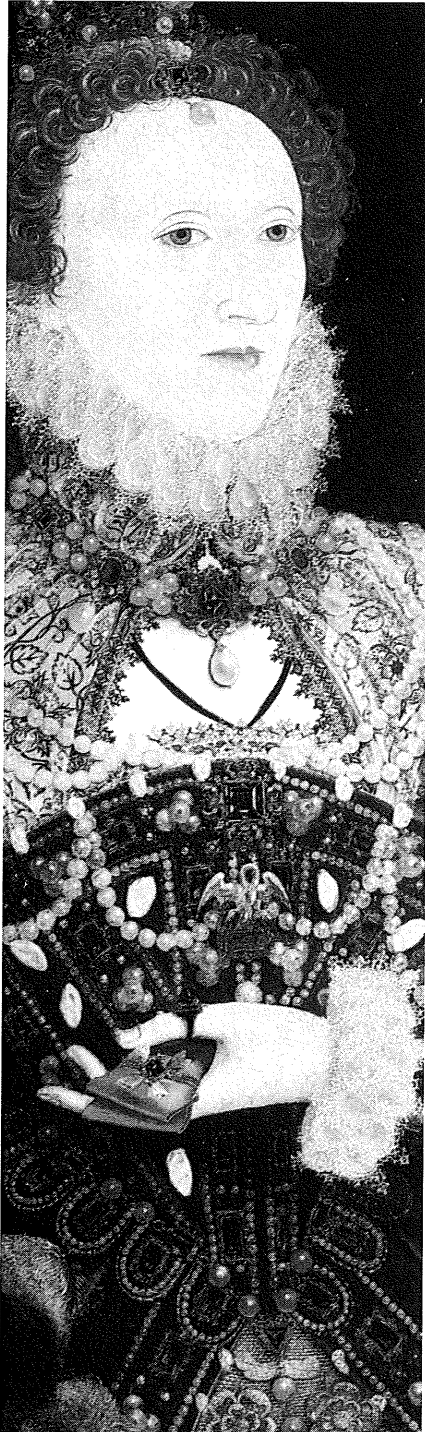


SHAKESPEARE, OXFORD, AND “A PEDLAR”



James Fitzgerald ————— ❧

You can always get a little more literature
if you are willing to go a little closer into
what has been left unsaid as unspeakable,
just as you can always get a little more
melon by going a little closer to the rind.

Robert Frost

THE *Oxford Book of English Verse*, as one among several anthologies (*The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse*, *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, *The Viking Book of Poetry of the English*

Speaking World, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*), contains an anonymous poem that ought to be of great interest to those fascinated by the mystery of the true identity of William Shakespeare, and to all who love the works of Shakespeare. The poem has been suitably titled “A Pedlar” in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, and so we shall refer to it. (But the corporeal seller of wares, him we shall refer to as a “peddler.”) “A Pedlar” was first published in 1600, in John Dowland’s *Second Book of Songs or Aires*, where it was set to music. Dowland (1563-1626), was an English lutenist and composer, and immensely popular during his lifetime.

As we shall see, “A Pedlar” shows compelling links both to Shakespeare and to Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. The text below is faithful to the punctuation, spelling and capitalization of the poem as it appears in the publication of 1600 (Pollard). The line numbers have been added to facilitate subsequent examination and discussion.

1 *Fine knacks for ladies, cheap choice, brave and new!*
 2 *Good penniworths! But mony can-not move,*
 3 *I keepe a faier but for the faier to view,*
 4 *a begger may be liberall of love,*
 5 *Though all my wares bee trash the hart is true,*
 the hart is true,
 the hart is true.

6 *Great gifts are guiles and looke for gifts againe,*
 7 *My trifles come as treasures from my minde,*
 8 *It is a precious Jewell to bee plaine,*
 9 *Sometimes in shell th 'orienst pearles we finde,*
 10 *Of others take a sheafe, of mee a graine,*
 Of mee a graine,
 Of mee a graine.

11 *Within this packe pinnes points laces & gloves,*
 12 *And divers toies fitting a country faier,*
 13 *But [in] my hart, where duety serves and loves,*
 14 *Turtels & twins, courts brood, a heavenly paier,*
 15 *Happy the hart that thincks of no removes,*
 Of no removes,
 Of no removes.

