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"A Tailor Made Thee": A Critical Discourse Analysis of *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*

Simona Laghi (Università degli Studi di Tor Vergata)

simona.laghi@uniroma2.it

ABSTRACT

This article examines Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* through a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis combined with the Discourse-Historical Approach. It investigates how the legal discourse surrounding allegiance and the status of the postnati and natural-born subjects, crystallised in Calvin's Case Report (1608), is recontextualised within Shakespearean drama through the lexical item *tailor*, its collocation with the verb *make*, and the recurrent expression "A tailor made thee". Drawing on corpus analysis of Calvin's Case Report, *King Lear*, and *Cymbeline*, and comparing keywords, collocations, and concordance patterns across the three texts, the article demonstrates that Shakespeare's language is intertextually and interdiscursively linked to contemporary legal debate. It argues that Shakespeare recontextualises legal concepts of allegiance, natural identity, and subjectivity within dramatic discourse, transforming legal language into a means of exploring political authority, legitimacy, and the construction of social identity.

Simona Laghi

Università degli Studi di Tor Vergata
simona.laghi@uniroma2.it

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This article examines Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* through a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis combined with the Discourse-Historical Approach. It investigates how the legal discourse surrounding allegiance and the status of the *postnati* and natural-born subjects, crystallised in *Calvin’s Case Report* (1608), is recontextualised within Shakespearean drama through the lexical item *taylor*, its collocation with the verb *make*, and the recurrent expression “A tailor made thee”. Drawing on corpus analysis of *Calvin’s Case Report*, *King Lear*, and *Cymbeline*, and comparing keywords, collocations, and concordance patterns across the three texts, the article demonstrates that Shakespeare’s language is intertextually and interdiscursively linked to contemporary legal debate. It argues that Shakespeare recontextualises legal concepts of allegiance, natural identity, and subjectivity within dramatic discourse, transforming legal language into a means of exploring political authority, legitimacy, and the construction of social identity.

KEYWORDS: Shakespeare; critical discourse analysis; corpus linguistics; subjecthood; tailor.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Questions

In early modern England, discourses concerning the nature of power and governance were articulated through a dense figurative language. Political authority was mediated not only through written and spoken texts but also through images and material objects whose meanings were shared by the community.

The semantic domain of the human body was widely adopted in figures of speech regarding government and political discourse. The royal body literally embodied both the natural and the political dimensions of the concept of the state. It was viewed as a privileged site where theology, law, and political theory found representation. Accordingly, the sovereign's image, royal clothing, and insignia functioned as a semiotic system through which legitimacy was socially constructed, represented, and interpreted (Greenblatt 1980, 167). However, the royal body was not the only semiotic resource of meaning, but the entire societal structure was also semiotically classified by clothing. Garment was an intelligible mark of social rank legally recognised (Hayward 2009). The enforcement of the Sumptuary Laws during the Elizabethan reign confirmed the crucial role assigned to apparel as a political strategy for controlling expenditure and constructing personal identity (Hooper 1915). As emerges in Philip Stubbes *The Anatomy of Abuses*, first published in 1583, outward appearance had implications for the evaluation of moral values and religious beliefs, since excessively luxurious garments were interpreted as a mark of pride (Stubbs 1882 [1583], 28-29). Consequently, the tailor was portrayed as the artisan capable of fashioning outward identity and manipulating the visible signs of rank and gender, thereby challenging established social distinctions. The word tailor acquired a proverbial use conveying "disparagement and ridicule" from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and Kent's expression, "A tailor made thee", in *King Lear* is only one of the examples of this offensive usage recorded in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. This meaning is also attested in *All's Well That Ends Well*, as noted by Dent (1981, 225).

Thus, these cultural assumptions regarding clothing and the tailor found expression in the public theatre, where costume, disguise, and outward appearance became central dramatic devices through which social identities were represented, negotiated, and contested at a time of increasing awareness that human identity could be self-fashioned (Greenblatt 1980). The stage thus became a privileged site in which, through rhetorical devices, questions of identity, social recognition, and political legitimacy were explored. As Greenblatt argues, rhetoric was "the chief intellectual and linguistic tool" of the Renaissance and a crucial component of humanist education, providing the means to "theatricalise culture" in a society that was already deeply theatrical (Greenblatt 1980, 167).

Against this socio-cultural background, the present study addresses the following related questions. How do the lexical item *tailor*, its recurrent collocation with *make*, and the expression “*A tailor made thee*” construct discourses on apparel, identity, and social recognition in Shakespearean plays? To what extent do these plays recontextualise contemporary legal discourse on subjecthood?

1.2. Theoretical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis and the Discourse-Historical Approach

This study adopts Fairclough’s ([1989] 2015) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), integrated with the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) developed by Reisigl and Wodak ([2001] 2016). Together, these approaches conceptualise discourse as both a linguistic and a social practice and emphasise that it can only be fully understood through its historical, institutional, and socio-political contexts (Reisigl and Wodak 2016[2001], 19). Whereas Fairclough’s model provides the analytical framework for examining the relationship between text, discursive practice, and social practice, the Discourse-Historical Approach complements this framework by systematically integrating historical knowledge into discourse analysis and tracing the development and transformation of discourses over time (Reisigl and Wodak 2016[2001]). Accordingly, the present study extends beyond the description of textual features to investigate the interactional processes through which texts acquire meaning and the historical, institutional, and ideological contexts within which they operate.

