

“SHAKESPEARE” AND BURGHLEY’S LIBRARY:

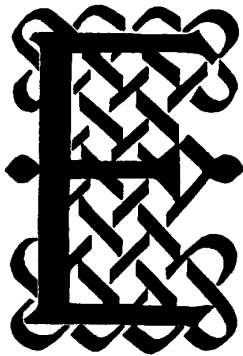
Bibliotheca Illustris: Sive Catalogus Variorum Librorum

Eddi Jolly

Holofernes: O thou monster Ignorance, how deformed dost thou look!

Nathaniel: Sir, he hath never fed of the dainties that are bred in a book;
He hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink; his intellect is
not replenished; he is only an animal only sensible in the duller parts.

Love’s Labour’s Lost: IV.2



EVIDENCE of the literacy of the William Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-Avon is minimal. It is suggested that perhaps the so-called “hand D” in the play *Sir Thomas More* in the British Library is Shakespeare’s (Schoenbaum 214), while in 1949, McLaren suggested that the annotations in a 1551 Halle’s *Chronicles* were in Shakespeare’s hand (10). According to which scholar you read, he may or may not have attended petty school. According to Nicholas Rowe (1709), he attended a free school (Butler 7) which may or may not have been the grammar school and he may or may not have left at about age thirteen when his father was beginning to have some financial problems (Muir 1). According to Rowe, “the narrowness of his circumstances and the want of his assistance at Home forc’d his Father to withdraw him from thence.” Later scholars such as Park Honan see Shakespeare still at school aged fifteen (47). Views vary so widely, of course, because there are no records whatsoever that give place names or dates for his presumed education nor do the records at Oxford and Cambridge mention him.

“Except Shakespeare”

Any access William of Stratford might have had to books is unknown. Did he borrow books from the local schoolmaster? Did his family’s connection with the printers, the Field family, give him access to the books they produced, as has been suggested? Did he have a photo-

graphic memory and haunt the bookshops in St Paul's precincts? Did he, like Gabriel Harvey, Barnabe Barnes and Thomas Nashe, lodge above a printer's house (Onions 2.228) and so spend his nights reading translations of classics?

William of Stratford mentions no books or mss. in his will, unless "All the Rest of my goodes chattels . . . & householde stuffe whatsoever" (Chambers 173) embraces books. Jonathon Bate notes that the Bodleian has a copy of the Aldine version of Ovid from 1502 bearing the signature "Wm She" along with a marginal note by one "T N" dated 1682 which states, "This little Booke of Ovid was given to me by W. Hall who sayd it was once Will. Shakesperes." Bate also mentions a Montaigne in the British Library, but, according to Bate, "no other surviving book can plausibly be said to have belonged to Shakespeare" (28). Most significant perhaps is Sears Jayne's comment in his *Library Catalogues of the English Renaissance* (1956), "For any Elizabethan not mentioned in my survey (*except Shakespeare*) the chances of finding an inventory on decease are good" (9; emphasis added).

Oxford's opportunities

While Shakespeare of Stratford's opportunities to become the erudite playwright of the canon seem minimal on the current evidence, the opportunities for the Earl of Oxford were enormous, not only because of the advantages he enjoyed as an Earl's son, but chiefly because his childhood and youth were spent with two of England's greatest educators, Sir Thomas Smith (Dewar 77) and William Cecil, Lord Burghley (Ward 14).

Records show a typical day's education for the Earl of Oxford in Burghley's household included French, Latin, dancing, Cosmography and Common Prayers (Ward 20). We know he had the foremost scholar of Anglo-saxon literature, Lawrence Nowell (Churton 236-7), as his tutor (Ward 20); that his uncle, the scholar and translator, Arthur Golding, was also in residence (23); that he was awarded Master's degrees from Cambridge and Oxford in 1564 and '66; and that Burghley sent him to study law at Gray's Inn in 1567 (27).

Oxford's literacy and his fluency in foreign languages is evident. Proof that he was fluent in French can be seen in his letter to his guardian at age thirteen (Fowler 1-2), a letter from Burghley to Sir Thomas Smith in which he mentions his fluency in French,¹ and his purchase

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of books in French in 1569 (Ward 33). Presumably he could read Italian as he also purchased books in Italian in 1569 (33) and spent a year in Italy in 1575. His proficiency in Latin is shown in his 1571 dedication to Bartholomew Clerke's Latin version of *Il Cortegiano*; his ability in composing verse in Latin is eulogized by Gabriel Harvey in his speech before the Court community at Audley End in 1578 (Ward 156-7). Meres and Peachum refer to his reputation as a playwright and all of those who dedicated thirty or so works to him early in his life mentioned his erudition and his love of learning.