The poem begins with the hawking shout of a peddler; but in line 2 we read that "mony cannot move" his "fine knacks." If his physical inventory cannot be purchased, even though it possesses value—the (figurative) "good penniworths"—it must be metaphorical, and the song, by implication, laden with a hidden meaning. Straight away we are tipped off that things are not to be as they first appear.

In line 3 the peddler turns into the keeper of a fair, keeping it only for the "faier to view." The second "faier" should alert the experienced reader of Shakespeare. The Fair Youth of the Sonnets comes quickly to mind. But beyond that, there is the great potency and widespread use of "fair" throughout the works of Shakespeare. Line 4 presents a third occupation, if beggary be regarded as such. Then line 5, with its reference to "wares," makes of the stanza a small ring composition, by looking back to the peddler's "fine knacks" in line 1.

An atmosphere of bitter irony and resignation sours the fair of the first stanza. The author, reacting to some misfortune, casts about for images that will convey a profound dis-

appointment he has experienced, in effect soliloquizing: "What am I, a peddler?" "What am I, a fair keeper?" "What am I, a beggar?" (Although the word "peddle" itself does not appear in the poem, it is so strongly implied that we may treat it as substantially present.) As they are metaphors, the author does not engage in these occupations, except in a symbolic and self-condemning way. Line 4 informs us that he perceives himself as impoverished, although obviously no genuine street beggar is speaking to us here. The acerbity behind the "liberality of love" hints at the need of the financially pinched to be accommodating, at the cost of pride. Such chafing at penury conforms to Oxford's nearly lifelong financial difficulties.

Let us look by way of comparison at Sonnet 66 of Shakespeare, which begins with the following three lines:

*Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity.*

Then nine lines more ensue, conceived in grief and rage, commencing each time with the famously anaphoric "And," until the ending couplet brings a merciful conclusion to this register of injury and offense.

But what heads the list after the cry for death? An image of destitution. The living realities provoking the verses in each poem are lack of funds, for which "beggar" in both, "needy nothing" in Sonnet 66; misvaluation of the author's works, for which "desert a beggar born" stands in the Sonnet, and "though all my wares bee trash" in "A Pedlar"; and lastly, the enforced pretense of a cheerful mien, for which "needy nothing trimmed in jollity" in the Sonnet, and in "A Pedlar" the very notion of the "faier" in line 3, with its attendant associations of merriment and good times.

THE *Harvard Concordance to Shakespeare* cites ten uses of "peddler" as a noun. Fully six of these occur in *The Winter's Tale*. The verb *peddle* is not used by Shakespeare. By comparison, the *Concordance* cites an astonishing 274 instances of "beg(gar)" as a singleton or in combinatory form. What does this huge disparity in the frequency of use between "peddler" in Shakespeare signify to us, if "A Pedlar" is from the hand of Shakespeare?—that the figure of the peddler is a deliberate creation, whereas the numerous images of beggary spring into the writer's consciousness reflexively? The sudden appearance of the beggar in line 4 in "A Pedlar" looks very like that sort of unconscious irruption, as it is completely unconnected to the preceding line. "A Pedlar" is sonnet-like in its length of 15 lines, exceeding the sonnet by one, and in its unsonglike meter, iambic pentameter. I am unaware of any song in the Shakespeare canon written in iambic pentameter, which leads me to suppose that "A Pedlar"

was first written as a poem, psychologically almost a kind of sonnet, in light of its confessional nature. It might then have passed into the hands of John Dowland, who could have set it to music. Oxford as a composer in his own right could also have composed the music. This is an issue for musicians to settle, if sufficient of de Vere's music remains to warrant comparison against "A Pedlar" and the body of Dowland's acknowledged compositions.

Line 4, "a beggar may be liberall of love," appears almost verbatim in *Henry VIII*, "Where you are liberal of your loves and counsels" (2.1.126. Note: all emphases in quoted passages below have been added by the author). In line 5 the poet catches himself in the midst of his angry ruminations and deftly closes off the stanza with an elegant return to the implied opening figure of the song, the peddler. But what a change! The "fine knacks" in the peddler's pack in line 1 have turned to trash in line 5. Yet may not those ironical knacks have been trash from the beginning, and all of line 1 a pose?

