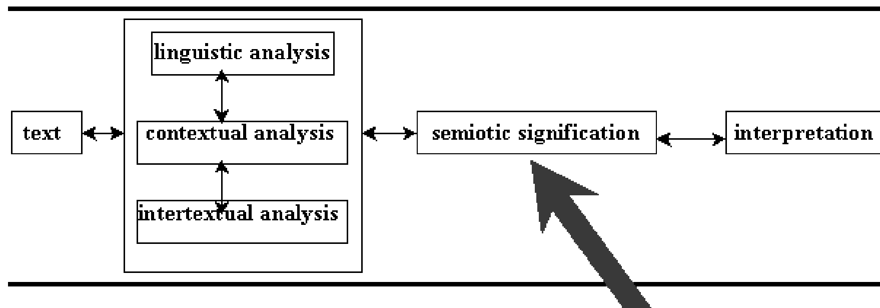
EL4222 Stylistics of Drama
Session No. 11

Organisation: summary + 'lecture' and task (fused)
Geoffrey Leech (2008), *Language in Literature: Style and Foregrounding* (London: Longman) – chapter 5 (this is in LumiNUS files, entitled Leech2008 under 'Additional Readings'. Also Emmot & Alexander (2016), 'Defamilliarisation and foregrounding'.
1. If you remember, we presented a model of stylistics in Session No. 1.



It is the area of *semiotic signification* that we are now interested in.

2. We need to be able to say:

- <u>What the 'normal' pattern is — *eg,*</u>
  - *(a)* a character characteristically provides the I in the IRF structure;
  - *(b)* an interaction characterised by a high number of Challenging Moves;
  - *(c)* a particular maxim of the CP is regularly not followed;
  - *(d)* a high degree of concern for the others face on the part of a set of characters;
  - *(e)* a preference for a 'direct' and impolite ways of performing particular speech acts;
  - *(f)* felicity conditions not being fulfilled.
- <u>Where there are 'abnormalities' — *eg,*</u>
  - *(a)* where there has been adherence to the CP, we suddenly find the CP ignored;
  - *(b)* where there has been a lack of reliance on direct ways of communicating, we suddenly find a heavy reliance on implicatures;
  - *(c)* where speech acts have been being performed felicitously, we suddenly find them being performed infelicitously;
  - *(d)* where the dominant category of speech acts changes, for example, from a high percentage of representatives to a high percentage of commissives;
  - *(e)* where there have been a lack of face concerns, we suddenly find a high degree of face concerns;
  - *(f)* where previously modesty has overridden agreement, we suddenly discover the opposite;
  - *(g)* where suddenly we discover a lot of banter;
  - *(h)* where previously the IRF patterns have been the norm, we suddenly find complicated or incomplete exchanges.

Doing a stylistic analysis therefore implies a look-out for the *presence or absence of patterns*, and a look-out for *when patterns are broken*. It is these things that frequently have to be *explained* and given *semiotic signification*.

… foregrounding invites an act of *imaginative interpretation* by the reader. When an abnormality comes to our attention, we try to make sense of it. We use our imaginations, consciously or unconsciously, in order to work out why this abnormality exists. The obvious question to ask, in the case of poetic deviation is: What does the poet mean by it? In these imaginative acts of attributing meaning, or 'making sense', lie the special communicative value of poetry. (Leech 2008: 61)

3. Leech distinguishes between:
- the **foreground**, and
- **background** (terms from the visual arts).

In Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, she is in the foreground and she is what you see first. You notice the background (the mountainous landscape) is what you notice when you look more carefully.

(*a*) The *foreground* 'sticks out', and 'deviates from the norm' — *ie*, it breaks the pattern, or goes against the readers expectations. And this leads to the question, 'What's the point?' (assuming, of course, that there *is* a point — that the author *is* in control, though s/he need not be *consciously* aware of what is being done).

Leech's example from T S Eliot's *The Waste Land*, III:

> When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said —
> I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself, …
> Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
> He'll want to know what you done with the money he gave you
> To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there …

Why the gossipy language, typical of an exchange in the pub?