WE know that at age nineteen, Oxford purchased a Chaucer, a Geneva Bible and Plutarch's works in French and "other books," regrettably unknown; also "two Italian books, and Plato's and Cicero's works in folio" (33). The Geneva Bible may well be the one Roger Stritmatter has been investigating as it has Oxford's coat of arms on it and annotations in what seems to be Oxford's handwriting, annotations that Stritmatter shows fit well with Shakespeare's Biblical references (unpublished Ph.D. thesis). Oxford is not known to have left a will; nor does his Countess and second wife's will of 1612 mention manuscripts or books.² The eighteenth Earl's will does not mention either.³ But above all the Earl of Oxford was, from the age of four (Dewar 77), brought up in households where education was relished and where there were large and growing libraries. Burghley was greatly interested not only in the education of his own children but also in that of the royal wards in his care, among them the Earls of Oxford, Rutland, Essex, Southampton and Bedford.

During his lifetime's service to the Crown, Burghley kept himself fully informed on European attitudes to religion, threats to the English throne, attitudes towards Mary Queen of Scots and other contemporary matters. Although he was not fluent in contemporary European languages, he was an omnivorous reader of Greek and Latin classics (Read, *Cecil* 11), as his library shows. Burghley served one of the best-educated monarchs in the history of the English throne. His wife was not only fluent in Latin, but in Greek as well. His brother-in-law, Sir Thomas Hoby, translated *Il Cortegiano* into English. Joel Hurstfield comments that "at Cecil House in the Strand, there existed the best school for statesmen in Elizabethan England, perhaps in all Europe"; earls asked for their sons to be educated there, "to be brought up and educated as the wards be," as the Countess of Lennox put it (*Burghley* 255). Entry into Cecil house meant not only unique educational opportunities but also good prospects. Available to Oxford through Burghley were not only his private tutors like Laurence Nowell, but also scholars like Robert Ramsden, Archdeacon of York and chaplain to Burghley, the scholar Sylvius Frisius, the herbalist John Gerard, and the Queen's own tutor and Burghley's personal friend, the highly respected Roger Ascham. In short, an intelligent youth would have found the Burghley household an extraordinarily stimulating environment.

Although he wrote constantly, letters, proposals, lists and the like, Burghley's literary

efforts were limited to propagandistic pamphlets such as *England Triumphant*, which deals with England's relation to the papacy. Conyers Read comments that "the whole composition was a tedious, long winded affair" and that Burghley "had an itching hand for the pen with no marked aptitude for the use of it" (*Burghley* 24). Burghley wrote a number of such pamphlets, although much that he wrote for publication was never published.

Burghley's books

Central to the question of what Oxford might have learned while with Burghley is the size and nature of his library. What can be gleaned from the records about this library? Martin Hume tells us, for example, that Burghley was an insatiable book buyer and eagerly purchased any new books from France sent him by Sir William Pickering and Sir John Mason (48 et seq.). Eventually Burghley's library came to include books published in many different European cities: Rome, Vienna, Hamburg, Antwerp, Hanover, London, Paris, Florence, Venice, Oxford, Geneva, Edinburgh, Wittenberg and many more. This brings Oxford from the age of twelve into contact with upwards of 1700 titles (some in multi-volumes) and approximately 249 manuscripts.

Our primary source for the titles in Burghley's library is a 6 d. (modern English money 2 to 3 pence) sale catalogue dating from "Novemb. 21. 1687." This catalogue was advertised as including the library of Lord Burghley. It lists over 1700 books and approximately 250 manuscripts up to the date of Burghley's death in 1598,⁴ a reasonably impressive collection, since the University Library at Cambridge in 1582 had only about 451 books and manuscripts (Jayne 77). Since the sale did not take place until almost ninety years after Burghley died, it is not possible to say how many books had been lost from or added to the collection since then. The manuscripts, on the whole, lack dates; only fourteen are clearly dated within Burghley's lifetime. The collection cannot be totally complete, because, for instance, Sir Walter Raleigh admitted, under Cobham's examination of him at his trial, that with regard to one book, "I took it out of the study in my Lord Treasurer's house in the Strand" (Williams 193). Nevertheless, knowing Burghley's acquisitive nature, love of books, and the fame of his library during his lifetime, we are on relatively safe ground in assuming in most cases that where the dates of publication are appropriate, a given title would have been available to Oxford during the years when he had access to his guardian's library.

