


Debate: A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres

An Answer to Robert R. Prechter
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 hoever wishes to determine the authorship of a literary work must start by meticulously reading the work in question and then conducting an analysis of it in the light of its historic context. Robert R. Prechter claims to come up with the right answer by criticizing existing secondary (albeit questionable) literature on the subject. He doesn't realize that merely disproving the errors of one's predecessors often leads headlong into the next ones.

Let us begin with our own observations.

I. Two Very Different Levels of Literary Quality

Within the anthology, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, (1573) the novel *The Adventures of Master F.I.* stands out because of its particular literary qualities. On the merits of the skilful narrative, the refined construction and the innovative plot, *The Adventures of Master F.I.* has been most justifiably declared a masterpiece, indeed a milestone, of English literature.

The novelist we are seeking describes love as an “experiment,” he discusses how jealousy can lead to betrayal, how love's passion can lead to physical violence--thereby breaking all the boundaries of convention and going into the realms of the unutterable, the impermissible, even the unthinkable. The dramaturgy of this compartmented composition is nothing less than revolutionary. The author plays the parts of the lover, Master F.I. - the narrator, G.T. — the publisher, H.W. — and the printer, A.B.

The central characters of the novel enter unconditionally into their dangerous play. The heated emotions thus generated put the characters in danger of losing themselves. They go through love, reproach, ecstasy, joy, suspicion, collapse and disillusionment. The author seems to be one of them. He immerses into the different

personalities only to return, with apparent effortless, to himself. Such refined literary devices are only to be found two hundred years later in the works of Choderlos de Laclos.

The volcanic core of the narration (how love leads to alienation) is reflected upon and analyzed at different stages of the cooling down process. Dramatic refinement along with deep psychological insight give the author the hallmark of a true dramatic prose master. The distinctive quality of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* is based on the interaction between the masterful narrative technique with the innovative content. (A fact that neither Bernard M. Ward nor his critic, Robert R. Prechter mention with a single word.) We seek such genius to no avail in the rather straightforward, not to say pedestrian prose that we have come to associate with George Gascoigne. (Consider works such as *A Delicate Diet for daintie mouthde Droonkardes* [1576] or *The Spoil of Antwerp* [1576].)

From these considerations alone, we can assume that Gascoigne did not write the novel in question.

II. To the Difference of Literary Quality Correspond Different Posies

There are also other observations to be considered. In *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, edited by “Meritum petere grave,” the index makes a clear distinction between works that George Gacoigne wrote or translated alone and works that were written by other authors or by other authors in collaboration with George Gascoigne. The index lists the play *Supposes* in the first section, another play, *Jocasta*, in the second section; “*Thirdly*, a pleasant discourse of the adventures of master F.I.,” “*Fourthly* divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen,” “*Fifthly*, certayne devises of master Gascoyne” and “*Lastly*, the dolorous discourse of Dan Bartholmew of Bathe.”¹

George Gascoigne is identified as being the translator of Ariosto and of Euripides right at the beginning: “Englished by George Gascoyne” (*Supposes*) and “translated and digested into Acte by George Gascoigne and Francis Kinwelmershe” (*Jocasta*).

The authorship of the fifth section is stated in a forceful manner. Not only is the section entitled “certayne devises of master Gascoyne” but with each individual poem, the authorship is restated within the text.

The publisher wrote the following introduction to the fourth chapter: “Now I will ... recite unto you sundry verses by sundry gentlemen, adding nothing of myne owne, but onely a tittle to every Poeme, wherby the cause of writinge the same maye the more evidently appeare: Neyther can I declare unto you who wrote the greatest part of them, for they are unto me but a posie presented out of sundry gardens, neither have I any other names of the flowers, but such short notes as the authors themselves have delivered therby if you can gesse them, it shall no waye offende mee” (Pigman, 216).

We then come to the introduction to the fifth chapter, which contradicts the introduction to the fourth chapter:

“I will now deliver unto you so many more of Master Gascoignes Poems as have come to my hands, who hath never beene dayntie [chary] of his doings, and therefore I conceale not his name: but his word or posie he hath often changed and therefore I will deliver his verses with such sundrie posies as I received them” (Pigman, 263).

It cannot be overlooked that, in the fifth chapter, Gascoigne used posies (epithets, or mottos that were used to tell the reader something about the author) that had not been used in chapters three and four: “Ever or never,” “Haud ictus sapio” (=Not involved, but non-the-less informed), “Attamen ad solitum” (=nevertheless unchanged), and “Sic tuli” (Thus, I bore it).

In the third section (*The Adventures of Master F.I.*) and the fourth (“Divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen”), we find the following posies: “A.B.” (the printer), “H.W.” (the publisher), “G.T.” (the narrator), “F.I.” (the poetic lover) and “Si fortunatus infoelix” (If Fortunate Unhappy), “Spraeta tamen vivunt” (Shunned but still alive), “Ferenda natura” (The nature that must be endured), and “Meritum petere grave” (It is hard to ask for that which one has earned).

From this we clearly see that the third and the fourth sections of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* are marked off from the fifth section (Gascoigne).

III. Stylistic Differences

Furthermore, we find a clear difference in style between “divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen” and “certayne devises of master Gascoyne.” The first excels with a brilliant, fast moving, meaningful yet still lyrical dialogue of the logic of contradictions. Gascoigne’s poems, on the other hand, reveal a realistic brave spirit; a down-to-earth philosophy. They teach their moral lessons with a pleasing simplicity, plodding on like a cart horse.²

IV. Gascoigne’s Own Statement

Who is behind the name “Master F.I.”? This not an unimportant question. The conservative publishers Cunliffe (1907), Prouty (1942) and Pigman (2000) stick to Gascoigne’s statement in the “Posies” (the second modified version of “Flowres” from April-May 1575), assuring us that “Master F.I.” is a certain “Ferdinando Jeronimi” - and not “Master Fortunatus Infoelix,” as we can assume from the first edition. Had they been consequent, Cunliffe, Prouty and Pigman would not have published Ferdinando Jeronimi’s story and called it “a novel by George Gascoigne,” for in his foreword to “The Poesies,” the soldier-poet denies authorship and claims to have merely translated the Italian original (Pigman 362-3).

