



The Singing Swallow: Sir John Davies and Shakespeare

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True hope is swift, and flies with swallow's wings;
Kings it makes gods, and meaner creatures Kings.

Richard III (V. ii. 23)¹

One of the persistent puzzles of the Elizabethan period is the identity of the "singing Swallow" in John Davies' poem, *Orchestra or a Poeme of Dauncing*. The reference appears in stanza 131 of the poem as it was originally printed:

O that I might that singing Swallow heare
To whom I owe my service and my love,
His sugred tunes would so enchant mine eare
And in my mind such sacred fury move,
As I shou'd knock at heav'ns great gate above
 With my proud rimes, which of this heav'nly state
I doe aspire the shadow to relate.²

I think the meaning of Davies' words is literal. They mean that his own poetic efforts take flight as a result of hearing those produced by the Swallow—sweet, swift, singing "inventions." These qualities serve to define the nature of the poet Davies identified with the Swallow. In fact, these lines, with their clarion echo of Shakespeare's sonnet 29, do what they say, demonstrate what they state. To think that the Swallow

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stands for either Richard Martin or Henry Wotton—two candidates that have been proposed—forces us to question Davies’ taste or veracity or both.³ The evidence I have gathered and present here allows us to avoid that difficulty by identifying the Swallow with “William Shakespeare,” that is, Edward de Vere, the seventeenth Earl of Oxford. The evidence in support of this identification is of three kinds. First, the established connections between Davies and Oxford. Second, the date of composition of *Orchestra* and the event for which it seems to have been composed. And third, the literary and theatrical traditions surrounding the figure of the swallow.



Charles Wisner Barrell, that prodigious and entertaining Elizabethan scholar, first drew attention to the connections between Davies and Oxford in his dazzling but too little known analysis of the *Epistle Dedicatorie* to Thomas Nash’s pamphlet, “Strange News” (1593). Barrell’s main aim in that piece of literary detective work was to identify the recipient of the *Epistle Dedicatorie*—a man Nash addressed as “Gentle M[aster] William”—with the Earl of Oxford. Barrell made that identification with learning and verve. But what concerns us here is a single paragraph from Nash’s *Epistle*: “By whatsoever thy visage holdeth most precious I beseech thee, by John Davies’s soul and the blue Boar in the Spittle I conjure thee to draw out thy purse, and give me nothing for the dedication of my Pamphlet.”⁴

Barrell reasonably concluded from this paragraph, in part: “That John Davies’s poem, *Of the Soul of Man* (the second part of *Nosce Teipsum*) was considered ‘precious’ by the Earl of Oxford in 1592 is plausible enough.” He goes on to point out that Nash’s testimony serves to corroborate that of Nahum Tate, who as Poet Laureate could have had access to the manuscript of *Nosce Teipsum* that Davies presented to the Queen. When Tate republished *Nosce Teipsum* in 1697, he included Davies’ poem dedicating the work to Queen Elizabeth, a poem dated 11 July 1592 (Barrell, 944).

There is a little more evidence to support this early date of composition for *Nosce Teipsum*. (The poem was first published in 1599 and many scholars, following Alexander Grosart, think of it as written after, rather than before, *Orchestra*, Davies' epigrams, and so on.) Anonymous "Notes of the Life of Sir John Davys" dated May 2, 1674, and preserved among the Carte Papers at the Bodleian Library include this statement on the poem: "...ye first essay of his pen was so well relisht yt ye queen encouraged him in his studdys, promising him preferment, and had him sworn her servant in ordinary" (Krueger, 324).

It is, of course, incredible that *Nosce Teipsum* was literally "ye first essay of his pen." That Davies composed the work when he was only twenty-three years old is extraordinary enough without trying to believe that he did so with no apprentice work. Barrell suggested a partial solution to this problem with these words: "...by the age of twenty (1589) Davies had made himself persona grata to the same literary set in London that Oxford favored. He appears to have written at least one of the anti-Martin Marprelate tracts" (Barrell, 944). The "tract" Davies appears to have written was a verse pamphlet issued as "Sir Martin Marpeople, his Coler of Esses, Workmanly wrought by Maister Simon Soothsayer, Goldsmith of London, and offered to sale upon great necessity by John Davies." This verse pamphlet is clearly work Davies was capable of producing, and its appearance in 1590 represents the first time John Davies' name appeared in print. That Davies entered the Middle Temple on 3 February 1587-88 and that Thomas Nash knew Davies' poetry in manuscript in 1592 increase the likelihood of Davies' involvement in the anti-Martinist campaign.