The dates of publication suggest that Burghley bought books regularly. By his death there were probably, based on the surviving record, more than 2,000 books and manuscripts in his library. By comparison, Shakespeare's contemporary, John Florio, left 320 books to the Earl of Pembroke (Yates 313). Ben Jonson is known to have had at least 113 books, Sir Walter

Raleigh at least 494, and Gabriel Harvey at least 180, plus some fourteen manuscripts. John Dee was reputed to have had “neere 4000” (Stern 194/5) though there is no confirmation of this high figure. It is likely that the largest known private library of the Elizabethan period was that of Oxford’s cousin and friend, John, Lord Lumley. This was catalogued in 1596; the catalogue was copied after Lumley’s death in 1609; it lists over 3000 texts (Lievsey 52-3).

Burghley’s classical and non-fiction tastes are reflected in the list, in the books dedicated to him, and in his own writings. The twenty-two books dedicated to him are chiefly translations of classics and works of history and religion, with some on plants and history. There are only two that might be described as literary: Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queen* (1590) and perhaps Henry Lok’s *Ecclesiastes*, “with sundry sonnets annexed.”

The catalogue

The ninety-eight page sale catalogue lists forty to fifty titles per page; slightly fewer on pages containing subheadings. The books are sorted partly by subject: “Libri Theologici,” “Philologici,” “Historici,” “Juridici,” “Medici,” “Mathematici”; partly by language: “Libri Graeci” and “Graeci Latini,” “Livres Francois,” “Libri Hispanici,” “Italici,” “English Books”; and by form: “book” (“folio,” “quarto” and “octavo”) or “manuscript”; with a miscellaneous section at the end. Most titles include author and subject; sometimes details of number of volumes, and place and date of printing, usually in that order. (See a re-creation of page 24 as it appears in the catalogue on page 9.)

The catalogue offers a veritable treasure-trove of information on what interested the great Lord Treasurer and, as well, what would have presumably been available to Lord Oxford in his early and impressionable years.⁵

Burghley’s interest in learning and education can be seen in the long list of dictionaries and grammars. Among them were:

- The Lady Anne Cecil’s *French Grammar* in Eng. and French
- Calepini (Amb.) *Dictionarium*; Romae; 1580
- Genevensis (Jo.) *Vocabularium ac Summa Grammatices*; Parisiis; 1506
- Stephani (Rob.) *Dictionarium Latino Gallicum*; Ibid.; 1546
- Florio, John, his *Dictionary Italian and English*; 1598
- Grammatica Espagnola & Francoise* por Cef. Oudin a Paris; 1597

Since Burghley himself was not fluent in any contemporary foreign language, his stockpiling of books in French, Italian and Spanish was probably mostly for the sake of his family and wards, and for the many to whom he was patron. Heraldry and genealogy interested him.

Listed is the *Genealogie of the Earl of Leycester*; useful, perhaps, when it seemed that the Queen might marry her Master of the Horse. The many astronomy books reflect his interest in the relationship of the earth and the sun and in the significance of comets, such as: "Stanbusius (Mich), de Meteoris, Wittebergae 1562." Burghley's interest in astrology is shown by the six books of ephemerides listed, among them: "Pitati (Pet.) *Ephemerides ab 1552 ad 1562; Venetiis, 1552.*" He also seems to have been curious about aspects of medicine, including an understanding of anatomy. Perhaps he was even interested in the circulation of the blood:

Stephanus (Car.) *de Dissectione Corporis humani cum . . . Stephani Riverij; Paris 1545*
 Zerbii (Gab.); *Anatomia Humain Corporis; Ibid. [= Ven.], 1502*
 Courcellius (Fr.) *de vera mittende Sanguinis ratione; Francof., 1593*
 Camulij (And.) *Medicina de Palpitatione Cordis; Florent., 1578*

Geography was also well represented, both in terms of maps, and for quite specific topics such as the topography of Rome:

Marliani (Bart.) *Antiquae Romae Topographia; Lugd. 1534*

Poetry and fiction were not as well represented as works of non-fiction, but there were several works by Petrarch:

Il Petrarcha; Lyone, 1564,
Sonnetti Canzoni & Triumpho di Franc Petrarcha; Vinegia, 1549
Il Petrarcha com Commentario di Bernardo Illicino; 1490
Il Petrarcha, con l'Espositione D'Allessandro Vellutello; Venetia, 1544

It is interesting that, at the sale in 1687, the Lady Anne Cecil's Grammar sold for 2/6d, and a First Folio of Shakespeare's plays for 17s; roughly 20 cents and \$1.40, respectively.