I understande that sundrie well disposed mindes have taken offence at certaine wanton wordes and sentences passed in the fable of *Ferdinando Jeronimi*, and the Ladie *Elinora de Valasco*, the which in the first edition was termed *The adventures*

of master F. J. And that also therewith some busie conjectures have presumed to thinke that the same was indeed written to the scandalizing of some worthie personages, whom they woulde seeme therby to know. Surely (right reverend) I smile to see the simplicitie of such, who being indeed starke staring blind, would yet seeme to see farre into a milstone... But for the better satisfying of all men universally, I doe here protest unto you (reverend) even by the hope of my salvation, that there is no living creature touched or to be noted therby. And for the rest you shall find it now in this second imprinting so turquened and turned, so densed from all unclenly wordes, and so purged from the humor of inhumanitie, as percase you woulde not judge that it was the same tale.

The author of this foreword is obviously trying to pull the wool over our eyes. He now claims that the novel was written by a certain “Bartello”— who never existed. Gascoigne is trying to quieten disgruntled voices who claim that “The Adventures of Master F.I.” is, in truth, a novel about the actual private lives of living persons. The invention of the author “Bartello” was perhaps a good idea, the name being a play on the name of the Italian novelist “Matteo Bandello” who was featured in William Painter’s anthology *Palace of Pleasure* (1567) and in Geoffrey Fenton’s collection *Certain Tragical Discourses* (1567).

But “Ferdinano Jeronimi” is simply pure fiction. Many clues point to the fact that “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” is behind “Master F.I.” Here are three of them.

First, Master F.I. plays the role of the unfortunate, blessed lover in “The Adventures” (and does credit to his name); initially, the love of Mistress Elynor makes him happy but then he is plunged into unhappiness when he confesses his jealousy to her and she rejects him for it. Second, in the poems of “Si fortunatus infoelix” (in the fourth section) we clearly see the literary style and the mentality of “Master F.I.”— rich in concetti (extended metaphors), daring in the presentation, continuing the lamentations of the rejected lover. Third, the common subject matter that we find both in “The Adventures” and in “Divers excellent devises” also lends a certain clarity to the situation; for instance, Master “Meritum petere grave” (he is one of the “sundry gentlemen” of the fourth section *and* the editor of the *Flowres*) and Master Fortunatus Infoelix both speak of the object of their love as “Bathseba.”

In other words, in *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, the name “Master F.I.” has, once and for all, been decoded.

Prechter points out that “Si fortunatus infoelix” and “Meritum petere grave” both occasionally slip in to the role of George Gascoigne, when writing — and he comes to the conclusion that Gascoigne, “S.f.i.” and “M.p.g.” are one and the same person. However, he overlooks the fact that “G.G.” appears at a royal banquet. A royal banquet was unthinkable for the soldier-poet George Gascoigne in 1572 or 1573. Moreover, later the author performs a brilliant conjuring trick with letters and word-plays. “Of all the letters in the crists crosse rowe,/I feare, my sweete, thou lovest B. the best”— hardly to be expected from Gascoigne, but with amazing parallels with Shakespeare’s *Richard III* (1.1) Clarence says: “He hearkens after prophecies and dreams/ And from the cross-row plucks the letter G,/ And says a wizzard told him that by G/ His issue

disinherited should be,/ And, for my name of George begins with G,/ It follows in his thought that I am he.”

In both *The Adventures of Master F.I.* and the “divers excellent devises” we find that dozens of role-swapping games are featured. (A speciality of the Earl of Oxford and his twin brother William Shake-speare). Prechter ignores the fact that both “H.W.,” the “publisher” of “The Adventures,” “Spraeta tamen vivunt” and “Meritum petere grave” write in the role of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. “H.W.” ends the foreword with the words: “From my lodging near the Strand the xx. of January, 1572.” (This is in keeping with Edward de Vere’s address at that time. Towards the end of 1571 he took up residence in a story of the Savoy, directly opposite Lord Burghley’s house on the Strand.) “Spraeta tamen vivunt,” “shunned but still surviving,” brings a brilliant wordplay put into the mouth of a lady: “The lustie *Ver*, which whilome might exchange/ My grieffe to joy, and then my joyes encrease,/ Springs now elsewhere.” (Surely everybody can recognize the amorous “Vere” from Oxford’s Echo-poem and Thomas Nashe’s “lusty *Ver*” from *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*.) Thirdly, the last poem from “Meritum petere grave” in “Divers excellent devises” has the title: “The absent lover (in ciphers) deciphering his name.” Bernard M. Ward has deciphered this puzzle and found the name of the author to be Edward de Vere. (Up to now, nobody has proven Ward’s interpretation to be incorrect.)

The logical conclusion: either Gascoigne wrote in the role of the Earl or the Earl wrote in the role of Gascoigne. That is why we ask ourselves once more; who is who, in this elegant game of hide and seek? The following considerations will provide the solution, even to the most casual reader.

V. A Comparison of Some Poems

My lucke is losse.