LET us assay an illumination of the first stanza of "A Pedlar," supposing Oxford-as-Shakespeare as its author. The "ladies" of line 1 may be interpreted as an allusion to Elizabeth and the noble women at court. The "fine knacks" become the presentations and performances there of Oxford's dramatic works. In this vein, the "faier to view" of line 3 would be consistent with a staged spectacle. The symbols fit. The peddler is openly ambivalent about the worth of his goods. Likewise, from the Sonnets we know that such was Shakespeare's troubled state of mind with regard to his own creations. Set side by side, for example, "For I am shamed by that which I bring forth" (72.13) and "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme" (55.12).

"Though all my wares bee trash, the hart is true." The language in line 5 is familiar. A favored term of Shakespeare for "trashing" something is "trash": "Who steals my purse steals trash," *Othello* (3.3.157); "What trash is Rome," *Julius Caesar* (1.3.108). The like is also true for "true" in two striking passages from *Troilus and Cressida*: "And what truth can speak truest not truer than Troilus?" (3.2.100); "But alas, / I am as true as truth's simplicity" (3.2.170).

A year before his death, in a letter written in 1603 to Robert Cecil (Fowler 771), Oxford restates in a moving passage this constant concern for and devotion to truth: "but I hope truth is subject to no prescription, for truth is truth though never so old, and time cannot make that false which once was true." Shakespeare shows exact parallels. In *Measure for Measure*: "for truth is truth to the end of knowing" (5.1.45). In *King John*: "but truth is truth" (1.1.105). In *Henry IV, Part I*: "is not the truth the truth?" (2.4.230).

While "trash" and "true" are antithetical in meaning and thought, they are at the same time knit together, like "trick or treat," in the number of syllables they contain, and, more conspicuously, in their initial "tr" sounds. We can leap ahead here and cite the identical technique in line 6 with "gifts" and "guiles," and in line 7 with "trifles" and "treasures." One

can, with a stretch, also include in this category the “faier” and “faier” of line 3. Such word play bespeaks a mind fascinated with the fusion of paired ironies and antitheses within an alliterative, hence unifying, vocabulary. The paradoxical nature of these pairs is the source of much of the poem’s power. The reader’s mind can never come entirely to rest in them; like atoms, they vibrate endlessly. They seem the natural expressions of a rueful, poetic, compendious, and reflective intellect.

In line 6 of the second stanza an allusion appears to the practiced insincerities of power politics. “Great gifts,” to wit: expensive objects or substantial bribes employed as tools of policy—“guiles,” in other words—can only have been available at the highest levels of society, Oxford’s milieu. Line 7 extends this conceit. The “Great gifts” of others are pointedly contrasted to the author’s trifles, as “Great gifts” heads up line 6, and “My trifles” line 7. They give great gifts. I can afford only trifles. But these trifles are treasures. Extending the Oxfordian conjecture, “trifles” consorts naturally with “knacks” and “wares” as standing for Oxford’s dramatic works; and observe once more the same ambivalence that attended “fine knacks” and “wares [of] trash.”

Line 7, my “trifles come as treasures from my mind,” is closely related by a kind of conceptual inversion to line 3 in Sonnet 110, which is given here with lines 1 and 2:

*Alas 'tis true I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored my own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear.*

“Thoughts” come from the “mind,” “cheap” is the value of “trifles”; “dear” is the appraisal of “treasures.” Line 3 of Sonnet 110 may be read as the debasement that a grubbing peddler would inflict upon line 7 of “A Pedlar.” Selling cheap what is most dear puts us in mind as well of the wares of line 5 in “A Pedlar,” which may be only trash. Making a spectacle of oneself, “a motley to the view,” if you will, recalls to us line 3 of “A Pedlar,” with its fair to divert the eye, and its sardonic fairkeeper.