Texts are therefore analysed as historically situated and intertextually connected. Building on Bakhtin’s dialogic conception of language, as reformulated by Kristeva, Fairclough views texts as inherently intertextual because they are constituted by elements of previous texts while simultaneously anticipating future ones. As he observes, “the concept of intertextual context requires us to view discourses and texts from a historical perspective” ([1989] 2015, 166). Reisigl and Wodak similarly argue that texts are linked synchronically and diachronically, thereby foregrounding the historical dimension of intertextuality ([2001] 2016, 28). They further distinguish intertextuality, which concerns the relationships among texts, from interdiscursivity, which concerns the relationships among dif-

ferent discourses. Likewise, Fairclough defines interdiscursivity as the articulation of different discourses, genres, and styles within the same communicative event. Interdiscursivity therefore explains how texts draw upon different orders of discourse, linking linguistic choices to broader institutional and social practices.

This relationship between discourse and social practice is further elaborated through the concept of recontextualisation. According to Reisigl and Wodak, recontextualisation is closely connected with both intertextuality and the historical orientation of discourse analysis: “The historical context is taken into account when interpreting texts and discourses. The historical orientation permits the reconstruction of how recontextualization functions as an important process of linking texts and discourses intertextually and interdiscursively over time” ([2001] 2016, 32). Fairclough goes further, defining recontextualisation as the “movement of parts or elements of interactions and texts out of their original context (so they are decontextualised) and into a different context (the recontextualised context). It is intertextuality and interdiscursivity in progress” ([1989] 2015, 38). Taken together, these approaches explain how legal discourses concerning natural law, allegiance, and the status of the natural-born subject, later articulated in Sir Edward Coke’s 1608 report of *Calvin’s Case*, are recontextualised in Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, first performed in 1606, before the decision, and in *Cymbeline*, generally dated to about 1609, after it.

1.3. Method

In accordance with Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, the analysis begins with a systematic description of the linguistic features of the texts before discussing them as products of discursive and social practice. The descriptive stage is operationalised through corpus linguistic methods, which provide the empirical basis for the subsequent interpretation and explanation stages. Frequency lists, keyword analysis, and collocation analysis are employed to identify recurrent lexical patterns and salient linguistic features that characterise both the legal report and the Shakespearean plays. The integration of corpus linguistics with Critical Discourse Analysis is widely recognised as a productive methodological framework (Baker *et al.* 2008; Fairclough [1989] 2015, 38). The quantitative

findings are then interpreted within the broader discursive framework proposed by Critical Discourse Analysis and the Discourse-Historical Approach.

Three corpora are analysed: *Calvin’s Case Report* (39,470 tokens), the Folger Digital Texts edition of *King Lear* (34,975 tokens), and *Cymbeline* (37,155 tokens). These texts were processed using Sketch Engine (Kilgarrieff *et al.* 2014), an off-the-shelf digital tool for extracting word frequencies, keywords, concordances, and collocational patterns. In this study, the term *keyword* is used in its linguistic sense, that is, as “a word which appears in a text or corpus statistically more frequently than would be expected by chance when compared to a corpus which is larger or of equal size” (Baker *et al.* 2006, 99). As Biber notes, keyword analysis helps to identify “the individual words that characterize a literary work: words that are statistically more likely to occur in a target corpus than in a comparison corpus” (2011, 16).

In this study, keyword analysis was conducted across different reference corpora based on the nature of the focus text. For *Calvin’s Case Report*, the reference corpus was the English Historical Books Collection (EEBO, ECCO, Evans), containing 987,242,247 tokens and available within Sketch Engine, as the aim was to identify salient lexical patterns in the legal text relative to other contemporary English texts. For *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*, the Shakespeare English Drama Corpus, containing 988,019 tokens, also available within Sketch Engine, was used as the reference corpus, since the aim was to examine the salience of the word *tailor* and its lexical environment in these plays in comparison with Shakespeare’s other dramatic works. For each keyword, Sketch Engine calculates a keyness score, that is, a statistical measure indicating how unusually frequent a term is in a text. Once the keywords have been extracted, keyword-in-context (KWIC) analysis is carried out. For keywords with the highest keyness scores, collocational patterns and concordances are examined to identify statistically salient lexical items. Collocations are the “above-chance frequent co-occurrence of two words within a predetermined span, usually five words on either side of the word under investigation (the node)” (Fairclough 2015, 20). The frequency of the collocates surrounding the node contributes to its meaning (Baker *et al.* 2008, 278). Concordances are words or clusters of words within a lexical environment. Thus, KWIC concordances display each occurrence of a lexical item within its immediate textual environment, facilitating the qualitative examination of re-

current phraseological patterns and contextual meanings. This is considered a useful tool to observe which words are salient in large corpora (Fairclough 2015 [1989], 21). Thus, corpus linguistic methods are intended as tools for subsequent qualitative interpretation and explanation.