Surprisingly enough, no Oxfordians have paid much attention to the six poems, notable for their daring and innovation, from the pen of “My lucke is losse” in *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* (1578). One of these six is the opening poem, a translation of “Cur mundus militat sub vana gloria” from the Middle Ages:

Why dooth eache state apply it selfe to worldly praise? ...
Where is that Caesar nowe, whose high renowned fame,
Of sundry conquestes wonne, throughout the world did sound?
Or *Dives* [=Crassus] riche in store, and rich in richely name ...
O foode of filthy woorme, o lumpe of lothsome clay...

(Compare with *Hamlet* 5.1: “Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam (whereto he was converted) might they not stop a beer barrel? Imperious Caesar, dead and turn’d to clay,/ Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.”)

There is also a wonderful poem in the same vein, inspired by a theme from

Timon of Athens: “Even as the Raven, the Crow, and greedy Kite,/ do swarming flock, where barren corps doeth fall.” Or another brilliant literary firework: “If fortune may enforce the careful hart to cry.”

Couldn't we expect the unique quality of this poem to attract more attention? The answer is: “No,” simply because an important, and obvious clue has been overlooked for years. Surely it's as clear as the sun in the sky that “My Lucke is losse” is the English variation of “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” (=THE FORTUNATE UNHAPPY from *Twelfth Night*).

However, perhaps some attention should be given to the following fact: In Humphrey Coningsby's collection of handwritten poems (BL, MS Harl.7392, fol. 19) the poem “If fortune may enforce” is ascribed to “RO. LOO.” and (written in a woman's handwriting) “Balle.” The cipher “Ball(e)” identifies the Earl of Oxford as being the author of five other poems in MS Harl.7392, also signed “Ball.”

1. My mind to me a kingdom is ³
2. When griping griefs the heart would wound (see *Romeo and Juliet*, IV/5) ⁴
3. Who taught thee first to sigh, alas, my heart? (Bodleian, MS Rawl. Poet. 85: “Earlle of Oxenforde”)
4. Though I seem strange, sweet friend, be thou not so (Folger V.a. 89: “Vavaser”)
5. Short is my rest, whose toil is overlong (also in *Phoenix Nest*, 74)

The abbreviation “RO. LOO.,” comparable to “Lo. Ox.” from MS Harl. 7392, fol. 18v, must be read as “Robert Lord Oxenford.” As there is no Robert Oxenford and because the word “Balle” emphasises the identification, we can safely assume that Edward Oxenford is meant.

In other words; Humphrey Coningsby's assignation identifies “My lucke is losse” = “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

VI. Foelix Infortunatus Versus Fortunatus Infoelix

Gabriel Harvey (1550-1630), the epitome of the inexperienced theorist, Cambridge graduate, friend of Edmund Spenser, was determined to become the English Cicero. Harvey made a note on “Fortunatus Infoelix” “in his copy of the “Posies” (just after the introductory poem to “Jocasta” to be precise): “lately the posie of Sir Christopher Hatton.” This information was not correct, but is important.

Harvey's note (written in 1577 or 1578) was a reaction to the sudden rise to nobility of Christopher Hatton Esquire, Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Captain of the Guard. He was named as Vice-Chamberlain in 1577, shortly thereafter he was knighted. The posy (or motto) of Sir Christopher Hatton was not, however, “Fortunatus Infoelix,” it was “Foelix Infortunatus” (unfortunately situated but happy).

In a speech to the Queen and her Lords at Audley End in July 1578, Gabriel Harvey corrected this mistake. In his “Gratulationes Valdinenses,” he praises the aristocrats: Leicester, Burghley, Oxford, Hatton und Sidney.⁵ The remarks addressed

to the Earl of Oxford contained the famous advice that he could serve his country better with his sword than with his pen. (Oxford is a “de Vere” and as such a pillar of truth and reliability, nothing and nobody is more truthful than he. The name alone defines him as a conqueror and a shining example to his countrymen. He is England’s Achilles, etc.)

When addressing the Knight, Harvey takes the marvelous opportunity to reveal the identities of “Foelix Infortunatus” (the happy child of ill fortune= Christopher Hatton) and “Fortunatus Infoelix” (the unhappy child of good fortune =Alexander the Great =Edward de Vere).

Harvey’s actual words were: “One is happy though not smiled upon by fortune—the other is not happy although he enjoys good fortune.” The one—Hatton! —is a philosopher, although not always happy; “he is his own foundation, he fears no downfall because he has a clear oversight of the world, both the good, the bad and the strange.” The other, a spoiled Alexander the Great, a man to whom success merely bought unhappiness. “Alexander the Great was favoured by fortune yet he was still unhappy. Why?”

No doubt about it, with “Fortunatus Infoelix” Harvey is targeting the Earl of Oxford, and therewith, for his part, he emphasizes the equation; “Master Fortunatus Infoelix” = Oxford.

Oxford’s ironic inversion reference to Hatton’s motto, “F.I.” may well be understood as a sarcastic jab between rivals, but there is no reason to interpret further meaning into the matter. There is no cause to say that Hatton was the inspiration for “Master F.I.,” or for Mistress Elynor’s midget secretary. The author draws his inspiration from true events but he doesn’t relate the said events, he uses them as a basis for his story. He plays a game with reality, but it remains a game. A lot of famous stories would have lost their fascination if the author had stuck rigidly to actual events.

VII. A Comparison of Poems (2)

There are a lot of similarities between the poems written under the name: “Master F.I.” (=Si fortunatus infoelix =Spraeta tamen vivunt =Ferenda natura =Meritum petere grave) and those which the young Earl of Oxford wrote under his own name. Anyone who reads “This tenth of March when *Aries* receyv’d” (*Flowres*, ed. Pigman, p.237) by “Spraeta tamen vivunt” and then compares it with “Sitting alone upon my thought” by the Earl of Oxford, will be convinced that they are both from the same author. In this case, the basic composition, the role-swapping games, the setting, the monologue that was spied upon and the humorous résumé are astonishingly similar. Comparing the two poems, verse for verse, will surely dissipate any doubts:

This tenth of March when *Aries* receyv’d,
Dan Phoebus rayes, into his horned head...
I crost the Thames, to take the cherefull ayre,
In open feeldes, the weather was so fayre.
And as I rowed, fast by the further shore,

I heard a voyce, which seemed to lament...