This of course begs the question: do all readers have similar norms? (We will think about this further next week.) If our idea of poetry is based on, say, Romantic poetry, which bits of Eliot constitute deviations (some people also use the term *deviance*)?

TEXT	Points of contrast with Eliot	Effect?
Example: Shelley **To a Skylark (v. 1)** Hail to thee, blithe Spirit! Bird thou never wert, That from Heaven, or near it, Pourest thy full heart In profuse strains of unpremeditated art. **Example: Coleridge** *Kubla Khan* (opening) In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure dome decree: Where Alph, the sacred river, ran Through caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea. So twice five miles of fertile ground With walls and towers were girdled round: And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills, Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree, And here were forests ancient as the hills, Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.		

(*b*) Leech suggests that there is *foregrounding* when there are **more** patterns than would normally be expected. Is there extra regularity here, and how would you account for it?

Secondary and tertiary deviation

Secondary deviation is deviation not from norms of linguistic expression in general, but from norms of literary composition, of the 'poetic canon' …, including norms of author or genre. This can also be called *conventional deviation* or *defeated expectancy*. (Leech 2008, p. 62)

Tertiary deviation is deviation from norms internal to a text, and is for this reason also termed *internal deviation* … Like secondary deviation, it is a kind of defeated expectancy: a frustration of expectations which have been established in the poem itself. (Leech 2008, p. 62)

3. Metaphors could be employed beyond what is considered 'normal'. Do you get the same sense in the extract from *Macbeth* below? Is there a reason for this density of metaphor usage?

	Enter LADY MACBETH	
1	**MACBETH:** How now! what news?	
2	**LADY MACBETH**: He has almost supp'd: why have you left the chamber?	*l. 3* he*: ie King Duncan*
3	**MACBETH**: Hath he ask'd for me?	
4	**LADY MACBETH**: Know you not he has?	
5	**MACBETH**: We will proceed no further in this business:	
6	He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought	
7	Golden opinions from all sorts of people,	
8	Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,	
9a	Not cast aside so soon.	
9b	**LADY MACBETH:** Was the hope drunk	
10	Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?	
11	And wakes it now, to look so green and pale	
12	At what it did so freely? From this time	*l. 13* afeard: *afraid*
13	Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard	*l. 19: an* adage *is a saying. The adage being referred to is apparently 'The cat would eate fishe, but would not wet her feete' (John Heywood,* Proverbs *[1566]) – ie it is foolish to refuse to act in order to achieve one's goals*
14	To be the same in thine own act and valour	
15	As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that	
16	Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,	
17	And live a coward in thine own esteem,	
18	Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would',	
19	Like the poor cat i' the adage?	
20	**MACBETH**: Prithee, peace:	*l. 20* prithee*: I pray thee – ie please*
21	I dare do all that may become a man;	*l. 21* become*: befit*
22	Who dares do more is none.	
23	**LADY MACBETH**: What beast was't, then,	
24	That made you break this enterprise to me?	
25	When you durst do it, then you were a man;	*l. 25* durst*: older past tense form of 'dare'*
26	And, to be more than what you were, you would	
27	Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place	*l. 27* Nor ... nor*: neither ... nor*
28	Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:	
29	They have made themselves, and that their fitness now	
30	Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know	
31	How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:	
32	I would, while it was smiling in my face,	
33	Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,	
34	And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you	
35	Have done to this.	

4. Now consider Romeo and Juliet's language after their first night together as husband and wife. What kind of patterning is there? Why is it there?

Enter ROMEO *and* JULIET *aloft.*

1 **JULIET**: Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
2 It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
3 That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
4 Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-tree:
5 Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.
6 **ROMEO**: It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
7 No nightingale. Look, love, what envious streaks
8 Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.
9 Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
10 Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.
11 I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