At first the focus is on the *Report of Calvin's Case*, and then the results are compared to the corpus analysis of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*. Whereas the legal report is examined to identify salient lexical patterns relating to allegiance, obedience, and the status of the natural-born subject, the analysis of the plays investigates whether and how these patterns are recontextualised within dramatic discourse. Particular attention is devoted to the lexeme *tailor*, its collocates, especially the verb *make*, and the expression "*A tailor made thee*". Their recurrent collocations and concordance lines are analysed to determine whether the imagery of tailoring intersects with questions of legitimacy, loyalty, social recognition, and identity.

At the level of interpretation of discursive and social practice, the analysis is conducted using the concepts of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and recontextualisation, in line with the Discourse-Historical Approach. The interpretation is situated within the historical, political and legal context of Jacobean England, particularly the debates surrounding *Calvin's Case*, James I's project of political union, and the status of the *postnati*.

2. The analysis

2.1. Historical and Legal Context

As discussed in the theoretical framework, the Discourse-Historical Approach emphasises that the interpretation of texts and discourses requires the systematic consideration of their historical context (Reisigl and Wodak 2016 [2001], 32). To understand how the analysis of texts belonging to different genres, a legal report and two Shakespearean plays, can reveal processes of interdiscursivity within discourses of political authority (Fairclough 2015[1989]), it is first necessary to outline the historical and legal significance of *Calvin's Case Report*, a landmark decision in the development of the English Common Law system.

After James VI of Scotland succeeded Elizabeth I in 1603, a legal issue emerged: the distinction between the *antenati*, those born in Scotland before 1603, and the *postnati*, those born after his accession. Under existing common law principles, those not born within England were classified as "aliens" and were excluded from certain civic rights, including land ownership. This legal distinction aimed to preserve the integrity of the realm. As Sir Edward Coke warned: "strangers might fortify themselves in the heart of the realm, and be ready to set fire on the commonwealth, as was excellently shown by the Trojan horse" (Price 1997, 93). After King James's accession, those born before 1603 remained legally aliens in England, whereas the status of those born after 1603, the *postnati*, was uncertain. The issue arose in the case of Robert Calvin, born in Scotland after 1603, whose guardians sought recognition of his right to inherit English land. The legal question was whether birth under the rule of James I rendered him a "natural-born" English subject or whether he remained an alien (Ward 2024, 74). However, there was an important precedent. The medieval statute *De Natis Ultra Mare* (1351) provided that children born abroad could be considered "natural born" if their parents were "of faith and ligeance of the king of England" (Price 1997: 93). In resolving the case, Sir Edward Coke, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, and Francis Bacon, Attorney General, grounded their reasoning in the theory of natural law adapted to the English constitutional tradition and to the doctrine of the king's two bodies. Allegiance, they argued, was owed to the king's natural body rather than merely to his body politic. In his 1608 report of *Calvin's Case*, Sir Edward Coke articulated a theory of *ligeance* by adapting natural-law theory to the English constitutional doctrine of allegiance. According to Aquinas, natural law is understood as human beings' rational participation in the eternal law (White 1996, 6). As Price argues, Coke appropriates this natural-law tradition to represent allegiance as a duty owed "by the law of nature" to the sovereign's natural body, thereby grounding political obligation in nature rather than in human law (1997, 75).

Departing from this historical and legal background, the following sections examine whether and how Shakespearean drama recontextualises the lexical and ideological patterns articulated in legal discourse through the dramatic language of *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*.

2.2. The Calvin's Case Report

The first step concerns the analysis of the *Calvin's Case Report* at the level of textual description through corpus-linguistic analysis. The keyword analysis is conducted using the English Historical Book Collection (EEBO, ECCO, Evans) as the reference corpus and the subcorpus 1600–1699, so as to situate the lexical profile of the *Calvin's Case Report* (1608) within its immediate historical linguistic environment. The analysis reveals the exceptional keyness of *ligeance* (3,770.70), and a strong salience for *alien* (3,057.32), *postnati* (254.78), and *natural born* (257.78), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

Focus Corpus: <i>Calvin Case Report</i> Reference: Corpus: English Historical Book Collection (EEBO, ECCO, Evans) Sub corpus: 1600-1699				
Rank	Keyword	Freq per million (Focus).	Freq per million (Reference)	Keyness Score
1	ligeance	148	135	3,770.70
2	alien	120	3,156	3,057.32
3	ligeantia	22	78	560.51
4	alienigena	20	38	509.55
5	ligeantiam	19	25	484.08
6	inheritable	20	178	509.55
7	gascoin	17	121	433.12
8	shack	14	46	356.69
9	politic	19	357	484.08
10	denization	12	85	305.73
11	postnati	10	17	254.78
12	natural-born	10	28	254.78

These results show that the lexical field of allegiance and birth status is markedly foregrounded in the *Report*, thereby confirming that the construction of political belonging constitutes a central textual concern. The high frequency and keyness of *ligeance* and *alien*, as well as other lexemes belonging to the legal domain are, to some extent, expected, given the specialised nature of the document and its juridical register. However, what is particularly significant is the comparatively high keyness score of *natural-born*, together with the collocation of *ligeance*:

Table 2.