In “Venus and Adonis” Shakespeare also shows us a collocation of “treasure” and “trifle”:

*Fie, fie fond love, thou art as full of fear
As one with treasure laden, hemmed with thieves;
Trifles unwitnessed with eye or ear,
Thy coward heart with false bethinking grieves (11.1021-24).*

As “A Pedlar” is a song of fifteen lines, line 8 marks the midpoint. Lines 1 through 7 describe a crescendo of tension and elevation of subject, commencing at the lowly station of peddler and rising up into the Court in line 6, and from there into the author’s own consciousness in

line 7. At last the strain of paradox, which has built from line 1, is released, the pressure dissipates, and line 8 springs forth from the author's mind as half-remedy, half-yearning: "It is a precious Jewell to bee plaine."

The locution "precious jewel" can be found four times in Shakespeare. Once in Sonnet 131: "Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel." Once in *The Merchant of Venice*: "in that, and other precious, precious jewels" (3.1.87). Once in "Venus and Adonis": "as one that unaware / Hath dropped a precious jewel in the flood" (824). But most memorably in the words of Duke Senior in *As You Like It*:

*Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head. (2.1.12-14)*

Before passing on, observe that Sonnet 48 brings together "jewel" and "trifle": "But thou to whom my jewels trifles are."

LINE 9 is enigmatic; it seems to advise us that the rough or common exterior of a thing may conceal a pearl, in both the literal and figurative senses. "Th'orienst pearls" is odd. I read it as a clever superlative formed for the nonce and the meter, and meaning "the pearls from furthest east"; therefore, the most exotic pearls, the most valuable pearls, the rarest pearls.

It should be noted that none of the editors of the cited anthologies could stand the success of "th'orienst pearls." They either modified the expression to the contextually less meaningful "the orient pearls"; or dismayed, one must suppose, at the novel accent on the neologistic "th'orienst," supplied instead the conventionally accented but unpronounceable "the orient'st." In any case, the almost identical phrase "orient pearl(s)" was at home in Shakespeare, turning up four times. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "Was wont to swell like round and orient pearls" (4.1.54). In *Richard III*: "Shall come again, transformed to orient pearl" (4.4.322). In *Antony and Cleopatra*: "the last of many doubled kisses- / This orient pearl" (1.5.41). In *The Passionate Pilgrim*: "Bright orient pearl alack too timely shaded" (10.3). Let us compare line 9 and lines 981-82 from "Venus and Adonis":

*Sometimes in shell th'orienst pearls we finde.
Being prisoned in her eye, like pearls in glass;
Yet sometimes falls an orient drop beside.*

The one poem has pearls in glass; the other, pearls in shell. In each case the pearls are "orient." Lines 9 and 982 seem more than accidentally connected. "Sometimes" and "orient" are present in both lines. The final two syllables of each line, "we finde" / "beside," show consecutive, parallel long-e and long-i sounds.

In line 10, why does the author suggest to us that we take less of him than of others? This line, too, is difficult to plumb. Lines 8, 9, and 10 each contains something that is small and valuable; respectively a jewel, a pearl, a grain. A sense of concealment is also present among the three. The first two stanzas of "A Pedlar" are foreshadowed, both in theme and language, by a passage in Oxford's eloquent prefatory letter of 1573 to Thomas Bedingfield's translation from the Latin, which Oxford had commissioned, of Cardanus Comfort. Oxford was then 23 years old. In the letter (Fowler 119), Oxford has dilated upon the admonition that talents not be kept hidden, and upon the primacy of "virtue" among the public attributes of a gentleman. "And in mine opinion," he further declares, "as it beautifieth a fair woman to be decked with pearls and precious stones, so much the more it ornifieth a gentleman to be furnished in mind with glittering virtues."

The Bedingfield letter and "A Pedlar" both treat of the ornamentation of women. In "A Pedlar" the theme is laced with irony, whereas in the letter it introduces the first part of a straightforward comparison with the accoutrements of a gentleman, which may imply an earlier date of composition for the latter. The second half of the Bedingfield sentence, "so much the more it ornifieth a gentleman to be furnished in mind with glittering virtues," amounts to line 7 in "A Pedlar" wrought in prose. The "glittering" in "glittering virtues" implies the metaphor of virtues as adornments of precious stones or metals. They resemble the ambiguous "trifles" of line 7 of "A Pedlar," which we may interpret as standing for Oxford's literary works and which "come as treasures from [the] mind."