12	**JULIET**: Yon light is not daylight, I know it, I:
13	It is some meteor that the sun exhal'd,
14	To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
15	And light thee on thy way to Mantua.
16	Therefore stay yet; thou need'st not to be gone.
17	**ROMEO**: Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
18	I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
19	I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,
20	'Tis but the pale reflex[1] of Cynthia's[2] brow;
21	Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
22	The vaulty heaven so high above our heads.
23	I have more care to stay than will to go:
24	Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so.
25	How is't, my soul? let's talk; it is not day.
26	**JULIET**: It is, it is: hie hence, be gone, away!
27	It is the lark that sings so out of tune,
28	Straining harsh discords and unpleasing sharps.[3]
29	Some say the lark makes sweet division;[4]
30	This doth not so, for she divideth us.
31	Some say the lark and loathed toad change[5] eyes,
32	O, now I would they had changed voices too!
33	Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,[6]
34	Hunting thee hence with hunt's-up[7] to the day.
35	O, now be gone; more light and light it grows.
36	**ROMEO**: More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!

5. Now consider Dysart and Alan.

1	DYSART Can you hear me?
2	ALAN Mmm.
3	DYSART You can speak normally. Say Yes, if you can.
4	ALAN Yes.
5	DYSART Good boy. Now raise your head, and open your eyes.
6	*He does so.*
7	Now, Alan, you're going to answer questions I'm going to ask you. Do you understand?
8	ALAN Yes.
9	DYSART And when you wake up, you are going to remember everything you tell me. All right?
10	ALAN Yes. .
11	DYSART Good. Now I want you to think back in time. You are on that beach you told me about. The tide
12	has gone out, and you're making sandcastles. Above you, staring down at you, is that great horse's
13	head, and the cream dropping from it. Can you see that?
14	ALAN Yes.
15	DYSART You ask him a question. 'Does the chain hurt?'
16	ALAN Yes.
17	DYSART Do you ask him aloud?
18	ALAN No.
19	DYSART And what does the horse say back?
20	ALAN 'Yes.'
21	DYSART Then what do you say?
22	ALAN 'I'll take it out for you.'
23	DYSART And he says?
24	ALAN 'It never comes out. They have me in chains.'
25	DYSART Like Jesus?
26	ALAN Yes!

[1] *reflex*: reflection
[2] *Cynthia*: the moon
[3] *sharps*: high notes
[4] *divisions*: variations on a melody
[5] *change*: exchange. Juliet is referring the folkore idea that because the ugly toad has beautiful eyes and the beautiful lark has ugly eyes, the two must have traded eyes.
[6] *affray*: frighten
[7] *hunt's-up*: song to awaken huntsmen

27	DYSART Only his name isn't Jesus, is it?
28	ALAN No.
29	DYSART What is it?
30	ALAN No one knows but him and me.
31	DYSART You can tell me, Alan. Name him.
32	ALAN Equus.
33	DYSART Thank you. Does he live in all horses or just some?
34	ALAN All.
35	DYSART Good boy. Now: you leave the beach. You're in your bedroom at home. You're twelve years
36	old. You're in front of the picture. You're looking at Equus from the foot of your bed. Would you like to
37	kneel down?
38	ALAN Yes.
39	DYSART (*encouraging*) Go on, then.
40	*Alan kneels.*
41	Now tell me. Why is Equus in chains?
42	ALAN For the sins of the world.
43	DYSART What does he say to you?
44	ALAN 'I see you.' 'I will save you.'
45	DYSART How?
46	ALAN 'Bear you away. Two shall be one.'
47	DYSART Horse and rider shall be one beast?
48	ALAN One person!
49	DYSART Go on.
50	ALAN 'And my chinkle-chankle shall be in thy hand.'
51	DYSART Chinkle-chankle? That's his mouth chain?
52	ALAN Yes.
53	DYSART Good. You can get up. . . Come on.
54	*Alan rises.*
55	Now: think of the stable. What is the stable? His Temple? His Holy of Holies?
56	ALAN Yes.
57	DYSART Where you wash him? Where you tend him, and brush him with many brushes?
58	ALAN Yes.
59	DYSART And there he spoke to you, didn't he? He looked at you with his gentle eyes, and spake unto
60	you?
61	ALAN Yes.
62	DYSART What did he say? 'Ride me?' 'Mount me, and ride me forth at night'?
63	ALAN Yes.