In his note on Davies, Charles Wisner Barrell wrote, "John Davies is one of the most important contemporary witnesses against the Stratford claimant and in favor of the Earl of Oxford as the real Bard. But his evidence is much too interesting to include in these brief notes" (Barrell, 944). What Barrell probably had in mind was the material eventually brought to light by Davies' most recent editor, Robert Krueger, who worked with a unique manuscript collection in the Bodleian of which earlier editors were unaware—adding immeasurably to our knowledge of Davies and Oxford-Shakespeare.



In 1962, Robert Krueger published for the first time an “Epithalamion” by Davies which is made up of ten sonnets. The first sonnet in the series is an introductory one entitled Epithalamion Io: Daviesij. Each of the remaining nine sonnets is addressed by one of the muses to a couple about to be married. The wedding for which Davies composed this series of poems was that of Elizabeth Vere, the daughter of the seventeenth Earl of Oxford, to William Stanley, the six Earl of Derby. As Krueger wrote:

The conveniently inscribed date (‘finis 95 Ian:’) gives the first clue to the marriage being celebrated in the “Epithalamion.” The second occurs in the poem, where Melpomene mentions the bride’s cousin:

Your most victorious cosin warlike Vere,
The glory of your glorious familie...

This is the same Francis Vere (1560-1609) whose valour Davies celebrated in his 40th Epigram, ‘In Afrum,’ written about the same time:

He tells how Gronigen is taken in
By the braue conduct of illustrious Vere....

Davies gives a third clue in a speech by Calliope, who says she will witness ‘an earls daughter married to an Erle’. This evidence points unerringly to a famous marriage of the time: Elizabeth Vere, daughter of Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, to William Stanley, Earl of Derby, on 26 January 1594-5.⁵

Because of the relationship of these sonnets to Davies’ *Orchestra* and their echoes of Shakespeare’s sonnets, it is worth reproducing them here in full:

Love not that Love that is a child and blynde
But that Heroicke, honorable Love
Which first the fightinge Elements combinde,
And taught the world in harmony to move:
That God of Love, whose sweet attractive power
First founded cities, and societyes,
Which links trewe frendes, and to each paramor
That virtewe loves, a virtewous Love affies.
This Love hath caused the Muses to record
Their sweetest tuens, and most celestiall,
To you sweet Lady, and to you great Lorde,
In honor of your joyfull nuptiall.

And to their tuens this prayer they still apply,
That with your dayes your joyes maye multiplie.

Clio.

Illustrious Lord, heire of that happy race
Which with great Lordshipps doth great Love inherit,
Raysd by the heavens unto that glorious place,
Which your great grawnseirs did by virtewe merit:
And you sweete Lady, virtewes noble fayre,
Whom when I name your grandsier, father, mother,
Of all whose excellencies you are heire,
I then extoll, and prayse above all other.
Your famous Auncestors eternall names
My diamond pen in adamant shall write,
And I will spread your owne younge Loving fames,
As far as Phoebus spreades his glorious Light.

Still with my tuens importuninge the skye,
That with your dayes your Joyes maye multiplie.

Thalia.

And I the merry Muse of Comedyes,
That with a marriage ever end my playe,
Will into mirth, and greatest joye arise,

While I applawd this blessed marriage daye.
Yet will I sadly praye my Father Jove,
That as cross chaunce fought not agaunst your will
In the fayre course of your most happy Love,
So with out crosse ye maye continewe still.
That as the voice and Echo doe agree,
So maye you both, both doe, and saye the same,
And as your eyes being two, but one thinge see,
So maye ye to one end your actions frame.
 So shall your Lyves be a sweete harmonye,
 And with your dayes your Joyes shall multiplie.

Melpomene.

And I which sownd the tragicke tuens of warr,
Have Layd my harsh and fearfull Trumpe aside,
Wherwith I usd to rende the ayre a farr,
In service of your cosin, bewtious bride.
Your most victorious cosin, warlike Vere,
The glory of your glorious familye;
A braver spirit the earth did never beare,
Since first the fyer of lyfe came from the skye:
This fyery starre of Mars my trumpett tooke,
And put a warlinge lute betwine my handes,
And with a joyfull voyce and joyfull looke,
Sent me to blesse these sacred marriage bandes,
 And to commend his vowes to Jove on hie,
 That with your dayes your joyes maye multiplie.