FROM the aspect of structure and syntax, the unique personal tone of "A Pedlar" derives from its pronounced parataxis; that is, "the placing of related clauses ... in a series without the use of connecting words" (*Webster's*). Parataxis is the mode of internal thought and of unstudied speech and conversation, wherein mental constructions are simply added one to the next without great attention being paid to the relationships between the constituent elements. Much of the extraordinary immediacy of the song results from this seeming artless, *non sequitur*-laden, everyday quality. The Sonnets achieve the same, or an even greater, depth of intimacy, but because of their more formal, rhetorical structure, cause us to keep a more respectful distance.

In the third stanza, lines 11 and 12 comprise one unit of thought and constitute the second and larger of the two ring compositions present in the song. "Packe," in line 11, strikingly alliterative with "pinnes" and "points," implies the return of the peddler while echoing the sound of "knacks" from line 1. But of course we understand that the peddler is not real, and the list of his goods a beguiling whimsey. There is no country fair, except in the figurative image of it.

Line 13 presents a sudden change of subject. (Note: in line 13 I fall in with the antholo-

gies, supplying the bracketed [in] at "But [in] my heart." Metrically, it appears that a word has fallen out, and the insertion of "in" mends both the meter and the sense.) The author begins to speak of himself personally, and of what is in his heart "where duty serves and loves": namely, "turtles and twins." Some connection is maintained with lines 11 and 12, as the heart is being compared to the pack on the common basis that both have contents. The pack, which is a fiction, holds items of potential reality. The heart, on the other hand, which is real and beating, contains only symbols. Lines 13 and 14 demonstrate unmistakable affinities with "The Phoenix and the Turtle" of Shakespeare. The "turtle" (dove) appears in both poems. "Twins" appears in "A Pedlar," while "The Phoenix and the Turtle" itself stands a hymn to twinning and the concept of two-in-one, as we read in stanza 7:

*So they loved as love in twain
Had the essence but in one,
Two distincts, Division none,
Number there in love was slain.*

THE *Oxford Anthology of English Literature* provides a useful explication of line 14 in "A Pedlar": "turtle-doves and the 'heavenly pair' of twins Castor and Pollux of the constellation Gemini were emblems of true love and constancy; the latter were the 'brood' of Jove as the swan, and Leda" (Kermode 615, fn). Shakespeare, to whom the tales of classical mythology were second nature, would have heard these resonances as he composed the line. The commentator in the *Oxford Anthology* is very likely right, as far as he goes. He has, however, discreetly passed over "courts" in the expression "courts brood." This omission is serious from the Oxfordian standpoint. "Courts" anchors the line in Tudor England with an imagery paralleling the classical antecedents of Castor and Pollux. Would Oxford-as-Shakespeare have written so? Goethe implicitly says yes when he declares that "the very finest symbols are those which allow a multiple interpretation, while the visible object portrayed always remains the same" (Goethe cited by Karl Victor in Ogburn *Star* 236, fn).

The final line and tender suspiration of "A Pedlar," "Happy the heart that thinks of no removes," can be heard in the thought and language in stanza 8, line 1, of "Phoenix and Turtle": "Hearts remote, yet not asunder." It finds an echo in Sonnet 25: "Then happy I, that love and am beloved / Where I may not remove or be removed"; and also in Sonnet 116, which declares that love (the activity of the heart) does not "bend with the remover to remove."

Let us now move to the final stanza of the threnody of "Phoenix and Turtle:"

*To this urn let those repair,
That are either true or fair
for these dead Birds, sigh a prayer.*

The author of "A Pedlar" has also used those hallmark Shakespearean words "true" and "fair" with Shakespeare's characteristic proximity and profound import:

*I keep a faier but for the faier to view ...
Though all my wares be trash, the hart is true.*

And, lastly, to cite as well lines 9 and 10 from Sonnet 105:

*Fair, kind, and true is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words.*

I submit for consideration the likelihood that one man is the author of all three passages.

Someone has remarked that in Shakespeare all dogs are curs. The peddler fares not much better in the Poet's esteem, as we shall see in the following scenes.