6. The notion of *foregrounding* is borrowed from Russian formalism. (This approach is seen as belonging to a sub-approach within stylistics called **formalist stylistics**[8] in the sense that it pays particular emphasis on the *formal features* of the text; these features are seen as being *inherent* in the text in some sense.)

- What distinguishes literature from 'practical' language (and therefore, drama from ordinary conversation) is its *constructed* quality.
- The purpose of art is to *defamiliarise* ('defamiliarisation', 'ostranenie') — Shklovsky argued that we can never retain the freshness of our perceptions of objects and that the demands of 'normal' existence require that they must become *automatised*. Therefore, the purpose of art is to *de-automatise*.
- Brecht talks about the *alienation effect* as opposed to the classical ideal of *ars celare artem* (art should conceal its own processes).

> The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar', to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important*. (Shklovsky's italics.) — Viktor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' (1917), *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, trans. Lee T Lemon and Merion J Reis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 11

[8] Jean Jacques Weber in his book *The Stylistics Reader* (London: Arnold, 1996) provides the following sub-approaches within stylistics: *formalist stylistics; functionalist stylistics; affective stylistics; pedagogical stylistics; pragmatic stylistics; critical stylistics; feminist stylistics* and *cognitive stylistics*. We have been concerned with *pragmatic stylistics* in earlier sessions, and will touch on *functionalist* and *affective* stylistics next week.

The following is intended to refer briefly to the use of the alienation effect in traditional Chinese acting. This method was most recently used in Germany for plays of a non-Aristotelian (not dependent on empathy) type as part of the attempts being made to evolve an epic theatre …

In setting up new artistic principles and working out new methods of representation we must start with the compelling demands of a changing epoch; the necessity and the possibility of remodelling society loom ahead. All incidents between men must be noted, and everything must be seen from a social point of view. Among other effects that a new theatre will need for its social criticism and its historical reporting of completed transformations is the A-effect.

Berthold Brecht, 'Alenation effects in Chinese Acting', in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 91, 99

Here is Jakobson on the **poetic function** of language.

We have brought up all the six factors involved in verbal communication except the message itself. The set (*Einstellung*) toward the MESSAGE[9] as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language. This function cannot be productively studies out of touch with the general problems of language, and, on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of its poetic function. Any attempt to reduce the sphere of poetic function to poetry or to confine poetry to poetic function would be a delusive over-simplification. Poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent. This function, by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects. Hence, when dealing with poetic function, linguistics cannot limit itself to the field of poetry. Hence, when dealing with poetic function, linguistics cannot limit itself to the field of poetry.

'Why do you always say *Joan and Margery*, yet never *Margery and Joan*? Do you prefer Joan to her twin sister?' 'Not at all, it just sounds smoother.' In a sequence of two co-ordinate names, as far as no rank problems interfere, the precedence of the shorter name suits the speaker, unaccountably for him, as a well-ordered shape of the message.

A girl used to talk about 'the horrible Harry'. 'Why horrible?' 'Because I hate him' 'But why not *dreadful, terrible, frightful, disgusting*?' 'I don't know why, but *horrible* fits him better.' Without realising it, she clung to the poetic device of paronomasia.[10]

The political slogan 'I like Ike' /aI laIk aIk/, succinctly structured, consists of three monosyllables and counts three diphthongs /aI/, each of them symmetrically followed by one consonantal phoneme, /..l..k..k/. The make-up of the three words presents a variation: no consonantal phonemes in the first word, two around the diphthong in the second, and one final consonant in the third. A similar dominant nucleus /aI/ was noticed by Hymes in some of the sonnets of Keats. Both cola[11] of the trisyllabic formula 'I like | Ike' rhyme with each other, and the second of the two rhyming words is fully included in the first one (echo rhyme), /laIk/–/aIk/, a paronomastic image of a feeling which totally envelops its object. Both cola alliterate with each other, and the first of the two alliterating words is included in the second: /aI/–/aIk/, a paronomastic image of the loving subject enveloped by the beloved object. The secondary, poetic function of this electional catch phrase reinforces its impressiveness and efficacy.