Shakespeare's Sources and Burghley's library

Shakespeare's reading has been the subject of much conjecture over the years. "Shakespeare was a hungry reader," writes Moray McLaren (10) while J.A.K. Thompson writes, "It is evident that Shakespeare was not a bookish man" (36). "Shakespeare was trained to value the classics," writes Jonathon Bate (6) while Park Honan writes, "Learning by ear and memory, William would have read very little in the few, costly schoolbooks" (46). "Shakespeare was well read in contemporary English writing," writes G.K. Hunter (65) while Geoffrey Bullough writes, "Shakespeare was not academically learned" (8.346).

*Left: a re-creation of a page from the sale catalogue (Latin misprints and all).
 We did put on a single line one item, 250, that was originally on two.*

210	<i>Titelmanni (Franc.)</i> Compendium Naturalia Philosophi	<i>Ibid.</i>	157?
211	<i>Gaguini (Al.)</i> Rerum Polonicarum Historia	<i>Francof.</i>	1584
212	<i>Boterius (Steph.)</i> de rebus in Gallia Gestis	<i>Parisiis</i>	1610
213	<i>Junij (Had.)</i> Emblemata	<i>Antwerpi</i>	1565
214	<i>Danus (Lamb.)</i> de Venesicis	<i>Genev</i>	1574
215	<i>Ciacconius (Pet.)</i> de Triclino & de modo Convivandi apud Priscos Romanos cum Appendixe Fulvij Ursini	<i>Ibid.</i>	1590
216	<i>Perionij (Jo.)</i> Orationes 2 pro Aristotele in Petrum Ramum	<i>Paris</i>	1543
217	Horatij Opera, Juvenalis Satyr	<i>Parisiis</i>	1533
218	<i>Sambuci (Jo.)</i> de Imitatione Ciceroniana Dialogi tres	<i>Ibid.</i>	1561
219	Baysius de Vasculis de re Vestiaria, & Grimaldi Lexicon de partibus fidium	<i>Lugd.</i>	1535
220	<i>Petrarch (Fr.)</i> Epistol	<i>Ibid.</i>	1601
221	<i>Barocij (Fr.)</i> Cosmographia	<i>Ven.</i>	1588
222	<i>Casauboni (Is.)</i> Commentarij in Polybii Historiarum librum primum	<i>Paris.</i>	1617
223	<i>Perionij (Jo.)</i> de optimo genere Interpretandi in Aristotelis Ethica		
224	<i>Omphalius (Jac.)</i> de Elocutionis Imitatione ac Apparatu	<i>Basil.</i>	1537
225	Insignium aliquot Virorum Icones & Vitae	<i>Lugduni</i>	1559
226	Plauti Comediae cum Commentariis D. Lambini	<i>Ibid.</i>	1587
227	<i>Lipsij (Justi.)</i> Epistol Selectae	<i>Col.</i>	1616
228	<i>Sturmiij (Jo.)</i> Dialogi 4 in partitiones Oratorias Ciceronis	<i>Paris</i>	1546
229	<i>Gyraldi (Lillij)</i> de re Nautica libellus	<i>Basile</i>	1540
230	Erasmi Apophthegmata	<i>Ibid.</i>	1538
231	<i>Liberi (Sigism.)</i> Commentarij rerum Moscovitarum	<i>Antwerp.</i>	1557
232	<i>Bozius (Tho.)</i> de Itali Statu antiquo & novo	<i>Colon.</i>	1595
233	<i>Freigij (Tho.)</i> Quaestiones Physicae	<i>Basil.</i>	1579
234	<i>Pagnini (Sant.)</i> Epitome Thesauri Linguarum Sæculi	<i>Antwerpi</i>	1605
235	<i>Rabirij (Janij)</i> de Octo Partium Orationis Constructione Libellus	<i>Paris</i>	1550
236	<i>Lusinga (Ren.)</i> de Incremento & Conservatione Imperiorum	<i>Noriburg</i>	1603
237	<i>Grimalij (Laur.)</i> de Optimo Senatore libri duo	<i>Basile</i>	1593
238	Juvenalis & Persii Satyr	<i>Lugduni</i>	1538
239	<i>Statij (Pap.)</i> Opera cum Lexico Græcarum Dictionum		
240	<i>Prevotius (Cl.)</i> de Magistratibus Populi Romani	<i>Lausann</i>	1579
241	<i>Neandri (Mich.)</i> Orbis Terrarum descriptio	<i>Lipsi</i>	1589
242	<i>Hegendorphinus (Christ.)</i> in Actiones Verrinas M.T. Ciceronis	<i>Hagano</i>	1529
243	<i>Sesellius (Claud.)</i> de Republ. Galli & Regum officiis	<i>Argentorati</i>	1548
244	<i>Junij (Adr.)</i> Nomenclator, propria Nomina variis Linguis Indicans.	<i>Antw.</i>	1567
245	<i>Schori (Ant.)</i> Phrases Linguarum Latinarum & Ratio observandum eorum in authoribus legendis	<i>Basil</i>	
246	<i>Rami (Pet.)</i> Institutiones Dialecticæ	<i>Parisiis</i>	1549
247	Terentij Comediae cum Commentariis A. Donati	<i>Antw.</i>	1533
248	<i>Hottoxsanni (Fr.)</i> Franco-Galli	<i>Francof.</i>	1586
249	<i>Baronij (Cardl.)</i> de Monarchia Siciliæ	<i>Parisiis</i>	1609
250	Commentarius de Regno recte Administrando libri tres adversus N. Machiavellum		1577
251	<i>Buchanani (Geo.)</i> Poemata varia		1593
252	<i>Scherius (Ant.)</i> de ratione Discendendi & Docendae Ling. Lat. & Græcæ	<i>Argent.</i>	1549
253	Alcinous de Doctrina platonis	<i>Basile</i>	1532
254	<i>Maurolici (Fr.)</i> Cosmographia	<i>Parisiis</i>	
255	<i>Freigij (Tho.)</i> Quaestiones Oeconomicæ & Politicæ	<i>Basil</i>	1578
			256 Polybii