In *Richard III*, when Earl Rivers swears to Richard as yet Duke of Gloucester that he would follow Richard faithfully if he were king, Richard responds, "If I should be? I had rather be a peddler" (1.3.148). In the Induction (2.19-21) to *The Taming of the Shrew*, Christopher Sly, seen among Oxfordians as a burlesque of William Shakspeare of Stratford, is taxed as to his identity by a lord (Ogburn *Shakespeare* 102-08). Sly answers, "What, would you make me mad? Am I not Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a peddler, by education a cardmaker, etc.?"

In *Love's Labor's Lost*, Biron scoffs at the departing Boyet:

*This fellow pecks up wit, as pigeons peas,
And utters it again when God doth please.
He is wit's peddler, and retails his wares,
At wakes and wassails, meetings, markets, fairs. (5.2.315-18)*

Biron gives us "peddler," "wares," and "fairs," and possibly a prefigurement of "A Pedlar." In the Oxfordian attribution, *Love's Labor's Lost* was an exuberant product of Oxford's young manhood (Clark 223-38). During reveries of self-inculcation and regret, Oxford in his later years may have played his performance in life as that of a Boyet, and, sucking on aching tooth, turned the theme against himself in the first stanza of "A Pedlar."

The commentator in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, in his remarks on "A

Pedlar," describes it as "a magnificent poem, exemplifying a common genre," and directs us by way of exemplification to Autolycus's songs in *The Winter's Tale*. He also observes that in "A Pedlar," "an uncharacteristic elevation of the plain over the fancy arises" (Kermode 615, fn). The fifth ode in Horace's *First Book of Odes* is a famous advocacy of this esthetic philosophy. Ben Jonson takes from the Horatian ode a half-line, *simplex munditiis*, that is, "simple, or plain, in [thine] elegance," to entitle a poem of his own on the same theme. But, as we shall explore below, the Oxfordian school of authorship produces a parallel and deeper meaning, which was the touchstone to Goethe of great art.

LET us examine more closely the editor's comment that "A Pedlar" is noteworthy for "an uncharacteristic elevation of the plain over the fancy." Logic compels "precious Jewell" to be metaphor, as a physical object cannot also be a non-material condition. A precious jewel may be a bauble, a trinket, a gem; but it cannot, for reason of its materiality, partake directly in a non-material condition, "plainness." The logical order of thought must run, "to be plain is a precious jewel," with the inversion explained in the author's desire to begin the line with the drama of the jewel image and to complete it with the surprising equivalence of "plainness."

What is he telling us, then, about the nature of plainness if we grant that some quality in the condition of plainness has governed the author's decision to equate it at the level of metaphor to a precious jewel? If the author is merely ringing a change on the ancient and Horatian theme that an unembellished Jane can exceed in comeliness a dolled-up Joan, line 8 comes across as hyperbolic and trite, in making "a precious Jewell" of a transient condition and disputable esthetic of beauty, in its "uncharacteristic elevation" of Jane over Joan. The choice of simplicity of toilette as the meaning to attach to "plaine in line 8 appears at best incomplete.

However, there is another common meaning to plain, the sense of being plain of speech, which is the expression of the unfeigning heart. In line 8 of "A Pedlar," a case can be made for the proposition that the author had in mind "plain" in the sense "to speak plainly," with its implication of also being able to speak freely; for to be muzzled and thus unable to speak plainly, and freely, is surely to be deprived of "a precious Jewell." Or as Jaques puts it to Duke Senior, "Give me leave to speak my mind." It behooves us now to look back at the lines from *As You Like It* cited above:

*Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.*

Let us now see how the notion of “precious jewel” in the lines from *As You Like It* bears a similarity to the application of that image in line 8 of “A Pedlar”: “It is a *precious Jewell* to be plaine.”

Duke Senior declares in effect: “the use of adversity is a precious jewel”; in *As You Like It*, a mis- or unprized non-material condition, adversity, is being likened to a precious jewel. The plainness in “A Pedlar” is an unvalued plainness to the degree that the observer fails to grasp its concealed reference to plain, free, and unimpeded *speech*, which in a just evaluation must be accounted “a precious jewel.” The symbolic “sweet” value of the uses of adversity, like plainness of speech sure to be overlooked by the unsightful, is “a precious jewel” within its “ugly” setting of bleak adversity, the metaphoric image of the carbuncled toad.