I sawe a Dame, who sat in weary wise
*Sitting alone upon my thought in melancholy mood,
In sight of sea, and at my back an ancient hoary wood,
I saw a fair young lady come, her secret fears to wail,
Clad all in colour of a nun, and covered with a veil;*

With scalding sighes, she uttred all hir mone,
The ruefull teares, downe rayned from hir eyes:
Hir lowring head, full lowe on hand she layde,
On knee hir arme: and thus this Lady sayde.

*Three times, with her soft hand, full hard on her left side she knocks,
And sigh'd so sore as might have mov'd some pity in the rocks;
From sighs and shedding amber tears into sweet song she brake,
When thus the echo answered her to every word she spake....*

Alas (quod she) behold eche pleasaunt greene,
Will now renew his sommers livery,
The fragrant flowers, which have not long bene seene,
Will florish now, (ere long) in bravery ...
The lustie Ver, which whilome might exchange
My grieffe to joy, and then my joyes encrease,
Springs now elsewhere, and showes to me but strange,
My winters woe, therefore can never cease:
In other coasts, his sunne full cleare doth shine,
And comforts lends to ev'ry mould but mine.

*Oh heavens ! who was the first that bred in me this fever ? Vere
Who was the first that gave the wound whose fear I wear for ever? Vere.
What tyrant, Cupid, to my harm usurps thy golden quiver ? Vere.
What sight first caught this heart and can from bondage it deliver ? Vere.*

What plant can spring, that feeles no force of Ver?
What floure can florish, where no sunne doth shine?

*Yet who doth most adore this sight, oh hollow caves tell true? You.
What nymph deserves his liking best, yet doth in sorrow rue ? You.*

Needes must I fall, I fade both roote and rinde,
My branches bowe at blast of ev'ry winde.
This sayde: shee cast a glance and spied my face,
By sight whereof, Lord how she chaunged hew?

*May I his favour match with love, if he my love will try? Ay.
May I requite his birth with faith? Then faithful will I die? Ay.*

Now Ladies you, that know by whom I sing,
And feele the winter, of such frozen wills:
Of curtesie, yet cause this noble spring,
To send his sunne, above the highest hilles:
And so to shyne, uppon hir fading sprayes,
Which now in woe, do wyther thus alwayes.

*And I, that knew this lady well,
Said, Lord how great a miracle,
To her how Echo told the truth,
As true as Phoebus' oracle.*

There are some obvious parallels between Master F.I. and William Shakespeare. For example, when Master F.I. is blinded by the unique beauty of his mistress, he writes the following lines for her:

The windowes of mine eies, are glaz'd with such delight,
As eche new face seemes full of faultes, that blaseth in my sight
(*Flowres*, 176)

In Sonnet 24, "Shake-Speare" goes a step further:

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart,
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is best painter's art.
For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies,
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.

In Master F.I.'s poem the delightful "glazing" of the eyes causes them to see better. Shakespeare has intensified this same "glaze" and sees things through the sharper eyes of a lover. In the poems of "Si fortunatus infoelix" the willingness of lovers to suffer is important: therefore the eyes play a major role, a glance can invite, or repel, the eyes that seduce so irresistibly can also refuse — cruelly and explicitly.

Looke where she likes, for lo this looke was cast,
Not for my love, but even to see my last. (*Flowres*, 227)

So looke, so lack, for in these toyes thus tost,
My lookes thy love, thy lookes my life have lost. (*Flowres*, 227)

Then though thy lookes should cause me for to dye,
Neeedes must I looke, bicause I live therby. (*Flowres*, 230)

Shakespeare also shows a certain fascination for the sufferings that the battle of love brings. The weapons of love are the eyes glances. Addressing the “Dark Lady” in Sonnet 139, he says:

Wound me not with thine eye but with thy tongue,
Use power with power, and slay me not by art...
Let me excuse thee, ah my love well knows,
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries.

Oxford alias “Meritum petere grave” writes:

Such thoughts I have, and when I thinke on thee,
My thoughts are there, whereas my bones would bee.
(*Flowres*, 254)

At the end of Valentine’s poem in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (3.1) “My thoughts do harbour with my Sylvia nightly,” we find:

I curse myself, for they [my thoughts] are sent by me,
That they should harbour where their lord should be.

“Fortunatus Infoelix” contributes a poem, in sonnet form, as a prologue to Gascoigne’s translation of “Jocasta.”

The argument of the Tragedie.

To scourge the cryme of wicked Laius,
And wrecke the foule Incest of Oedipus,
The angry Gods styrred up theyr sonnes, by strife
With blades embrewed to reave eache others life:
The wife, the mother, and the concubyne,
(Whose fearefull hart foredrad theyr fatall fine,)
Hir sonnes thus dead, disdayneth longer lyfe,
And slayes hirsself with selfsame bloudy knyfe:
The daughter she, surprisde with childish dreade
(That durst not dye) a lothsome lyfe doth leade,
Yet rather chose to guide hir banisht sire,

Than cruell Creon should have his desire.
Creon is King, the type of Tyranny,
And Oedipus, myrrour of misery.