It may be that Ben Jonson's authoritative statement in the *First Folio* that Shakespeare had "small Latin and less Greek" may have confused scholars who found evidence to the contrary. Certainly Shakespeare must have read at least as widely as Sidney, whose biographer, A.C. Hamilton, tells us that, "to achieve such originality in poetry, literary criticism and prose fiction," Sidney had to have read "Ovid, Virgil, Horace, Petrarch, Sannazaro, Montemayor, Scaliger, Elyot, Agrippa, Landino, Plato, Aristotle, Boccaccio, Tasso, Mantuan, Erasmus, More, Ascham, Buchanan, Plutarch, Xenophon, and Seneca" (10). It is interesting that, according to his biographer, Sidney, seen by some as the epitome of the perfect courtier and scholar of the time, read much the same books as Shakespeare.

BY the late twentieth century, a number of scholars had spoken out with evidence of Shakespeare's extensive reading, including, surprisingly, some of those quoted above (G. Bullough, G.K. Hunter, K. Muir and J.A.K. Thomson).⁶ These are the scholars cited here, but there are many more. Both Muir and Bullough have produced extensive overviews of the sources, the probable and the possible sources that the playwright used, while Thomson has looked specifically at Shakespeare's use of the classics.

The Roman playwright Plautus (254?-184 B.C.), is known to be the source for *The Comedy of Errors* (Muir 255). Burghley's library included:

Plauti Comediae cum Commentariis D. Lambini; Lugduni, 1587.

Not all the Plautus plays Shakespeare may have used were available in translation. For instance, while it seems that *The Menaechmi* was available by 1595 in a translation by William Warner, Thomson points out that *Amphitruo* was not (49).

T. W. Baldwin feels certain that for a number of his comedies, Shakespeare studied "Terence and his commentators" (Hunter 61). Burghley's library had:

Terentij Comediae cum Commentariis A. Donati; Antw., 1533

Gio. Fabrini. *della Interpretatione della lingua Latina per via della Toschana le Comedie de Terentio*; Vinegi, 1548(?)

Muir sees three of Erasmus' writings as sources for *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Rape of Lucrece* and *Macbeth* (5, 15, 177). Burghley's library held all three:

Erasmi (Rot.) *Adagia*; Basil, 1515

Epitome Adagiorum Erasmi, per Had. Barlandum, Gr. Lat; Basil, 1528

Erasmi (Rot.) *Praise of Folly*; 1549

Erasmi *Colloquia familiaria*; Antwerpiae, 1545

Muir thinks that not only Plutarch's *Lives* but also his *Moralia* were used. Although North's translation is the one the playwright is supposed to have used for the history plays,

Burghley's library held:

Plutarchi (Chaeron.); *Vitae virorum Illustrium* lat.; Paris, 1514

Plutarchi (Chaeronensis); *Vitae* G. Xilandro Interprete 3. Vol.; Basil 1579

————— *Ethicorum sive Moraliuum*; pars 2^{da}. & 3^{tia} 2. Vol., Ibid.