…

What is the empirical linguistic criterion of the poetic function? In particular, what is the indispensable feature inherent in any piece of poetry? To answer this question we must recall the two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behaviour, *selection* and *combination*. If 'child' is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar, nouns like *child, kid, youngster, tot,* all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs – *sleeps, dozes, nods, naps*. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain. The selection is produced on the base of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and antonymity, while the combination, the build up of the sequence, is based on contiguity. *The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination.* Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry one syllable is equalised with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary, no boundary equals no boundary; syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause. Syllables are converted into units or measure, and so are morae[12] or stresses.

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[9] Jakobson's term is misleading; by *message*, he means *text*. 'Poetic' texts are therefore more text-conscious or metatextual.

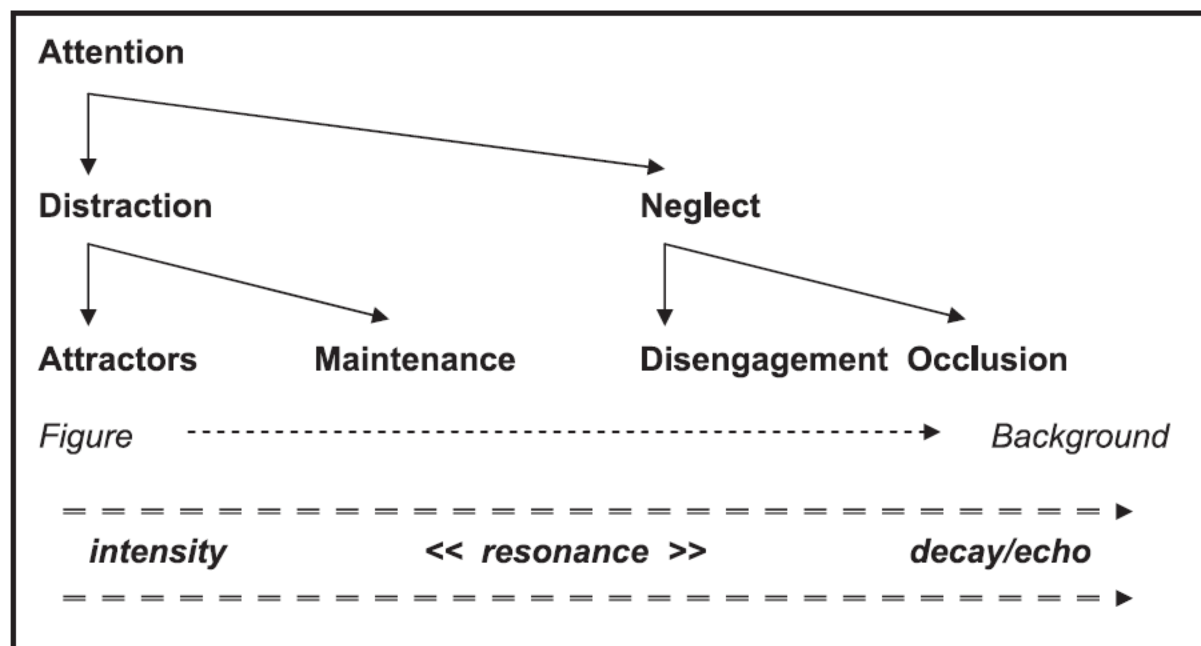
[10] *paronomasia*: word play or pun

[11] In Greek rhetoric and prosody, a *colon* (plural *cola*) is a member or section of a sentence or rhythmical period.

[12] A *mora* (plural *morae*) is a unit of metrical time equal to the duration of a short syllable. In linguistic analysis, it is the minimal unit of duration of a speech-sound.

Roman Jakobson, 'Closing statement: linguistics and poetics', in Thomas A Sebeok, *Style in Language* (MIT, 1960), pp. 356–358

7. It is possible to link up the notion of foregrounding to a model of **attention-resonance** (within cognitive stylistics). Here is a model by Stockwell (2009).