Euterpe.

And I betwine whose lipps the ayre doth playe,
Changinge her wanton forme ten thousand wayes,
Will not distingwish one halfe note this daye,
Which shall not sownd both to your joye and prayse,
For even your marriage doth sweete musicke make,
Like two sweete notes matcht in an unisone,

Where each from other doth full sweetnesse take,
Where one could make no harmony aloane.
Longe maye you Joye such sympathye of Loves
As doth betwine the Elme and Vine remayne,
Or betwine palme trees, twinns, and turtle doves,
Wher in one Lyfe doth live the Lives of twayne.
 Longe live you in each other mutually,
 That with your dayes your Joyes maye multiplie.

Terpsicore.

And I whose cunninge feete with measurd motion
Express the musicke which my Sisters singe,
Will nowe in songes expresse my trewe devotion,
To you which to my Arte most honor bringe;
For who can dawnce with better skill and grace,
Then you great bridgroome, or then you fayre bride?
Whether a solleme measure ye doe pase,
Or els with swifter tuens more swiftly slide.
Still maye you dawnce, and keepe that measure still
In all your lyfe which you in dawncinge shewe,
Where both the man and woman have one will,
And both at once the selfe same paces goe.
 So shall you never drawe your yoke awry.
 But with your dayes your joyes shall multiplie.

Erato.

And I the waytinge mayde of bewtyes Queene,
Which oft am wonte to singe of wanton Love,
Since I these sacred nuptials have seene,
An other godhead in my brest doth move;
For nowe I singe of bewty of the minde,
Which bewtifies the fayrest outward bewty,
And of a passion which is never blinde,
But waytes on virtewe with respectfull dutye.
O sacred Love, where one loves only one,

Where each to other is a mirror fayre
Wherein them selves are each to other shone:
Such is your sacred love, illustrious payre,
 Whose fyer like Vestas flame shall never dye,
 But with your dayes your joyes shall multiplye.

Polyhimnia.

And I which with my gesture seeme to speake,
Will speake indeede, in honor of this daye,
And with my sweetest tuens the ayre will breake,
Which shall to Jove passe through the milkey waye.
Even to the eares of Jove my tuens shall come,
And be for you (sweet bride) a zelous praier,
That as a cherye graft uppon a plumme,
You maye be fruitfull in your issues fayre.
Or that you and your Love be like two streames,
Which meetinge after many windes and crookes,
Soe spread their mingled waves through many realmes,
And from them selves dirive a thousande brookes.
 And though the lesser loose her name thereby,
 Yet with her dayes her Joyes shall multiplye.

Calliope.

And I which singe th'eroicke Love of Kinges,
Must use like notes whiles I your names rehearse,
For he which your great names in number singes,
With names of Princes doth adorne his verse.
And princly is your match as gold and Pearle,
Both bewtifull, each other bewtifie;
So an earls daughter married to an Erle,
Gives and receaves like honor mutually.
And as the purest cullors which alone,
Sett by themselves, imperfect bewty make,
Wher they are mingled and conjoynd in one,
One from an other lyfe and lustre take.

So you beinge matcht, each other glorifie,
That with your dayes your Joyes maye multiplye.

Urania.

But I the Muse of Heaven, to heaven will rayse (you,)
And your fayre names in starry letters write,
That they which dwell under both poles maye prayse you
And in rehearsall of your names delight.
And you fayre Bride, shall like fayre Cynthia shine,
Which beinge in conjunction with the Sunne,
Doth seeme her beames and glory to resigne,
But hath indeede more light and virtewe wonne.
Longe shall you shine on earth, like Lampes of heaven,
Which when you Leave, I will you stellifie;
To you sweet bride, shall Hebes place be given,
But your Lord shall his Ganimedes roome supplye.
Till when I will invoke each dyetye,
That with your Dayes your joyes maye multiplye.