Les Oeuvres Morales de Plutarque; 2 vol; a Paris, 1584.

In the Spring 1999 edition of *The Elizabethan Review*, Peter Usher discusses Shakespeare's apparent knowledge of the Copernican and Ptolemaic views of the universe as revealed in *Hamlet* (48). Burghley's library held:

Copernicus (Nic.); *de Revolutionibus Orbium Caelestium*; Basil, 1566

Proculus & Porphyrius in Ptolemaeum *de Effectibus Astrorum*. Basil, 1559

In the same edition of *The Elizabethan Review*, Gary Goldstein offers convincing evidence that Shakespeare took the four Jewish names in *The Merchant of Venice*—Shylock, Jessica, Tubal and Chus—from the Old Testament in Hebrew, as these name appear there “within the narrow compass of the two consecutive chapters, Genesis X and XI” (70-1). In the Latin and Greek versions of the Old Testament, these names are spelled so differently that the connection is lost. Burghley's library contained a large number of theological books, including two bibles in Hebrew:

Biblia Sacra; Heb. & Lat. cum comment. Seb. Munsteri 2 Vol.; Ibid (i.e. Basil), 1546

Biblia Psalterium; Hebr. Graec. Arabic cum 3 Latinis Interp & Glossis; Genuae, 1516

For *Antony and Cleopatra*, sources include: Plutarch's *Lives* and *Moralia* and Appian, both in Burghley's library. For *Cymbeline*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*; for *A Winter's Tale*, *Amadis de Gaule*; for *Measure for Measure*, Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*; for *Othello*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Cardinal Contareno's *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice*. All of these were in Burghley's library.

For *Macbeth*, possible sources include Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, Seneca's *Hercules Furens* and *Hippolytus*, as well as Ovid; all in Burghley's library. For *Hamlet* there was available Belleforest's *Les Histoires Tragiques*, along with possible sources such as Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* and Seneca's *Troas* and *Agamemnon*. Some or all of the scholars referenced here have agreed on these connections.

The following lists some of the titles thought to be sources for Shakespeare with the various language versions of these works owned by Lord Burghley:

Shakespeare's alleged sources: Language of source in Burghley's library:

Caesar	Latin
Cicero	Latin
Florus	Latin
Livy	Latin, French, Italian
Lucian	Latin, Spanish
Pliny	English
Seneca	Latin, French
Tacitus	French
Terence	Latin
Virgil	Italian, ms
Appian	Greek, Latin, Italian, French
Aristotle	some 23 books
Euripedes	Greek
Heliodorus	Greek
Homer; Iliad	Italian, ? Greek
Odyssey	Latin
Sophocles	Greek
Xenophon	Greek
Ariosto	Italian
Bandello	French
Boccaccio	Italian
Castiglione	Italian
Cinthio	Italian
Contareno	Italian
Machiavelli	Italian, English
St. Augustine	Latin
Homilies	English
Saxo Grammaticus	Latin, undated
Amadis de Gaule	French, Spanish
Belleforest	French
Boaistuau	French
Bodin	Latin
Froissart	French
Buchanan	Latin
Camden	French
Sir John Smithe	English

Oxford and Burghley's library

Among the Shakespearean sources quoted by these scholars are the following books we know were purchased by Oxford in 1569: from Chaucer: "The Knight's Tale" found in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; from Plutarch: "Titus Andronicus," used for the play of the same name; from Plato, the *Timaeus* for *Troilus and Cressida*; from Cicero, material in *Richard II*.

Of Latin authors, Ovid is generally agreed to have had the most influence upon Shakespeare. He refers to him in almost everything he ever wrote. Ovid's long poem, *The Metamorphoses*, was translated by Oxford's uncle, Arthur Golding, and published in 1567. Muir comments that Shakespeare "remembered" enough Latin to improve on this translation; therefore he must have known the original (3). Burghley's library included:

Ovidij (Pub.) *Metamorphosis cum Commentariis Antiquorum*; Paris, 1527

Apart from Holinshed, which was readily available to all English readers, the only Shakespeare sources that Burghley's library lacks are the contemporary sources. Burghley may have shared Thomas Bodley's attitude to "riffe-raffe bookes" in English and perhaps excluded plays from his library as Bodley wished them to be excluded from the library he instituted at Oxford (the famous Bodleian).