Fortunatus Infoelix. (Flowres, 59)

In all of the English literature of the sixteenth century we can only find one other prologue in sonnet form, and that is in *Romeo and Juliet*:

The Prologue. Chorus

Two households both alike in dignity
(In fair Verona, where we lay our scene)

From ancient grudge break to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the fatal loins of these two foes
A pair of star-cross'd lovers take their life,
Whose misadventur'd piteous overthrows
Doth with their death bury their parents' strife.
The fearful passage of their death-mark'd love
And the continuance of their parents' rage,
Which, but their children's end, naught could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

With that, we rest our case for Oxford's sole authorship of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* and "Divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen" (1573).

VIII. Conclusion

To summarize, let us devote close attention to Prechter's arguments.

Prechter doesn't realize that Oxford and Gascoigne are deliberately trying to confuse us by changing roles. Oxford (alias "Si fortunatus infoelix," alias "Meritum petere grave") speaks twice as "G.G." Gascoigne, for his part, adopts a line from the poem "Ferenda Natura": "Myne eyes so blinded were, (good people marke my tale)/ That once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amide my weary *Bale*" (=Amid my *Bale* I bath in blisse). What Prechter overlooks is that both poets are referring to a line from Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale": "His herte bathed in a bath of utter blisse." This often-used quote has its own special characteristic. The story is told by the Wife of Bath but it is actually about a Knight whose life is in danger. He is given a year to find out what women really want, more than anything else. Shortly before his time is up an ugly old woman revealed the answer to him: What women really want most is sovereignty over their husbands. The Knight has to marry the old lady because she saved his life. In their marriage bed, the knight confesses that he is unhappy because she is ugly

and low-born. She tells him that he can choose between her being ugly and faithful or beautiful and unfaithful. He leaves the choice up to her; pleased with the mastery of her husband, she becomes *fair and good* (young, beautiful and faithful). “And whan the knyght saugh verrailly al this,/ That she so fair was, and so yong therto,/For joye he hente hire in his armes two./ *His herte bathed in a bath of blisse.*” The two authors of *Flowres* use this story in reference to a particular, beloved woman.

Oxford doesn't name the lady, but Gascoigne — alias Dan Bartholmew of Bath — gives her the name of “Ferenda Natura.” This mysterious lady is none other than Queen Elizabeth. (See Stephen Hamrick: *The Catholic imaginary and the cults of Elizabeth, 1558-1582*). The phrase “Amid my Bale I bath in blisse” in connection with Queen Elizabeth means that under her rule both men have managed to find a woman who is both beautiful and faithful: the Queen herself. The first homage to the faithful lady was written by Gascoigne's co-author — the Earl of Oxford — under the pseudonym “Ferenda Natura”!

Amid my Bale I bath in blisse
 I swim in heaven, I sink in hell:
 I find amends for every misse,
 And yit my moane no tongue can tell.
 I live and love, what wold you more:
 As never lover liv'd before...
 The which to thee (deare wenche) I write,
 That know'st my mirth, but not my moane:
 I praye God graunt thee deepe delight,
 To live in joyes when I am gone.
 I cannot live, it wyll not bee:
 I dye to thinke to part from thee.

(*Flowres*, 243)

The second bath-in-bliss poem was also written by Edward de Vere, this time signed with “Meritum petere grave.”

If ever man yit found the Bath of perfect blisse,
 Then swim I now amid the Sea where nought but pleasure is.
 I love and am beloved (without vaunt be it told)
 Of one more fayre than shee of *Grece* for whom proud *Troy* was sold.
 As bountifull and good as *Cleopatra* Queene:
 As constant as *Penelope* unto hir make was seene.
 What would you more? my pen unable is to write
 The least desart that seemes to shine within this worthy wight.
 So that for now I cease, with hands held up on hye,
 And crave of God that when I chaunge, I may be forst to dye.

(*Flowres*, 247)

Soon Gascoigne retracts the passionate declarations, claiming Oxford's poems for his own. As an unsuccessful courtier he complains about "Ferenda's" vicissitude:

Myne eyes so blinded were, (good people marke my tale)
That once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amidde my weary *Bale*.
(*Flowres*, 274)

He also says:

Lo thus I lye, and restlesse rest in Bathe,
Whereas I bathe not now in blisse pardie,
But boyle in bale and skamble thus in skathe,
Bycause I thinke on thine unconstancie...
("Dan Bartholmewes Dolorous discourses"; *Flowres*, 342)

That means: Both authors use the name "Ferenda Natura"; Oxford uses it as his posy and Gascoigne uses it as a name for the powerful object of his love; Queen Elizabeth.⁶ Gascoigne doesn't have the slightest intention of using the name "Ferenda Natura" as his motto, (even if Prechter suggests that he did). Instead of stealing the motto, he usurps the two "bath-in-bliss" poems from his co-author when he writes: "That once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amidde my weary *Bale*" (*Recantation*)—and on another occasion—in the "Posies" (1575) - he signs Oxford's poem: "If ever man yit found the Bath of perfect blisse" with his own motto: "Fato non Fortuna" (The substitution of mottos would have been pointless if "Meritum petere grave" and "Fato non Fortuna" were the same person.)

The two authors bounce ideas off each other at whim—this is too much for Prechter, who likes to work with labels and etiquettes rather than form and content. Had he paid more attention to the comments of Dan Bartholemew (=Gascoigne) he may well have come across this expression of gratitude which Gascoigne addressed to his co-author and publisher of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (*Flowres*, ed. Pigman, p.397):

Syr *Salamanke* to thee this tale is tolde,
Peruse it well and call unto thy minde,
The pleasaunt place where thou dydst first behold
The rewfull rymes: remember how the *Winde*
Dyd calmelye blowe: and made me leave behinde
Some leaves thereof: whiles I sate reading styll,
And thou then seemdst to hearken with good wyll.
Beleeve me nowe, hadst thou not seemd to lyke
The wofull wordes of *Bartholmews* discourse,
They should have lyen styll drowned in the dyke,
Lyke *Sybylls* leaves which flye with lytle force,
But for thou seemdst to take therein remorse,
I sought againe in corners of my brest,

To finde them out and place them with the rest.