Krueger's careful analysis of the other contents in the manuscript collection containing these sonnets—a manuscript collection which he convincingly argues was based on Davies' own manuscripts—throws new light on the composition of John Davies' *Orchestra*. Krueger, who uses the initials of the compiler of the manuscript, LF (Leweston Fitzjames), to identify the collections, notes: "LF shows that Davies made two important but independent structural changes in *Orchestra*—one before its first publication in 1596, the other before its second printing in 1622. These alterations have caused confusion in understanding the poem, and have prompted the erroneous belief that it was never completed."⁶ The first of these structural changes—the one Davies introduced before the first publication of *Orchestra* in 1596, shows "the poem originally contained only 113 stanzas and was considered complete by Davies in that form" (Krueger 49, 17-29).

Through an analysis of the manuscript and the structure of the poem, Krueger soundly argues that Davies inserted stanzas 109-126 of

the poem “not because he felt the poem required them, but either because he simply wanted to pay homage to Elizabeth more overtly, or—which I feel more likely—because the poem was to be used in an entertainment attended by the Queen” (Krueger 49, 17-29). He goes on to note, “...stanzas 119-126 particularly suggest that they might have been written for use in a court entertainment at which the Queen was present. All the action narrated is such that it could easily have been acted” (Krueger 49, 17-29). Finally, Krueger wrote of the Epithalamion written by Davies for the marriage of Elizabeth Vere and William Stanley:

On reading the Epithalamion, the marked similarity it bears to *Orchestra* in thought, imagery, and diction will be so immediately apparent that it requires no illustration here. By simply altering their rhyme scheme, some of the lines could easily be transferred from one poem to the other. They are products of the same period, written in the same style: smooth, light, and easy, with an Elizabethan love for pageantry and classical allusion (Krueger 50, 8).

Professor Krueger fails to let his mind follow where his evidence inevitably points: the Epithalamion and *Orchestra* were written for the same court entertainment at which Queen Elizabeth was in attendance—the festivities held at Greenwich for the marriage of Elizabeth Vere and William Stanley. Not only the stanzas Krueger draws attention to but the whole of *Orchestra* could easily have been, not acted, but presented as a recitation accompanied by music, dancing, and, perhaps, dumb shows. The very name of the work should have been the key to it long ago—*Orchestra* is not only Greek for dancing, it is also the name of that part of the Greek theater in which the Chorus danced and chanted, an area below what would be considered the stage proper.

Seen in this setting, *Orchestra* takes on a very literal and concrete meaning; it is given a local habitation and a name. When, in stanza 6, Davies makes what has been thought of as a merely rhetorical appeal to his Muse:

Sing then Terpsichore, my light Muse sing
His gentle art, and cunning curtesie:

You lady can remember every thing,
For you are daughter of Queene Memorie:
But singe a plaine and easy melodie:
For the soft meane that warbleth but the ground
To my rude eare doth yeeld the sweetest sound.

it is likely that a member of the wedding party stood, present as Davies' Muse. Since there is a logical break in the structure of *Orchestra* following this appeal, it is at least possible that the Muse responded with the sonnet in the Epithalamion assigned to Terpsichore.

Though Krueger nowhere suggests the whole of *Orchestra* was an entertainment or interlude, he writes of it as if it were: "The opening five stanzas provide the story's legendary background. Stanza 6 uses the familiar poetic device of an invocation to the Muse—in this case the Muse of Dancing, since *Orchestra* is subtitled *A Poeme of Dauncing*. Five further stanzas give the setting, after which Antinous invites Penelope to dance, preparing for the situation. Her refusal (stanzas 14-15) prompts him to describe how Dancing was created by Love and acts as a harmonizing force in the cosmic order, etc." (Krueger 49, 17-29). It would be impossible to give a more accurate description of the opening of the poem. Let us see now if a few details of the poem will bear being placed in the setting I have suggested for it.

The legendary basis for *Orchestra* is indeed very slight. It begins with the story, drawn from Homer, of loyal Penelope waiting for the return of Ulysses, despite the fact that he has been reported dead. It soon breaks clean from this basis, however, by adding to the tale of these loyal lovers an element which Davies claims Homer either forgot, or was unaware of, or failed to discuss for fear it would hurt Ulysses—the story of Antinous:

Antinous that fresh and jolly knight,
Which of the gallants that did undertake
To win the widdow, had most wealth and might,
Wit to perswade, and beautie to delight.

(Stanza 5)

Was this “story” appropriate for the wedding of Elizabeth Vere and William Stanley? Fortunately, we know a good deal about the events surrounding this match.

