been left ‘hindmost’ by ‘the sons of emulation’. (Things went otherwise with Nespresso: it was received skeptically at first, but the company knew how to wait and reaped the benefits of the wait.)

The case of Blackberry phones
The BlackBerry could be a case of outstanding success followed by collapse due to lack of market awareness and failure to meet and overcome the challenge of
‘emulation’. It was held as possibly the best phone for managers on account of their convenient and efficient keyboard, which made it useful for email as well as a phone. In 2003 the company launched its BlackBerry smartphone and that year shares quadrupled to nearly $15, to reach $144 in 2008. In 2009 it surpassed 50 million subscribers. Enter Apple in 2010, and things began to fare badly for BlackBerry: the following year the number of users of iPhone topped those of BlackBerry in the US market alone. It held its ground, and in 2013 it tried to compete with Apple and Android, but with very disappointing results: not only did it lose its dominant position, but it had to agree to a buy-out. Although their phones are still being produced and may be cult devices for some, they’re by no means the success they used to be, and we’re tempted to say with Thersites that the BlackBerries have not ‘proved worth a blackberry’.

So the company seems to have been overconfident, to have stagnated in their format and not to have realised that others were devising applications that made the new products more useful and applicable than their phones. If this is the case, the company didn’t heed Ulysses’ advice: it failed to ‘keep the path’, it ‘gave way’, and ‘emulation’ succeeded in leaving it ‘hindmost’.

To conclude: one may take the notion of ‘managerial Shakespeare’ lightly, or disagree with its practical application, but if the authors of these manuals have chosen some of Shakespeare’s plays as lessons for managers, why is it that they have omitted or given such scant presence to a play like Troilus and Cressida which could have been used to much greater advantage by them than has been attempted in this rudimentary first approach? If Shakespeare’s dramatic works are often credited by both authors of management manuals and business seminar providers with offering a mine of practical knowledge, it is at the very least odd that this one has so far been overlooked.

**Works Cited**


**Bionotes**

**Ángel-Luis Pujante.** Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Murcia, he has written mainly on English Renaissance drama (Middleton and Shakespeare) and literary translation. He has co-edited, among others, *Four Hundred Years of Shakespeare in Europe* (with Ton Hoenselaars, 2003), *Shakespeare
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In Spain. An Annotated Bilingual Bibliography (with Juan Francisco Cerdá, 2014), ‘Romeo y Julieta’ en España: las versiones neoclásicas (2017) and ‘Otelo’ en España: la versión neoclásica y las obras relacionadas (2020, both with Keith Gregor), and has published Shakespeare llega a España. Ilustración y Romanticismo (2019), a critical study of the early reception of Shakespeare in Spain. His main current area of research is the reception of Shakespeare in Spain and Europe. From 2000 to 2008 he was the head of the research Project ‘The presence of Shakespeare in Spain in the Framework of Europe Culture’, in which he still collaborates. He is honorary president of ESRA.

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Keith Gregor teaches English and Comparative Literature at the University of Murcia, Spain. He has published widely on Shakespeare’s reception in Europe, especially Spain, with articles in journals such as Shakespeare Quarterly, Multicultural Shakespeare, Shakespeare Jahrbuch, SEDERI, Comparative Drama, and chapters in books such as Shakespeare’s History Plays: Translation and Adaptation in Britain and Abroad (CUP, 2004), Shakespeare and European Politics (U. Delaware P., 2008), Shakespeare in Cold War Europe: Conflict, Commemoration, Celebration (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and Migrating Shakespeare: First European Encounters, Routes, and Networks (Arden Shakespeare, 2021). With Ángel-Luis Pujante he has edited the first Spanish versions of Hamlet, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet and Othello, and with Juan F. Cerdá and Dirk Delabastita, Romeo and Juliet in European Culture (2017) for the ‘Shakespeare in European Culture’ series, published by John Benjamins. He has also published the monograph Shakespeare in the Spanish Theatre, 1772 to the Present (Continuum, 2010) and edited the collection Shakespeare and Tyranny: Regimes of Reading in Europe and Beyond (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). For the last two decades he has been a member and sometime head of the The Reception of Shakespeare’s Work in Spanish and European Culture’ project at the University of Murcia.

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