Focus Corpus: <i>Calvin's Case Report</i> Reference Corpus: English Historical Book Collection (EEBO, ECCO, Evans), Sub corpus: 1600-1699 CQL: obedience + ligeance • 32 810.74. per million tokens • 0.081% Filter: nature • 13 329.36. per million tokens • 0.033%			
	Left context	KWIC (node: obedience + ligeance)	Right context
1	That	ligeance or obedience	of the subject to the Sovereign is due by the law of nature
2	and nature is the faith,	ligeance, and obedience	of the subject due to superior
3	Seeing then that faith,	obedience, and ligeance	are due by the law of nature
4	If the	obedience and ligeance	of the subject to his sovereign be due by the law of nature
5	birthright in	obedience and ligeance	(which is the true cause of natural subjection) by the law of nature
6	thirdly,	ligeance and obedience	of the subject to the sovereign, due by the law of nature
7	a union of	ligeance and obedience	of the subjects of both kingdoms, due by the law of nature

segue

Focus Corpus: <i>Calvin's Case Report</i> Reference Corpus: English Historical Book Collection (EEBO, ECCO, Evans), Sub corpus: 1600-1699 CQL: obedience + ligeance • 32 810.74. per million tokens • 0.081% Filter: nature • 13 329.36. per million tokens • 0.033%			
	Left context	KWIC (node: obedience + ligeance)	Right context
8	his natural	ligeance and obedience	due by the law of nature , maketh him a subject and no alien
9	born under one natural	ligeance and obedience	due by the law of nature to one sovereign are natural-born subjects
10	born under one natural	ligeance and obedience	due by the law of nature to one sovereign; ergo, he is a natural-born subject
11	but	ligeance and obedience	of the subject to the sovereign is due by the law of nature
12	proved before that	ligeance or obedience	of the inferior to the superior, of the subject to the sovereign
13	which	ligeance or obedience	(being the only mark to distinguish a subject from an alien)

Furthermore, collocation and concordance analysis demonstrate that *ligeance* is recurrently embedded within the formulaic construction “natural ligeance and obedience ... due by the law of nature”. Indeed, the collocation of *ligeance* and *obedience* (32 occurrences) frequently co-occurs with explicit reference to *nature* (13 occurrences), forming a stable lexical cluster (Table 2). Hence, rather than appearing as isolated lexical items, *ligeance* and *obedience* function within a recurrent collocational pattern in which allegiance is explicitly modified by *natural* and associated with both the *law of nature* and *natural law*. Although these concepts are theoretically distinct, they were frequently used interchangeably in early modern legal discourse. Indeed, while the concept of natural law, according to Aquinas, is understood as human beings’ rational participation in the eternal

law (White 1996, 6), the law of nature was also employed in legal theory, overlapping in meaning with natural law. Indeed, Sir Edward Coke himself uses the expression *law of nature* to define the concept of *natural law*: "The law of nature is that which God at the time of creation infused into his heart, for his preservation and direction; and this is *lex aeterna*, the moral law, called also the law of nature" (*Calvin's Case*, 7 Coke Report 1a, 77 ER 377).

The discursive function of the formula "ligeance and obedience due by the law of nature" can be explained through Fairclough's concepts of power in discourse and power behind discourse. The former refers to the ways in which power is enacted within language through recurrent lexical patterns and syntactic configurations; the latter concerns the institutional and political structures that shape discourse and confer legitimacy upon it ([1989] 2015, 73). In *Calvin's Case Report*, the power in discourse resides in the construction of the concept of allegiance and natural-born through the repeated lexical association with the word nature. At the same time, the repeated use of this formula illustrates the power behind discourse. The institutional authority of the court legitimises and stabilises the concept of the natural-born subject by grounding allegiance in the king's natural person. In doing so, the *Report* reinforces the authority of the Crown while simultaneously recognising that those born in Scotland after James VI and I's accession were subjects entitled to the same legal rights as those born in England.

Given that texts are produced through processes of social interaction, the whole process, including the production and interpretation of texts, has to be considered for the discourse analysis, including the "members' resources" (MR), which constitute the shared knowledge of a community. In Fairclough's terms, they include the people's "knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions and so on" (2015[1989], 57). Such 'members' resources' have "social origins" since they result from transmitted and shared knowledge (Fairclough [1989] 2015, 57). Indeed, as Fairclough observes, "the formal properties of a text can be regarded from the perspective of discourse analysis on the one hand as traces of the productive process, and on the other hand as cues in the process of interpretation" (2015[1989], 57). With regard to *Calvin's Case Report*, the analysis indicates that the concept of *ligeance* is discursively grounded in the framework of natural law. The lexical

and grammatical patterns identified above, particularly the recurrent formula “natural ligeance and obedience due by the law of nature”, do not function in isolation. Rather, they activate theological and constitutional discourses readily recognisable to an early modern audience. The repeated co-occurrences of *natural*, *ligeance*, *obedience*, and *law of nature* draw upon shared knowledge of the doctrinal framework of the king’s two bodies and the concept of *vinculum fidei*, as defined by the Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, who explained the nature of this allegiance in the following terms: “This bond of allegiance, whereof we dispute, is *vinculum fidei*; it bindeth the soul and conscience of every subject severally and respectively to be faithful and obedient to the king” (Price 1997: 112). Indeed, Sir Edward Coke, in *Calvin’s Case Report*, points out that there is “a union of ligeance and obedience of the subjects of both kingdoms, due by the law of nature to the Sovereign” (Price 1997: 112).