Elizabeth Vere, like Penelope, was no widow, but she lived in a kind of widowed state during her long engagement to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, which seems to have extended from about 1590 until 1594. This was no love match, but rather a match made in the mundane heaven of Elizabeth’s court. Neither of the parties to this engagement seems to have wished to marry the other. Shakespearean scholars who are hostile to the Oxford theory have reasonably argued that the first seventeen of Shakespeare’s sonnets were written to encourage the Earl of Southampton to accept the match. Elizabeth Vere’s grandfather, William Cecil, Lord Burghley, was apparently anxious to see the match consummated so that one of his kin would gain access to the Earl of Southampton’s wealth—wealth Cecil could control while Southampton was a ward under Cecil’s guardianship. Throughout this precarious engagement other attempts were apparently made to marry Cecil’s granddaughter to men of noble rank and means, but she refused. It seems that she had eyes only for William Stanley, who, as a younger son with neither title nor wealth, made, in Ruth Loyd Miller’s phrase, a poor marriage prospect “for a young lady whose grandfather and guardian was looking for advantageous family alliances.”⁷ Stanley spent much of this time, like Ulysses, traveling abroad. Mistaken reports of the deaths of Elizabethan travellers were common.

If Penelope can reasonably stand for Elizabeth Vere and Ulysses for William Stanley, it seems likely that Antinous stands for Edward de Vere, urging his daughter to marry:

One only night’s discourse I can report,
When the great Torch-bearer of Heaven was gone
Down in a maske unto the Ocean’s Court,
To revell it with Thetis all alone;
Antinous disguised and unknowne,
Like to the Spring in gaudie ornament,
Unto the Castle of the Princesse went.

(stanza 7)

What to my mind suggests the Earl of Oxford here, and suggests that Oxford is the Swallow to whom John Davies refers at the end of *Orchestra*, is the description of him working to convince Penelope to enter the courtly dance of love “disguised and unknowne, / Like to the Spring in gaudie ornament.” It has been frequently pointed out that Vere or Ver is the Latin for spring. More to the point, in an interlude by Thomas Nash, *Summers Last Will and Testament*, the character of Ver is based on Oxford and clearly identifies him with plays, dancing, and poetry, as well as spring.⁸ Oxford was known for his extravagant dress, plumes, jewelry, and rich clothing—gaudie ornament. Finally, the phrase clearly echoes the first of Shake-speare’s sonnets: “Thou that art now the world’s fresh ornament / And only herald to the gaudy spring.” John Davies’ *Orchestra* seems to embody the love dance which had gone on for some time between Elizabeth Vere, Henry Wriothesley, William Stanley, Queen Elizabeth, and the Earl of Oxford. Oxford may well have used masks and dances to urge the Queen to intervene and bring a resolution to the situation by either encouraging Southampton to marry or by elevating William Stanley to a position that would make him acceptable to Burghley. That William Shakespeare of Stratford could have taken an interest in any of this is preposterous. Still, no less an authority than E. K. Chambers has suggested that Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* was performed at Greenwich at the wedding of Elizabeth Vere and William Stanley.

As in a Shakespearean comedy, the lovers were finally married—but not through the intervention of the Queen. The sudden death of William Stanley’s elder brother, the fifth Earl of Derby, metamorphosed Stanley into the sixth Earl and, reportedly, one of the wealthiest men in the kingdom. William Cecil would therefore permit the wedding to take place. It was with a little maliciousness as well as humor that the Queen notified Cecil that she expected him to dance at this wedding. As Conyers Read wrote in his life of Cecil:

She [the Queen] sent word to Burghley that she expected him to dance at the wedding. He wrote about it to Robert [Cecil] on December 2nd: “For her hope to have me dance, I must have a

longer time to learn to go, but I will be ready in mind to dance with my heart when I shall behold her favorable disposition to do such honours to her maid [Elizabeth was both namesake and a maid of honour to the Queen] for an old man's sake."

There is one apparent drawback to the basis for the composition of John Davies' *Orchestra* suggested here. The work was originally registered for publication as early as June, 1594, months before the wedding. This apparent drawback can be explained in a way that, to my mind, clinches the argument.