Many of the contemporary writers considered Shakespearean sources were personally known to Oxford, which would add over a dozen more authors and over twenty texts. These include Sir Thomas Bedingfield, George Chapman, George Puttenham, Anthony Munday, Thomas Nashe, Sir Philip Sidney, George Gascoigne (*The Supposes* as a source for *Taming of the Shrew*), John Lyly (*Mother Bombie* for *The Comedy of Errors*), Thomas Lodge (*Truth's Complaint over England* for *Richard II*), and Edmund Spenser (*The Faerie Queene* for *Henry IV*).

SOME of the sources regarded by orthodox scholars as "definite," are post 1604, causing perceived difficulties for the Oxfordian thesis. But Oxford was fluent in Latin, French and Italian, and so would have had no problem with the Latin, Greek or Continental versions of such sources as Herodotus, regarded as a source for *The Winter's Tale*; Livy, a source for *Coriolanus*; and Seneca, a source for *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, all found in Burghley's library. Chapman's *Iliad*, believed to be fundamental to *Troilus and Cressida*, was not complete until 1611, but Burghley had Homer in both Latin and Italian. Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures*, fundamental to *King Lear*, is variously dated from 1603 to 1606, but could well have been known to Oxford in manuscript, as Harsnett's publisher was James Roberts, publisher of the second (authentic) quarto of *Hamlet* (Muir 149).

While we may quote the opinions of respected scholars, still, many statements about sources remain problematic. There may be sources that remain unknown to scholars. Both

Shakespeare and the author of a "source" may in fact have worked from the same earlier text. For instance James I's *Daemonologie*, published in 1597 and regarded by some as a source for *Macbeth*, is not in the library, but there are several other books on devils, sorcerers and magicians. Could any of these have been a source for both authors?

Bodin (J). *de la Dæmonomanie des Sorciers*; a Paris, 1580

Histoires des Diables, Magiciens, Sorcieres, &c. par Jean Wier; Geneve, 1579

Les Sorciers, Dialogue necessaire pur ce temps; 1574

Orthodox scholars point to sources for the wreck in *The Tempest* that are dated too late for Oxford, but, apart from Oxford's own personal experiences at sea, there are numerous shipwrecks in early literature which offer sufficient if not more detail for a shipwreck. A reconsideration of the dating of sources and plays might show works by contemporaries like Sidney, Spenser, Daniel, Nashe, Greene, Lodge, and Chapman, frequently listed as sources for Shakespeare, as deriving from Shakespeare instead. Thus it is difficult to see that Oxford is disqualified by "late sources."

It is almost irresistible to look at those books Burghley's household presumably pored over all those centuries ago and not ask what else Oxford might have read: Thomas More, Thomas Aquinas; Aristophanes and the lighter comedies, all the books about Italy, Polydore Vergil (the historian preceding Hall and Holinshed), an account of the martyr Edmund Campion, Scaliger, and Oxford's cousin Francis Bacon, of course. There are a host of familiar names, all presumably available to the household. We may not know for sure where Oxford was living after 1563, but his residence in Burghley's household from age twelve, his marriage into Burghley's family and extant letters all show the closeness of the relationship.

Where did Shakespeare get his sources?

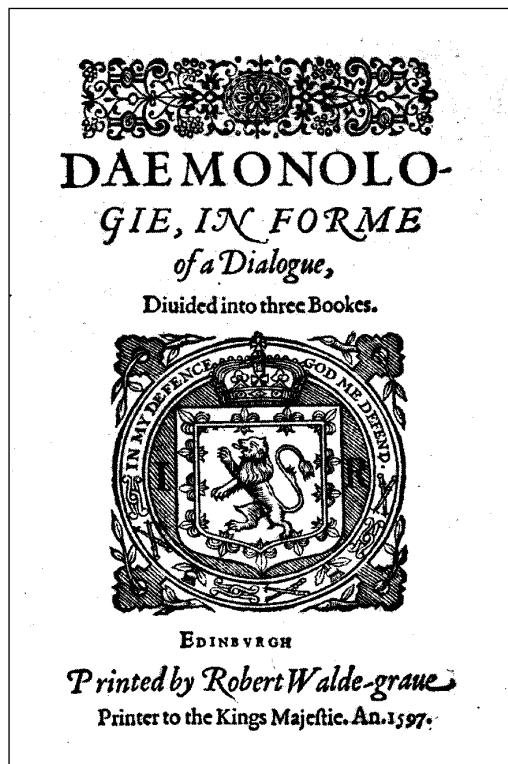
Sir Sidney Lee, ever mindful of the Stratford biography, suggests that:

He (Shakespeare) was endowed with the rare power of assimilating with rapidity the fruits of (observation and) reading. . . . His mind may best be likened to a highly sensitized photographic plate which need only be exposed for however brief a period to anything in life or literature, in order to receive upon its surface the firm outline of a picture which could be developed and reproduced at will. If Shakespeare's mind came in contact in an alehouse with a burly, good-humoured toper, the conception of a Falstaff found instantaneous admission to his brain. A hurried perusal of an Italian story of a Jew in Venice conveyed to him . . . all the background of Venetian society accurately defined" (636).

At the opposite pole, Kenneth Muir, more mindful of the evidence than the biography, seems almost to be describing Oxford when he writes:

Of modern languages, Shakespeare acquired some knowledge of French, Italian and perhaps a smattering of Spanish. He could certainly read French; and he could write it sufficiently well for his purposes in *Henry V*. . . . There is evidence too that he had read Florio's *First Frutes* and *Second Frutes*, presumably because he had started to learn Italian. Some of his plots were not available, as far as is known, in any other language. He could have read Boccaccio in a French translation; but he appears to have read Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and one or two plays in the original Italian. (5-6)

What did Shakespeare know? The answer may be found in the close relationship between the young Earl of Oxford and his guardian's "Shakespearean" library. ————— 🍷



Notes

¹ Burghley confirmed Oxford's fluency in French at age thirteen in a letter of 1563 to Oxford's first tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, referred to by John Strype in his biography of Smith (1698): "Cecil wrote him how the former Earl, whom he styled *his scholar*, had learned to understand French very well; and that he was desirous to have an honest qualified Frenchman to attend upon him and the other earl, for the exercise and speech of the tongue" (19).

² Principal Registry of the Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division of the High Court of Justice (Countess of Oxford's will).

³ P.R.O.: PROB11/146 (Eighteenth Earl of Oxford's will)

⁴ Sale catalogue of the library of Lord Ailesbury, passim. British Library 821.i.8.(1.), microfilm.

⁵ The list has to be treated with some caution, since it includes clearly erroneous entries. Note the dates of:

D. Algermus & Guernermus, *de Veritate Corp. & Sang.* in Eucharista; Colon, 1935

Nonni (Poetae) *Paraphrasis in Evangelium Di. Joannis*; Hagonoae, 5283

The Rehearsal Transposed, 2 vol. by Andr. Marvell; 1573

Kepleri (Jo.) *Harmonice Mundi*; Linciae, Austriae, 1519

(These are probably typographical errors of the sort that can be found in any printed matter of the period.)

⁶ Despite the quantity of evidence provided by scholars, the extent of Shakespeare's reading has been disputed for three centuries. Dr. William Warburton in the eighteenth century suggested that Shakespeare knew far more than the "small Latin and less Greek" attributed to him by Ben Jonson. Warburton's assertions provoked Dr. R. Farmer's 1767 Essay on "The Learning of Shakespeare." Dr. Farmer's argument was essentially that Latin tags and phrases were commonplace in Elizabethan speech and thus easily picked up (just as we might use *caveat emptor* or *tempus fugit*), and that his plots could all be found in contemporary English texts. For instance, Farmer commented that the plot for *Hamlet* could have been found in the anonymous translation, *The Hystorie of Hamblet*, the English translation of Belleforest's *Les Histoires Tragiques*. But Farmer overlooked the fact that the English version was published in 1608 while the play *Hamlet* was registered with the Stationers' by 1602, and printed as Q1 in 1603 and Q2 in 1604. He can explain the French scene in the last act of *Henry V* only by suggesting that someone else wrote it (5).

⁷ From the lists compiled for this article, some thirty-five classical authors are suggested as sources. Burghley's library offered access to at least twenty-four of them. If we count by text, however, rather than author, the figures are different. For instance, among the ten Senecan plays used by Shakespeare, some scholars will list a specific work, such as *Agamemnon*, *Hercules Furens* or *Thyestes*, for a specific Shakespeare play while others will simply list "Seneca." Burghley did not have separate editions of all of Seneca's plays, but he did have two versions of his complete works, one in Latin with a commentary, and one in French. Should we count these as one source, or ten?

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