At the level of social practice, the discourse on allegiance participated directly in the political context following James I’s accession. By grounding subjecthood in allegiance to the king’s natural body rather than the body politic, the *Report* provides juridical support for the consolidation of the union between England and Scotland. The transformation of allegiance into a bond with the king’s natural body strengthens sovereignty at the time when King James had just acceded to the throne of England. As Coke insists: “Whatsoever is due by the law or constitution of man may be altered; but natural ligeance or obedience of the subject to the sovereign cannot be altered...” (*Calvin’s Case*, 7 Coke Report 1a, 77 ER 377).

In this sense, *Calvin’s Case* linguistically constructs allegiance and subjecthood through the concept of the natural-born subject, embedding both within the semantic and theological framework of natural law. The formulaic repetition of *natural ligeance* constructs allegiance as an inherent and immutable legal bond since it is due to the person of the king. Shakespearean drama appears to interrogate such construction. In *King Lear* and *Cymbeline*, the lexeme *tailor*, frequently collocated with *make* or *made*, introduces the semantic field of fabrication into questions of identity and recognition. This recontextualisation suggests an interdiscursive shift: where legal discourse encodes allegiance as natural law and as a natural bond, dramatic discourse foregrounds the possibility that identity, including subjecthood, may be artificially fashioned.

2.3. “A tailor made thee”: Nature and Allegiance in *King Lear*

Following the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl and Wodak [2001] 2016), the analysis begins by situating *King Lear* within the historical, legal, and political context in which both the play and *Calvin’s Case* emerged. *Calvin’s Case* began in 1603, soon after the accession to the throne of King James I, while *King Lear* was performed in 1606, the year following the Gunpowder Plot (1605), at the height of the debates regarding the union of Scotland and England, the question of the *postnati*, and their subjecthood. The keyness analysis proves particularly useful. As Culpeper observes, keyness in literary and Shakespearean studies helps identify “style markers,” that is, words whose frequencies differ significantly from those in a normative corpus. Not all repetitions are meaningful; only those that statistically deviate from patterns established in a reference corpus qualify as keywords (Culpeper 2009, 33). *King Lear* does not contain technical language such as *ligeance*, but the words *nature*, *natural*, and *obedience*, which belong to the semantic domain of natural law and allegiance, are recurrent in both the play and the legal discourse. The selection of these lexical items that are present in the play derives from their statistical salience in the *Calvin’s Case Report* and from their conceptual centrality within the legal doctrine of natural allegiance. The analysis therefore moves from quantitative prominence to qualitative interpretation. As shown in Table 3, the word *nature* occurs 40 times and has a log ratio of 2.8, indicating that it is approximately 7 times more frequent in *King Lear* than in the reference Shakespeare corpus. Similarly, *obedience* (log ratio 2.7) is markedly overrepresented, while *natural* (log ratio 1.0) shows only a marginal increase.

The discourse of natural-born subjecthood debated in *Calvin’s Case* is interdiscursively recontextualised in *King Lear*. While the word *nature* remains salient in the play, the lexeme *tailor* introduces a contrasting semantic field associated with artificial construction and fabricated identity. Indeed, the keyword-in-context analysis (KWIC) reveals a significant collocational pattern with the lemma *make* (particularly *made*) which evokes artificiality in opposition to nature and naturalness.

Within the wider Shakespeare corpus, *tailor* occurs 41 times. Concordance and keyword-in-context (KWIC) analysis, using a ± 5 -word span and filtering for

Table 3.

Focus Corpus: <i>King Lear</i> Reference Corpus: Shakespeare English Drama Corpus					
Rank	Lemma	Frequency (Focus)	Freq. per million (Focus)	Freq. per million (Reference)	Keyness Score
1	nature	40	1143.67	404.85	2.8
2	obedience	5	142.96	51.62	2.7
3	natural	2	57.18	59.72	1.0

the lemma *make*, reveals 8 co-occurrences of *tailor* with *make/made*. A span of ± 5 allows to find immediate syntagmatic associations ensuring that collocational patterns are meaningful as shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