Such skylle thou hast to make me (foole) beleeve,
 My babies are as brave as any bee,
 Well since it is so, let it never grieve
 Thy friendly minde this worthlesse verse to see
 In print at last: for trust thou unto mee,
 Thine onely prayse dyd make me venture forth,
 To set in shewe a thing so litle worth.

*Thus unto thee these leaves I recommend,
 To reade, to raze, to view, and to correct,
 Vouchsafe (my friend) therein for to amend
 That is amisse, remember that our sect,
 Is sure to bee with floutes alwayes infect.
 And since most mockes wyll light uppon my muse,
 Vouchsafe (my friend) hir faultes for to peruse.*

The conclusion that we reach is diametrically opposed to that reached by Prechter: Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose work came to be published under the name of “William Shakespeare,” is the author of the novel: *The Adventures of Master F.I.* including the introduction from the printer and publisher. Furthermore, in “Divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen” in the anthology, *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* (1573), Oxford, alias “Meritum petere grave,” played an epic game of hide and seek, with the soldier-poet George Gascoigne as his accessory, and then, edited *Flowres* as a collection of his own and Gascoigne’s work.



Endnotes

¹ *First* an excellente and pleasante Comedie entituled *Supposes*. [*Flowres* 1573, pp. 1-70]; *bThe second*, the wofull tragedie of Iocasta, containing the vtter subuersion of Thebes. [pp. 71-164]; *Thirdly*, a pleasant discourse of the adventures of master. F. J. conteyning excellent letters, sonets, Lays, Ballets, Rondlets, Verlayes and verses. [pp. 201-294]; *Fourthly*, diuers excellent deuises of sundry Gentlemen. [pp. 294-343]; *Fiftly*, certayne deuises of master Gascoyne, conteyning his anothamie, his arrignemente, his prayse of mistresse Bridges now Lady Sands, the his praise of Zouch late the Lady Grey of wilton. [pp. 344-411]
 Gascoyne his passion.
 Gascoines libell of diuorce.
 Gascoines praise of his mistresse

Gascoines Lullabie.

Gascoines Recantation.

Gascoynes fīue notable deuises upon fīue sundry theames giuen to him by fīue sundry Gentlemen in fīue sundry meeters.

Gascoines gloze upon *Dominus ijs opus haber*.

Gascoines good morrowe.

Gascoines good night.

Gascoines counsell to Douglas Diue.

Gascoines counsell to Bartholomew wythipole.

Gascoines Epitaph upo Captaine Bourcher lately slayne in Zelande, called the tale of the stone.

Gascoines deuise of a maske.

Gascoines wodmanship.

Gascoines gardening.

Gascoines last voyage into Holland in Marche. 1572.

Lastly the dolorous discourse of Dan Bartholmew of Bathe, wherin is conteyned his triumphes, his discourse of love, his extreme passion, his libell of request to Care, his last will and testament, his farewel. [pp. 412-448]

Last of all the reporter.

² See Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, *Fortunatus im Unglück. The Auenturen of Master F.I.*, ed. Kurt Kreiler. Frankfurt/M. 2006. Also, Kurt Kreiler, *Der Mann, der Shakespeare erfand. Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford*. Frankfurt/M. 2009

³ See Steven W. May, "The Authorship of 'My Mind to me a Kingdom is,'" *Review of English Studies*, New Series, Vol. 26, Nov. 1975. May attributes the poem to Oxford.

⁴**Peter.** I will dry-beat you with an iron wit, and put up my iron dagger. Answer me like men.

(he sings)

When griping griefs the heart doth wound,

And doleful dumps the mind oppress,

Then music with her silver sound –

Why 'silver sound'? Why 'music with her silver sound'?

What say you, Simon Catling?

(*Romeo and Juliet*, IV.5)

Only in the first edition of *The Paradies of Dainty Devices* is the poem "When griping griefs" mistakenly ascribed to the poet, Richard Edwards (1523-1566); in all of the following nine editions, the poem remains anonymous.

⁵ Gabriel Harvey, *Gratulationes Valdinenses*. London 1578. See: *Gratulationes Valdinenses* of Gabriel Harvey, ed. by Thomas Hugh Jameson (1938)

⁶ The politician and poet, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a continuation with an amusing poem to "Ferenda Natura" (MS. Harl. 7392, fol. 22):

Fain would I, but I dare not;
I dare, and yet I may not;
I may, although I care not,
for pleasure when I play not.
You laugh because you like not;
I jest whenas I joy not;
You pierce, although you strike not;
I strike and yet annoy not ...

Lenvoy

If sweet from sour might any way remove,
what joy, what hap, what heaven were like love.



Robert Prechter Responds

I'd like to briefly respond to several points made by Kurt Kreiler in his criticism of my article, "Hundredth Sundrie Flowres Revisited: Was Oxford Really Involved?" published in *Brief Chronicles II* (2010).

Kreiler argues that "the masterful narrative technique with the innovative content" of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* are strikes against Gascoigne's authorship of the story. In my view, (1) *F.I.* was indeed innovative, but this is not a strike against Gascoigne, several of whose efforts were innovative; (2) the narrative technique is no more "masterful" than anything else Gascoigne wrote; (3) Ward himself noted the similarities between *F.I.* and Gascoigne's *Dan Bartholomew*; (4) I noted in my paper, "The tedious opening paragraph of Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Government* (1575) is perfectly compatible with his authorship of *F.I.*"

Kreiler implies that we must conclude that the narrative is therefore Oxford's. But (1) Oxford, either as himself or Shakespeare, produced no prose fiction; (2) *F.I.* is below the standard of Oxford's prose writing of the time, per his introduction to Thomas Bedingfield's *Cardanus Comforte* in 1573; (3) Kreiler does not show that the prose in *F.I.* is in fact *Oxford's* as opposed to Gascoigne's or someone else's.