The wedding was agreed to and planned as soon as the fifth Earl of Derby died on 16 April 1594. The plans had to be cancelled, however, when it was learned that the fifth Earl's widow was pregnant, possibly with a male heir. This posthumous child was a girl, which made William Stanley the sixth Earl and permitted the wedding to proceed on 26 January 1594-5. It seems to me that the original, complete *Orchestra* of 113 stanzas which Robert Krueger describes is the poem that Davies wrote in fifteen days and nights, as he says in his Dedicatory Sonnet to Richard Martin. I suggest that the joyous news of the wedding from his master, the Earl of Oxford, whose financial position would also be greatly improved by the marriage, provided the immediate impetus for the composition of that poem. When the wedding plans fell through, the patronage Davies expected to win by the poem fell through. So, possibly in great need (as he had been in 1590), he sold the poem to be printed, and it was registered for publication. Oxford no doubt did not wish for the piece to be published, and the necessity for selling it vanished when the marriage plans proceeded. It is not unlikely that Oxford suggested that Davies add verses which would cause the piece to end on a tribute to the Queen, explaining why Penelope is most clearly identified with the Queen in these inserted stanzas, as Krueger realized. This explanation of the composition of *Orchestra* fits the facts as we know them, if the Earl of Oxford is the singing Swallow to whom Davies owed his service and his love.



One feature of good literature is that it means more than it says. It can be enjoyed or appreciated on several levels simultaneously, depending on the wit or knowledge of the work's readers or listeners. What comes to mind for most readers or listeners, I should think, when they come across a reference to a swallow, is the proverb "one swallow does not make summer" or, as it is sometimes given, "one swallow does not make spring." There is no poet of the Elizabethan period, much less one known for the singing quality of his poetry, his sweet "sugred tunes," for whom the literary history of this proverb could have more meaning than the Earl of Oxford.

The proverb derives from Aesop's fable of *The Spendthrift and the Swallow*:

A few warm days in winter brought a swallow from its hiding-place, and a young prodigal seeing it, sold his cloak and spent the proceeds in riotous living. But the frost returned, and he discovered, to his sorrow, that "one swallow does not make summer."

Oxford was profligate in his youth, and it is likely that William Cecil used this proverb to try to restrain the young peer's extravagance and spending. More than that, for all children, but particularly for those children destined to become writers, their names have a special attraction. Our names are usually the first words we learn to write. Imagine the force this proverb had for Edward de Vere as a boy, when he came across it in Latin books of maxims compiled by Erasmus and other Renaissance scholars: *Ver non una dies, no una reducit hirundo*, or again, *Una hirundo non facit ver*. As he matured and his interest in plays, particularly comedies, deepened, he would have found it in places which would have connected it in his mind with his calling, his vocation: in *The Knights* by Aristophanes ("Look, friends, don't you see a swallow? The herald of Spring.") and in the same playwright's *The Birds* ("That requires more than one swallow, I'm thinking."). And he would have found it perhaps most forcibly in the Italian he loved: *Una rondine non fa primavera*.

All of this, alone, would only suggest the possibility of a multilingual

and rather roundabout pun which some listeners to John Davies' *Orchestra* might have smiled at when it was recited before wits and courtiers at the wedding of Edward de Vere's daughter. But the two works which gave this proverb its currency in English in Elizabethan times suggests perfectly the relationship between John Davies and the Earl of Oxford.

The first English work in which the proverb appears, given as "one swalowe maketh not sommer, men saie," was the *Proverbs* of John Heywood, issued in 1546, four years before Oxford's birth. Heywood was not only known for his book of proverbs but also for his epigrams and for his comic interludes performed at court under Edward and Mary. He lived his last years in retirement, and when he died is not known. He received wages for singing at court from Henry VIII as early as 1515. That John Davies consciously competed with the memory of Heywood appears in one of Davies' epigrams, written sometime before November 1594:

In Haywodum. 29

Haywood, that did in Epigrams excell,
Is now put downe since my light Muse arose;
As buckets are put downe into a well,
Or as a schoole-boy putteth down his hose.

It is highly unlikely that a swallow could be mentioned by an author of an interlude during a court performance without bringing John Heywood to mind for many listeners. His memory would bring with it for at least some listeners thoughts of the good old days—Roman Catholicism or, at least, Episcopalianism; feudalism; and an agricultural society in which life moved to the measure of the seasons, in which a person's place was fixed by birth and blood, a society the last glorious expression of which can be found in the plays of Shakespeare.