Focus Corpus: Shakespeare English Drama Corpus Lemma <i>tailor</i> 41 occurrences Filter <i>make</i> (-5. + 5, KWIC): 8 co-occurrences Frequency: 8.1 per million tokens (0.00081%)				
	Left Context	KWIC (node: <i>tailor</i> + <i>make</i>)	Right Context	Play
1	“...who was made by him that	made the tailor	, not be fit too?”	<i>Cymbeline</i>
2	“...He made those clothes... My	tailor made	them not.”	<i>Cymbeline</i>
3	“...nature disclaims in thee; a	tailor made	thee.”	<i>King Lear</i>
4	“...A	tailor make	a man?”	<i>King Lear</i>
5	“...a tailor made thee... A	tailor make	a man?”	<i>King Lear</i>

segue

Focus Corpus: Shakespeare English Drama Corpus Lemma <i>tailor</i> 41 occurrences Filter make (-5. + 5, KWIC): 8 co-occurrences Frequency: 8.1 per million tokens (0.00081%)				
	Left Context	KWIC (node: <i>tailor</i> + <i>make</i>)	Right Context	Play
6	“...knew the	tailor that made	the wings she flew withal.”	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
7	“...shall be a tailor to thee and shall	make	thee a new dou- blet...”	<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i>
8	“...the	tailor make	thy doublet of changeable taffe- ta...”	<i>Twelfth Night</i>

In *King Lear*, *tailor* occurs 4 times: 3 in Act II during the exchange between Kent and Oswald and Cornwall, and once in Act III in the Fool’s speech. In three of these instances, it collocates directly with *made*, establishing a recurrent lexical marker through which questions of identity and legitimacy are negotiated (Table 4). This repeated association between *tailor* and *made* introduces the semantic field of artificial construction of subjecthood that seems to challenge the *Calvin’s Case* debate.

The dialogue that occurs between Kent and Lear in Act I introduces the discourse on identity recognition and allegiance:

LEAR What art thou?
 KENT A very honest -hearted fellow, and as poor as the
 King
 LEAR If thou be’st as poor for a subject as he’s for a king,
 thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?
 KENT Service
 LEAR Who wouldst thou serve?
 KENT You
 LEAR Dost, thou know me, fellow?
 KENT No, sir; but you have that in your countenance
 which I would fain call master.

LEAR What's that?
KENT Authority. (1.4.18-30)

Kent's speech act pays homage to Lear by declaring that he recognises his authority from his countenance, that is, from his face, his natural body, echoing the legal discourse.

This homage to Lear's face contrasts with the insults that Kent directs at Oswald in Act II. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's model of politeness, face-threatening acts are those that "run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (1987, 65). The two scholars take the notion of face from the saying 'losing face', which refers to a feeling of embarrassment and humiliation. Indeed, according to Brown and Levinson, "face is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (1987, 61). In the confrontation between Kent and Oswald, the exchange of impolite speech acts culminates in Kent's insult: "nature disclaims in thee—a tailor made thee" (2.2.54), which is a face-threatening act intended to make Oswald lose face:

KENT No marvel, you have so bestirred your valour, you
cowardly rascal; nature disclaims in thee — a tailor made
thee. (2.2.52–54)

The offence lies precisely in the clause "nature disclaims in thee—a tailor made thee", which opposes natural and artificial identity. The syntactic structure juxtaposes two competing modes of identity formation: while *nature* is linked to the law of nature, the word *made* is linked to artificial and therefore false being. Grammatically, the *tailor* functions as the subject and agent of creation, the artisan who fashions identity, thereby misleading the onlookers. Thus, Kent's expression constitutes a direct attack on Oswald's face. As Culpeper (2011) observes, the interpretation of impoliteness depends upon both the semantic potential of the linguistic expression and its pragmatic interpretation within a particular context. If one considers Fairclough's concept of members' resources, such pragmatic evaluation depends upon the shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and assumptions that participants bring to the interpretation of discourse. In this case, the force of the insult does not reside in the linguistic form alone but in the 'members'

resources' shared by an early modern audience, who would associate the *tailor* with the artificial fashioning of appearance and, consequently, with false identity. Kent's expression therefore attacks both Oswald's honour as a loyal subject and his subjecthood itself; the force of the insult derives from the accusation that Oswald is a false person whose identity has been artificially fashioned rather than naturally constituted. Cornwall's intervention reinforces the collocational pairing of *tailor* and *make*:

CORNWALL Thou art a strange fellow — a tailor make a man?

KENT Ay, a tailor, sir; a stone-cutter or a painter could
not have made him so ill, though they had been but two
years o' the trade. (2.2.55–58)

The words *make* and *made* intensify the semantic association between tailoring and artificial production. Kent amplifies the insult by comparing the tailor to other artisans, suggesting that even they would have produced a better result. Oswald is "ill" not only in appearance but morally defective: false and disloyal. Kent later confirms this suspicion: "His countenance likes me not" (2.2.88), returning once again to the semiotics of the face with a negative evaluative language. Hence, the expression "a tailor made thee" dramatizes the *Calvin's Case* debate. While in the legal suit subjecthood is constructed and grounded in natural law and the king's natural body, in the play the insult represents the anxiety that, subjecthood and allegiance can be counterfeited. The play recontextualises the juridical principle that allegiance is due to the natural person of the king, however, if identity is artificially fashioned through false outward appearance, by implication, also loyalty is false and thus subjecthood. This is a process of recontextualisation through which legal discourse is transferred into dramatic discourse and acquires new ideological meanings within the historical circumstances of Jacobean England.