Kreiler reiterates that the fourth section of *Flowres* claims authorship by diverse poets, and that there are various mottoes attached to poems in the third, fourth and fifth sections, arguing that "from this we see clearly that the third and the fourth sections of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* were not solely written by the author of the fifth section (Gascoigne)." But Gascoigne in his follow-up book, *The Posies of George Gascoigne*, states that the earlier volume is his. We cannot take both books' claims at face value, because only one can be correct. Kreiler admits of the first book, that the fifth chapter in effect contradicts the introduction to the fourth chapter. But nothing in *Posies* is self-contradictory. If consistency prompts a conclusion, then we must side with Gascoigne's comments in *Posies*. But there are many more bases for a decision on the issue, as detailed in my article.

Kreiler says, "Furthermore, we find a clear difference in style between 'divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen' and 'certayne devises of master Gascoyne.'" I don't see any substantive differences, Kreiler does not make a case to that effect.

He states that "Master F.I." and "Si fortunatus infoelix" are the same individual, so F.I.'s identity "has, once and for all, been decoded." Elizabethan printers used *I* for

J, and “F.I.” here means “F.J.,” according to both the “Freeman Jones” name cited originally in *Flowres* and the “Ferdinando Jeronimi” name cited later in *Posies*. Yet *even if* F.I. had indicated the same person (real or imaginary) as “Si fortunatus infoelix,” the connection wouldn’t much matter, and I don’t see any “code.”

I do like his connecting one of the lines in a poem from *Flowres* featuring “G.G.” to lines from *Richard III*; each excerpt speaks of “G” and uses nearly the same term in “crists crosse rowe” vs. “cross-row.” But other aspects of the poem—the elevation of God and Gold, and its mincing cuteness, for example—are contrary to Oxford’s usual manner. A brief echo in Shakespeare, unfortunately, is not definitive. As noted in my article, Oxfordian scholars have had difficulty telling Oxford’s and Gascoigne’s verse apart, no doubt partly because Oxford and Gascoigne read each other’s work. Boas, for example, said that Shakespeare is much “indebted...to Gascoigne’s *Supposes*” for *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which “certain features of the under-plot...have their exact parallel in *Supposes*.” (Boas, *The Taming of a Shrew*, 1908, p.xxi) So, a single parallel instance of language no more argues that Oxford wrote the “G.G.” poem than that he wrote *Supposes*. Moreover, it still seems that “G.G.” is more likely to be George Gascoigne than anyone else, particularly since these initials appear in a book in which the only names cited are George Gascoigne, Francis Kinwelmarsh and “Chr. Yelverton.” But Kreiler avers: “The logical conclusion: either Gascoigne wrote in the role of the Earl or the Earl wrote in the role of Gascoigne,” which, to begin with, is a vague conclusion. But there is another valid option, which is that one of them—who was well versed in the other’s work—happened to write a line that sounds like a line by the other.

Kreiler also shows how a few lines from some of the other poems in *Flowres* are like some lines from Shakespeare. Such citations are not lost on me. They seem to confirm at least that one writer read the other. But let’s face it: Out of *hundreds* of pages by acquainted poets with similar sensibilities, we should be stunned if we didn’t find any like lines. Nevertheless, if one were to do a *thorough* analysis of this type, linking certain poems to Oxford’s writing and *contrasting* them to Gascoigne’s accepted writing, it might constitute a good case that Oxford is behind some poems in *Flowres*. But as I pointed out, some of the lines in these poems also match others from Gascoigne’s accepted work and/or are contrary to Oxford’s usual manner, so I doubt such an exercise would produce the conclusion at which he drives.

Kreiler mentions the use of *Ver*, but I covered that.

He repeats the assertion that Ward “deciphered” an acrostic in one poem to read “Edward de Vere,” but I carefully countered that claim. He says, “Up to now, nobody has proven Ward’s interpretation to be incorrect,” but I also cited a paper to that effect by Genevieve Ambrose from 1927.

He credits the “My Lucke is losse” poems from *Paradyse of Dainty Devises* to Oxford and states that “‘My Lucke is losse’ is the English variation of ‘Master Fortunatus Infoelix’ (=THE FORTUNATE UNHAPPY from *Twelfth Night*).” I am not convinced that his conclusion follows, and if it did, I am not sure it would constitute any evidence with respect to the authorship of Gascoigne’s book.

Some of his Kreiler’s arguments utterly escape me, for example, this paragraph:

In Humphrey Coningsby's collection of handwritten poems (BL, MS Harl.7392, fol. 19) the poem "If fortune may enforce" is ascribed to "RO. LOO." and (written in a woman's handwriting) "Balle." The cipher "Ball(e)" identifies the Earl of Oxford as being the author of five other poems in MS Harl.7392, also signed "Ball". ...The abbreviation "RO. LOO.," comparable to "Lo. Ox." from MS Harl. 7392, fol. 18v, must be read as "Robert Lord Oxenford." As there is no Robert Oxenford and because the word "Balle" emphasises the identification, we can safely assume that Edward Oxenford is meant. In other words; Humphrey Coningsby's assignation identifies "My lucke is losse" = "Master Fortunatus Infoelix" as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

His statement that Harvey's 1578 speech calls Oxford one who is fortunate but unhappy might provide a wisp of information supporting the case that Oxford is somehow behind the "Si Fortunatus Infoelix" poems in Gascoigne's book. But the contra-indications listed in my paper trump this far-removed datum. Regardless, the Flowres-Oxford myth holds that the posy refers to *Christopher Hatton*, which I showed to be highly unlikely, and Kreiler seems to agree with that conclusion.