'In stylistic terms, good attractors tend to be referred objects that have a unified and coherent structure and identity, textualised as noun phrases, and maintained by co-reference, by repeated naming or pronominalisation, by elegant synonym variation, or by verb-chaining' (Stockwell 2009: 30). Other typical features of good attractors include **newness**, **agency**, **topicality**, **empathetic recognisability**, **definiteness**, **activeness**, **brightness**, **fullness**, **largeness**, **height**, **noisiness** and **aesthetic distance from the norm**.

Stockwell develops the idea from Carstensen (2007) with the idea that figures form positive blobs (a shape with edges). There can also be negative blobs (gaps or absences bounded by their edges) – Stockwell talks about *lacunae*. We can give attention to positive or negative blobs.

8. It might not also be unreasonable to conclude that part of Shaw's aim was to shock his audience. Consider the following summary in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*. (I have underlined parts of the text that emphasise this.)

Known to the theatrical public as an *enfant terrible*, Shaw owed his emergence into fame to the seasons organised by Harley Granville-Barker and J E Vedrenne at the Royal Court Theatre in 1904–7. They presented the first performances of *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), a provocative thrust at the Irish question, *How He Lied to Her Husband* (1904), *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906). It was an unfamiliar experience for the theatre-going public to be drawn into intelligent debate and to encounter unpalatable truths, however beguilingly dressed. *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1907) maintained Shaw's growing reputation for mischief and iconoclasm, as did *Getting Married* (1908), *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet* (1909), censured for blasphemy, *Misalliance* (1910), *Fanny's First Play* (1911), *Androcles and the Lion* (1913) and *Pygmalion* (1913).

In what respects would *Pygmalion* have been shocking, do you think?

9. In what respect would *Equus* have been shocking?

Adrian Burke comments that Shaffer's 'choice of language – direct, sparse, expletive-strewn – and his depiction of nudity and violence set out deliberately to shock'. Shaffer himself says of *Equus*: 'It is my object to tell tales; to conjure the spectres of horror and happiness, and fill other heads with the images which have haunted my own. My desire, I suppose, is to perturb and make gasp; to please and make laugh'.

10. In what respect would *Romeo and Juliet* have been shocking (or unexpected)?

It is difficult for us to imagine the original production, given that the play has given rise to many films for cinemas and television, adaptations (*West Side Story*), ballets. And Romeo and Juliet as seen as archetypal lovers and even young children known about the 'balcony scene'. And it is featured in the reverse of the old £20 note in circulation around the 1980s.

Shakespeare wrote almost no original plots and similar stories have been in circulation in, say, the second century. Shakespeare's actual source was Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). This was a long narrative poem. Shakespeare developed the characters much more fully and changed the time scale – from nine months to just four days (from Sunday to Thursday morning). He also lowered Juliet's age to thirteen (Brooke's was sixteen) and is made to display a 'precociously independent intelligence' (Watts 1992: 12). That might have been shocking to the original audience, and certainly to a modern audience. We might also note that Juliet was the one who first mentions marriage:

> If that thy bent of love be honourable,
> Thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow,
> By one that I'll procure to come to thee,
> Where and what time thou wilt perform the rite.

She also appears shrewder and more decisive. She's given memorable lines and show wit and courage. Would this have been surprising?

There might of course also be stereotypes of the Mediterranean type (from the point of view of Northern Europeans) – even today – so that perhaps hot-blooded and early sexual maturity was expected.

Also associated with the Mediterranean type might be the 'macho' or 'manly' culture, and the clan feud is depicted as one between the menfolk, and women are portrayed as being for the benefit of men. As Sampson puts it,

> Women, being the weaker vessels, are ever thrust to the wall: therefore I will push Montague's men from the wall, and thrust his maids to the wall.

The strong woman is therefore surprising. Germaine Greer, the well-known feminist, writes in her book *Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1986):

> it is not easy for us to estimate Shakespeare's originality in developing the idea of the complementary couple as the linchpin of the social structure. The medieval Church regarded marriage as a second-rate condition … Shakespeare took up the cudgels on the side of the reformers … He projected the idea of the monogamous heterosexual couple so luminously that they irradiate our notions of compatibility and co-operation between spouses to this day.

(pp. 123–4)