Lines 4.4.101-08 from *Troilus and Cressida* may shed further light upon the concept of plainness in “A Pedlar” and why its author should account it “a precious Jewell.” To test it for suitability in *Troilus*, line 8 from “A Pedlar” has been inserted between lines 106 and 107.

Cressida: My lord, will you be true?

Troilus: Who? I? Alas it is my vice, my fault.

Whiles others fish with craft for great opinion,

I with great truth catch mere simplicity;

Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns,

With truth and plainness I do wear mine bare.

[It is a precious Jewell to be plaine.]

Fear not my truth; the moral of my wit

Is “plain and true”—there’s all the reach of it.

Cressida asks Troilus if he will be “true,” which in the context can only mean, “will you be loyal? will you be faithful?” In Troilus’s response, “true” or “truth” occurs four times, but with ambiguity or duality of meaning. In Shakespeare, the noun form “truth” with the sense of “fidelity” can be still be found, although it was probably becoming obsolete (as in *Cymbeline*, 5.5.127: “Briefly die their joys / that place them on the truth of girls and boys”). “Truth” with the exclusive meaning of “veracity” lies in the future.

In these same seven lines we also come upon “plainness” and “plain.” In the speech of Troilus, “plain” comes yoked with “true,” and “plainness” with “truth.” With “plain” and “plainness” so closely joined to the forms of “true,” what else can they be but the “plain” of direct, true-speaking language, the hidden essence of “plaine” in line 8 of “A Pedlar.” If anything, the word “plain” in this context of *Troilus* is even less likely to be an allusion to physical appearance than it was in “A Pedlar.” Troilus can only mean that he is plain speaking; not only is he loyal, he also tells the truth.

Line 8 from "A Pedlar" disappears into the speech of Troilus without a ripple. Both make common use of the image of costly ornament, whether real or "gilded," as metaphor. Both attach the signification of "plain-speaking" to "plain." Not only do Shakespeare and the author of "A Pedlar" attach an identical denotation to "plain," they both offer an uncommon veneration of this humble and homely virtue. Troilus tells us that "the moral of my wit is 'plain and true.'" Plainness is raised up with truth as the joint guides of conscience and intellect. No less a votary, the author of "A Pedlar" makes of plainness "a precious Jewell."

In *King Lear*, aggrieved that Cordelia will not vociferate her devotion to him beyond the acknowledgement of her filial bond, Lear complains, "So young and yet so untender?" (1.1.108). Cordelia responds:

So young, my lord, and true. (1.1.109)

Lear, enraged now, divides Cordelia's third of the kingdom between Goneril and Regan, while declaring of Cordelia:

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her. (1.1.131)

For the second time, "truth" and "plainness" are conjoined in a character: Cordelia. To herself Cordelia imputes "trueness." But it is Lear, foolish Lear, who, in mistaking honesty for pridefulness and flattery for devotion, attributes "plainness" to Cordelia. "Plainness" is never heard on Cordelia's lips; rather, it is an imputation on the part of Lear. And the nature of the play can only make of Cordelia's "plainness" a spiritual property of the highest order. Too late will Lear discover the wisdom of the author of "A Pedlar": "It is a precious Jewell to be plaine."

In the fool of *King Lear*, as also in Cordelia, we may discover the perfection of *Troilus*, although that insight would hardly please the proud Trojan prince. For the fool, in his high office of Fool, fuses both senses of "truth" together, when, like Cordelia, in speaking true, he is true. *Verum dicere, verus esse.*

In the correspondences between the speech of Troilus and "A Pedlar," the use both authors make—if two authors there be—of the idea of the counterfeit is worth examination. In "A Pedlar" we read in line 6 that "great gifts are guiles and look for gifts againe," which is to say they are fraudulent, counterfeit, as a genuine gift seeks no recompense. In 4.4.105 of *Troilus*, Shakespeare, punning on the dual meaning of crowns as coins and regal headgear, creates a literal image of counterfeiting: "Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns."