2.4. The Notion of “natural born” in *Cymbeline*

The dating of *Cymbeline* is generally placed around 1609 (Nosworthy 2007, xiv), thus after the conclusion of *Calvin’s Case* and Sir Edward Coke’s *Report* in 1608. *Cymbeline* revisits the discourse of allegiance and false identity constructed through the lexeme *taylor*. While the name Posthumus, derived from the fact that he was born after his father’s death, evokes the term *postnatus*, which is central to *Calvin’s Case Report*, the name *Cloten* is also significant within the discourse of false appearance and false allegiance. Indeed, its phonological resemblance to the word *clothes* would have been perceptible in theatrical performance, thereby reinforcing the association between outward appearance and artificially fashioned identity. Applying Fairclough’s three-dimensional model in conjunction with the Discourse-Historical Approach, the analysis examines how the play recontextualises the juridical doctrine of natural identity within its historical and dramatic context. Keyness analysis reveals a markedly different lexical profile from that of *King Lear*. As shown in Table 5, *obedience* occurs 68 times and displays a log ratio of 32.9, indicating a substantial overrepresentation compared with the reference Shakespeare corpus. Similarly, *natural* (55 occurrences; log ratio 23.1) is strongly foregrounded, while *nature* (57 occurrences; log ratio 3.6) also shows a clear degree of statistical salience.

Unlike *King Lear*, where *nature* emerges as the most salient term among the selected lexical items, *Cymbeline* foregrounds both *obedience* and *natural* to a significantly greater extent. The high log-ratio values suggest that the semantic field associated with allegiance, birth, and natural identity is not merely present but structurally prominent in the play. This quantitative prominence aligns with the thematic centrality of postnatal identity, dynastic legitimacy, and the testing of loyalty, thereby reinforcing the interdiscursive connection with the juridical discourse articulated in *Calvin’s Case Report*. From the perspective of the Discourse-Historical Approach, these lexical correspondences constitute evidence of the historical recontextualisation of legal discourse within Shakespearean drama.

While *King Lear* was performed during the period when the status of the *postnati* was still under discussion, *Cymbeline* unfolds its dramatic action after the legal stabilisation of natural allegiance. This change in the historical context is articulated through the opposition between nature and artificial identity,

Table 5.

Focus Corpus: <i>Cymbeline</i> Reference Corpus: Shakespeare English Drama Corpus					
Rank	Lemma	Frequency (Focus)	Freq. per million (Focus)	Freq. per million (Reference)	Keyness Score
1	obedience	68	1,732.48	51.62	32.9
2	natural	55	1,401.27	59.72	23.1
3	nature	57	1,452.23	404.85	3.6

which pivots on the accusation of being “made”, realised through the collocation of the lexeme *tailor* with the lemma *make/made*. Through the recurrent accusation of being “made” by a tailor, the play reopens the question of how loyalty to the king’s natural body can be acknowledged. The insult challenges the assumption that natural-born status and obedience can be granted by law suggesting instead that they may be artificially constructed.

Table 6.

Focus Corpus: <i>Cymbeline</i> Reference Corpus: Shakespeare English Drama Corpus KWIC Concordance Lines Lemma: tailor • 4 107.66. per million tokens • 0.011% Filter: make (-5. +5, KWIC) • 2 53.83. per million tokens • 0.0054%				
	Left Context	KWIC (node)	Right Context	Speaker
1	his mistress, who was made by him that	made the tailor	, not be fit too?	Cloten
2	Thou precious varlet, My	tailor made	them not.	Cloten

In Act II, Cloten insults Posthumus as socially inferior, “a base slave, / A hilding for a livery” (2.3.121–123), but is reciprocally challenged by Imogen through hyperbolic comparison:

IMOGEN His mean'st garment,
That ever hath, but clipp'd his body, is dearer
In my respect, than all the hairs above thee,
Were they all made such men. (2.3.132–135)

Posthumus' garment is declared more precious than Cloten's noble person. The verb *made* activates the discourse of identity as a self-fashioned process, anticipating the subsequent recurrence of the lexical pairing *tailor* and *made*. Furious at Imogen's words, Cloten resolves to disguise himself in Posthumus' clothes, reasoning that “she held the very garment of Posthumus in more respect than my noble and natural person” (3.5.135–137). He later remarks: “How fit his garments/ serve me! Why should his mistress, who was made by/ him that made the tailor, not fit too?” (4.1.2–4).

The discourse about artificial fabrication of one's identity and status is intensified in the confrontation between Cloten and Guiderius. Unaware of being the natural son of Cymbeline, Guiderius challenges Cloten's claim to status:

CLOTEN Know'st me not by my clothes?
GUIDERIUS No, nor thy tailor, rascal,
Who is thy grandfather: he made those clothes,
Which (as it seems) make thee.
CLOTEN Thou precious varlet,
My tailor made me not (4.2.81–83)

Here, the repetition of the words *make* and *made* foregrounds identity as constructed, and the act of tailoring is the textual site through which subjecthood is contested and destabilised. The insult implies that if garments “make” the man, then identity can be artificially tailored.