Curiously, the other current, popular work which spread this proverb was John Northbrooke's *Against Dancing*, issued in 1577. This book, remarkable as the first denunciation in English of plays and interludes, of dancing and dicing, contains the first references to The Theatre and

The Curtain and gives some idea of the topics dealt with in the plays performed in those public theaters. This book represents what some would have considered to be the slightly uncouth expression of the coming winter, of a new order, based on money and trade instead of blood, that moved to the measure of busy streets in seaport cities instead of the seasons, that was outspokenly Protestant, a forerunner of Martin Marprelate and, later, the Puritans who closed the theaters. It is possible that Davies composed his *Orchestra or a Poeme of Dauncing* at least in part as an answer to Northbrooke, a defiant announcement that the old ruling class still ruled and would continue to rule, thanks to marriages like the one he celebrated.

Finally, listeners to *Orchestra* would have heard in Davies' tribute to the singing Swallow echoes of lines from the plays of Shakespeare—Falstaff asking Lancaster, "Do you think me a swallow, an arrow, or a bullet?" or the second Lord addressing Timon of Athens: "The swallow follows not summer more willing than we your lordship."⁹ But Grosart long ago pointed out that the close of *Orchestra* sounds like a new invocation. The five stanzas that close with the appeal and tribute to the singing swallow (which appeared in the 1596 edition of the poem but were excised from the 1622 edition, the edition issued the year before the appearance of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays) begin by dismissing the muse who had presided over *Orchestra*, the muse of dancing, and invoking another muse:

Away, Terpsichore, light Muse away!
And come Vranie, prophetesce divine;
Come, Muse of Heav'n, my burning thirst allay.

I think Grosart was right. *Orchestra* was probably recited and danced in the orchestra at Greenwich while sets were changed and actors prepared themselves between the performances of plays. As Chambers has suggested, one of these plays could well have been *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Another of these plays, it seems to me, might have been *The Winter's Tale*, appropriate enough for the January event, especially since it ends with a marriage to be performed. I think that Davies' urgent plea

to hear the Swallow sing was answered, a little later, from the stage above where his lines were recited, with words like these:

O Proserpina,
For the flowers now, that frightened thou let'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.

The Winter's Tale (IV. iv. 116-120)



Notes

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¹ All quotations of Shakespeare are drawn from the Neilson and Hill edition of *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* (1942).

² All quotations of Davies' poems are drawn from *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, ed. Robert Krueger (London, 1975).

³ Robert Krueger identifies the Swallow with Richard Martin because of the pun on the name and Davies' dedication of an early version of *Orchestra* to Martin. Martin was a fellow member of the Middle Temple with Davies, a wit, a high-spirited and attractive youth, and the associate of poets. But there is no sign that he was a poet himself, much less the kind of poet Davies describes. Dr. D. W. Thomson Vessey identified the Swallow with Henry Wotton in *The Bard: The Journal of the Shakespearean Authorship Society* 2:4 (1980): 130-132. Setting aside the quality of Wotton's verse, Vessey conjectures that Davies may have addressed Wotton in an effort to attract the notice of the Essex faction and gain patronage. Davies' lines clearly state that he is paying tribute to his master, not seeking one. Vessey does make a strong case against Drayton as the Swallow, another candidate who had been proposed in the past.

⁴ Charles Wisner Barrell, "Thomas Nash in the *Epistle Dedicatorie* to "Strange News," in Eva Turner Clark, *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, ed. Ruth Loyd Miller (1974), 933.

⁵ Robert Krueger, "Sir John Davies: *Orchestra* Complete, Epigrams, Unpublished Poetry," *Review of English Studies*, New Series XIII, No. 50 (1962) [hereinafter Krueger 50]: 8.

⁶ Krueger, "Sir John Davies: *Orchestra* Complete, Epigrams, Unpublished Poetry," *Review of English Studies*, New Series XIII, No. 49 (1962) [hereinafter Krueger 49]: 17-29.

⁷ J. Thomas Looney, *Shakespeare Identified in Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford*, Ruth Loyd Miler, ed., (1974), Introduction.

⁸ See *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*, 907-909. For details of Oxford's life, see B. M. Ward, *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (1928).

⁹ *Henry IV, Part Two* IV. iii. 32-33; *Timon of Athens* III. vi. 29-30.



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