Let us now direct our attention to three couplets:

"A Pedlar" (2.6-7):

*Great gifts are guiles and looke for gifts againe,
My trifles come as treasure from my mind.*

Troilus (4.4.103-04):

*Whiles others fish with craft for great opinion,
I with great truth catch mere simplicity.*

Troilus (4.4.105-06):

*Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns,
With truth and plainness I do wear mine bare.*

Note how in the first line of each couplet the authors cite in one way or another the conscious deceptions or stratagems of others. In line 6 of "A Pedlar" and line 103 of *Troilus*, enormity, in its precise denotation of enlarged wickedness, is injected, in the expressions "great gifts" and "great opinion." In the second lines of the three couplets the authors contrast themselves or their works to the unidentified schemers or machiavels of the first lines in terms of their own relatively lesser size, but greater honesty or true worth, or both.

From the accumulated, foregoing evidence, I submit it for a likelihood that one man is the author of the three passages discussed above.

WE close with a look at that confidence man and songster, Autolycus of *The Winter's Tale*. Autolycus is as deficient in verisimilitude as the peddler in "A Pedlar." His inventory of goods in Act IV Scene 4 is absurdly extensive and costly. His peddlership is an imposture; the fellow is a thief, and by his own admission, his "revenue the silly cheat"; that is, the gullible victim. The Elizabethans were incorrigibly given to word play, to an extent unpracticed and unconceived today. If one reads the works of Shakespeare as written by Oxford, while keeping in mind the obsession of the age for *jeux de mots*, there are pregnant moments when "ever" seems a pun on "E. Ver[e]", "Edward (de) Vere." "Ever" also anagrammatizes "Vere."

Autolycus, pretending to be at death's door, the better to snare a victim, cries out, "O, that ever I was born!" (4.3.51). A study of Autolycus's lament produces equal parts amusement and logic. If we let "ever" stand for Edward de Vere, and the exclamation, "O" for the man's title, (Earl of) Oxford, we have his primary appellations and the order in which he acquired them: born de Vere, he took the title Oxford only on the death of his father. Might it not be that the raffish Autolycus is Oxford's portrayal of the merryandrew side of his own personality? Granted, as an argument this is not the entree; still, it seems harmless enough

to set it on the groaning board of dialectic as evidence, with a role commensurate to that of chutney at the feast.

In his early twenties Oxford may have been involved in a prankish highway robbery at Gad's Hill. Oxfordians advance the proposition that this real incident was the source for the robbery scene at Gad's Hill involving Prince Hal and Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part I* (Ogburn *Star* 77). If Oxford was anything like Hal and accustomed to running with the hounds and running with the hare, a reasonable conjecture in light of his life-long association with the demi-monde of the theater, the perception of Autolycus as an aspect of Oxford's psyche gains force.

The evidence of linkage between the Shakespeare character Autolycus and "A Pedlar" is recognized. The inference that "A Pedlar" may be from the hand of Shakespeare is supported by numerous and persuasive textual similarities. Written by an anonymous author, "A Pedlar" remains a mysterious beauty. However, if we attribute it to Shakespeare, and then place the mantle of Shakespeare's identity upon the shoulders of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, the enigmas of "A Pedlar" are resolved. The poem achieves an integration and coherence which it previously lacked, having been a kind of lovely but half-assembled puzzle. With Oxford construed as its author, "A Pedlar" soars above its prior altitude to where now, wheeling in solitude, it holds its place among the great short poems of the English language. It is also among the most important. _____



Note: Not until after I had completed "A Pedlar" was I made aware of "An 'Unconsidered Trifle' Snapped Up," an essay by Margaret K. Manwell, an essay that appeared in the December 1969 SOS Newsletter. In her brief, insightful examination of the poem, she made virtually identical Oxfordian connections that are broached in the essay above. Pleased am I, then, to hand over the laurels for first into print in exchange for the support of the graceful and informed observations of Margaret K. Manwell!

James Fitzgerald combines work in the construction industry with teaching Latin. Although he has been an Oxfordian since Hector was a pup, he has only lately entered the fray himself. Fitzgerald has published several articles in The Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter on his research into the enigmatic relationship between Oxford and Guillaume de Salust, Sieur Du Bartas, the French literary giant. The foregoing article and the DuBartas material will also be published sometime in 1999 in the Neues Shakespeare Journal, a German publication devoted to the authorship controversy.

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