Kreiler prints the poem "This tenth of March" from the *Spreta tamen vivunt* series in Gascoigne's book next to Oxford's "Sitting Alone" poem. As already noted in my paper, this is "Perhaps the poem in *Flowres* most suggestive of Oxford's composition." I ultimately argued against that assignment for five particular reasons, and I repeat that the two authors probably read and drew from each other, possibly making Gascoigne's poem a model for Oxford's, or vice versa. Nevertheless, even if (repeat, *if*) one were able to confirm that one or more of Oxford's poems ended up in Gascoigne's book, it would not follow that Oxford even knew his poems were being published, that *F.I.* was scandalous, that Oxford is *F.I.*, that he wrote *F.I.*, published *Flowres*, did so clandestinely, hid his name in an acrostic, hated Christopher Hatton, sought to embarrass Hatton, demanded a coverup, or that Hatton hated Oxford, or that there is truth to any of the other baggage that Ward's myth carries with it.

He charges, "Prechter doesn't realize that Oxford and Gascoigne deliberately try to confuse us by changing roles." He's right; I definitely do not realize this. In a comment worthy of Ward's claim about the supposed dual authorship of Gascoigne's matching "rain shower" comments, Kreiler says, "What Prechter overlooks is that both men are referring to a line that Chaucer wrote in "The Wife of Bath's Tale.'" But doesn't it make more sense that one man would refer to the same story? Especially if that man claimed Chaucer as his main influence, as Gascoigne did? Also, if that man's name is the only one connected to the publication under scrutiny?

He ascribes a poem to Oxford beginning thus:

Amid my Bale I bath in blisse
I swim in heaven, I sink in hell:

I find amends for every misse,
And yit my moane no tongue can tell.

However, we have no evidence that Oxford wrote sing-song verse in tetrameter, whereas Gascoigne did. Moreover, as Kreiler admits, Gascoigne outright claimed the poem, saying, “once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amide my weary *Bale*.” Consider also: There are four pairings of *bathe* and *blisse* in Gascoigne’s book. Wouldn’t a reader conclude that the poet was fond of this pairing? But rather than ascribe all references to “bathe in blisse” to one writer, Kreiler concludes that two authors are involved, that Gascoigne (for no stated reason) in two cases is “claiming Oxford’s poems for his own,” and that Gascoigne later in *Posies* inexplicably “signs Oxford’s poem...with his own motto: ‘Fato non Fortuna.’” To make his scenario work, he must further assert, “Both authors use the name ‘Ferenda Natura’; Oxford uses it as his posy and Gascoigne uses it as a name for the powerful object of his love; Queen Elizabeth.” Oxford had posies? Gascoigne was in love with the Queen? Gascoigne purloined one of Oxford’s poems despite being heroically prolific? Gascoigne and Oxford used the same phrase for different purposes? In one book? With Gascoigne’s name attached? Kreiler’s claims seem to be an exercise in affirming the consequent rather than using Occam’s razor.

Kreiler asserts that Gascoigne’s lines in “Dan Bartholomew” beginning “Syr *Salamanke* to thee this tale is tolde” is an “expression of gratitude that he addressed to his co-author and publisher of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*.” Yet nothing in those lines indicates any co-author or publisher, much less the Earl of Oxford. He makes no case as to why Gascoigne would call Oxford “Syr *Salamanke*.” Granted, there is no proof that the lines are *not* addressed to Oxford, and it would be nice to think that our hero encouraged Gascoigne’s efforts. But even if this were the case, how does Gascoigne’s expression of gratitude become evidence that Oxford—or anyone else—*wrote* part of Gascoigne’s book? If anything, his words indicate precisely the opposite, because in this poem Gascoigne thanks only a *reader*, someone who “dydst first *behold*/The rewoffull rymes,” who “made me *leave behind*/ *Some leaves*,” who praised “*My babies*,” causing him “To *set in shewe* a thing so litle worth.” Gascoigne does ask his friend “to correct” and “to amend/That is amisse,” but there is no indication that the friend did so. Nor does Kreiler therefore argue that said friend simply did some editing, and no one has ever argued that Oxford merely corrected a few of Gascoigne’s lines. The Ward myth is much grander and more nefarious than that. Remember, the story requires that Oxford be a cad who manipulated Gascoigne for despicable purposes. Yet the cited lines, if in fact they did show Gascoigne thanking Oxford, would contradict the whole myth of Oxford’s ill intent and support the case that he was innocent. All ways, Gascoigne’s thank-you lines challenge the Flox myth and even Kreiler’s more limited theory that Oxford wrote part of *Flowres*.

Kreiler asserts of Gascoigne and Oxford, “The two authors bounce ideas off each other at whim— this is too much for a reader such as Prechter who likes to work with labels and etiquettes rather than form and content.” You will find discussions of form and content in my paper, but on one point he is correct: I am indeed unable in this case to discern “two authors” who “bounce ideas off each other at whim.” Form and

content are important, but so is coherence. For the record, I have done extensive work separating co-authors, both real and pseudonymous, from each other in numerous works; an example is my current article on *Willobie His Avis* in this volume of *Brief Chronicles*.

Kreiler ends with this summary: "Oxford, alias 'Meritum petere grave' [yet another posy] played an epic game of hide and seek, with the soldier-poet, George Gascoigne as his accessory." For some reason, followers of Ward's theory don't stop at suggesting that some of the poems in the book are Oxford's; they spin intricate tales of intrigue around it. My hat is off to those who can derive "an epic game of hide and seek" from the pages of *Flowres* and *Posies*.





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