At the level of discursive practice, and following the Discourse-Historical Approach, these textual features are interpreted in relation to the historical and legal debates surrounding allegiance, legitimacy, and the status of the *postnati*. Posthumus Leonatus, born after his father's death and raised at court, occupies

a hybrid position, with an analogous social status to that of the *postnati*: legally ambiguous. Indeed, Posthumus's loyalty is to the king's natural body with no other bound due to law. Thus, the name *Posthumus* acquires intertextual and interdiscursive significance by evoking the contemporary legal category of the *postnatus*, thereby establishing a further point of contact between juridical and dramatic discourse. Cloten, by contrast, as the Queen's son is legally natural born but lacks the loyalty, for his absence of allegiance to the natural body of the king. Furthermore, although positioned as heir apparent, he does not embody the natural virtue expected. Thus, the play stages competing models of allegiance and obedience: allegiance as inherited and formally constructed, exemplified by Cloten's assumed status, and allegiance as grounded in interior virtue, exemplified by Posthumus and due to the body natural of Cymbeline. Birth alone does not guarantee honour, and clothing does not secure authority.

Consistent with the Discourse-Historical Approach, these discursive interactions are interpreted within the legal, political, and historical context of 1608, the year in which *Calvin's Case* was decided and reported by Sir Edward Coke. The doctrine of natural allegiance is juridically constructed as immutable and grounded in natural law. *Cymbeline*, however, dramatises the instability that this legal reasoning attempts to stabilise. Through a lexical pattern centred on *tailor* and *made*, the play activates shared cultural knowledge associated with tailoring to suggest that what is declared “natural” and due by law may itself be discursively and artificially produced. Whereas *Calvin's Case* asserts that allegiance to the king is grounded in natural law and owed to the king's natural body, *Cymbeline* represents natural allegiance as unstable and contingent. The play therefore does not merely reflect contemporary legal doctrine; rather, it interrogates its assumptions.

3. Conclusion

This article has argued that whereas legal discourse seeks to stabilise subjecthood through the recurrent association of *allegiance*, *obedience*, and *born* with the modifier *natural*, Shakespeare reuses and reshapes these same lexical resources within contexts of conflict and impolite speech acts. The lexeme *tailor*, in its recurrent

collocation with the lemma *make/made*, functions in *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* as a discursive recontextualisation of the legal concepts debated in *Calvin's Case*. By combining Fairclough's three-dimensional model with the Discourse-Historical Approach, this study has shown how these lexical patterns acquire meaning when interpreted within their historical, legal, and political context. It also demonstrates the methodological value of integrating corpus linguistics with the Discourse-Historical Approach to investigate the circulation of legal discourse across institutional and literary genres.

In *Calvin's Case Report*, “natural ligeance and obedience” are linguistically grounded in the law of nature, constructing subjecthood as inherent and due to the king's natural body. In *King Lear*, performed while the status of the *postnati* was still under debate, the insult “a tailor made thee” disrupts this construction by opposing innate loyalty to the artificial fabrication of subjecthood. The stage suggests that natural-born subjecthood cannot be secured by legal declaration alone but depends upon loyalty to the king. In *Cymbeline*, performed after the formal resolution of the case, the question is redefined, and the presence of *obedience*, *natural*, and *nature* confirms that the play engages contemporary debates on allegiance. The figure of Posthumus, whose name resonates with *postnatus*, embodies the tension between juridical acknowledgement of status and inward loyalty. Through the association of tailoring and making, the play reopens the question of whether what is declared natural by law may in fact be fashioned. Hence, across both plays, tailoring imagery challenges the ideology underlying this legal discourse.

Whereas *Calvin's Case Report* grounds allegiance in the sovereign's natural body, Shakespeare recontextualises this discourse by suggesting that what the law presents as natural may itself be discursively constructed. The tailor thus emerges as a semantic link between clothing, construction, and sovereignty, revealing that identity and loyalty to the king cannot simply be naturalised through legal declaration.

This study has also shown the relationship between language and power and how the Shakespearean theatre recontextualises it, drawing on Fairclough's distinction between power in discourse and power behind discourse ([1989] 2015, 73), together with the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2016[2001]). In *Calvin's Case Report*, power in discourse is visible in the repeated

formula “natural ligeance and obedience due by the law of nature,” while the legal decision aimed to resolve a constitutional problem by strengthening the authority of the king and extending rights of inheritance to those born under his sovereignty. This resolution was not ideologically neutral. English jurists had long regarded Scottish subjects as aliens, and the decision required a discursive redefinition of subjecthood to consolidate royal power, namely the person of King James I, while assuring those born in Scotland after his succession in 1603 that they would inherit land in England.

Shakespeare’s plays challenge this legal solution. The acknowledgement of natural ligeance to the natural person of the king is shown to be unreliable. Through the recurrent opposition between nature and fabrication, both plays expose the fragility of the subjecthood that *Calvin’s Case Report* seeks to naturalise.

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