Two Gentlemen of Verona *Italian literary traditions and the Authorship debate*

Kevin Gilvary

ANYONE moderately well-read in the Italian theater tradition might think it impossible that the author of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* could have grown up in a working-class family in a sixteenth-century English village two days horseback ride from a public theater, one who, so far as we know, had no opportunity to learn Italian or to travel outside England. So obvious are the links that tie *Two Gentlemen* to every aspect of the Italian theater tradition, and so obvious is it also that at the time that the play was written Shakspere of Stratford could have had no access to this tradition, that it is no wonder that, in general, literary criticism has simply ignored this problem, treating the two, the play's sources and its authorship, as entirely separate issues.

Although there were a few productions in London by one or more Italian companies during the 1570s,[1] such brief contacts would not have been sufficient to produce the kind of expertise in the Italian comedy traditions shown by the author of this play, nor were there books in English at that time that could have informed him of these traditions. It is far more likely that the play was composed by someone who was fluent in Italian, French and Latin, someone who had access to plays and texts in these languages and who had spent enough time in France and Italy to absorb the nuances of their theater. As Italian scholar Noemi Magri demonstrates, the accuracy of historical and geographical elements in the play cannot be explained in any way other than that the author was personally familiar with Italy and had frequent and close contact with Italian Renaissance theater traditions.[2] These traditions have been traditionally divided into genres known as *Comedy*, *Romance* and *Pastoral*.

By *Comedy* is meant traditions derived from the Classical Roman comedies of ancient playwrights Plautus and Terence and their Renaissance descendants, the refined *Commedia Erudita* of Italy's Courts and the rollicking *Commedia dell'Arte* of its streets. *Two Gentlemen* also reveals knowledge of a second continental tradition, that deriving from the *Greek Romance* novels of the first and second century AD. Written originally in Koiné Greek, the Lingua Franca of the Mediterranean cultures of that period, these early novels, their love stories spiced with hair-raising adventures, separations, and dangers, were the forerunners of today's action/adventure genre. A third tradition, known as the *Pastoral*, was primarily a Court genre in which shepherds sang

songs and recited sophisticated poetry to each other in an idealized country setting.

Comedy, Romance and Pastoral each have separate literary traditions that stretch from the Latin and Greek of the Classical period up through the Italian, French and Spanish Renaissance, traditions that, until Shakespeare's time, reached England only in the form of foreign language texts available to the few who could read and afford them. In fact, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was one of the first works to combine these traditions in English (Bullough 1.260, Greenblatt 82).

Individual texts that influenced *Two Gentlemen* have been identified and reproduced by Geoffrey Bullough in his eight volume *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (1957-75). Gilbert Highet in *The Classical Tradition* (1949), has analyzed the influence of Greek and Roman literature, both on Renaissance drama (124-143) and on Pastoral and Romance texts (162-177). In considering how these traditions influenced Shakespeare (194-218), Highet argues that there was very little Classical influence on English literature before Shakespeare. Robert Miola in *Shakespeare's Reading* (2000) states:

Then as now, playwrights did not write plays simply by reading books and adapting language; instead …they manipulated familiar traditions, the rich and capricious treasury of dramatic resources created by writers from antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance (15).

Friendship vs. Love

According to Georgio Melchiori, *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is an Italian-style comedy based on material that is neither Italian nor comedic (102). In fact it's based mostly on several English texts in which the theme of male friendship vs. male/female romantic love predominates: *Chaucer's Knight's Tale* (c.1390), which describes the strains on the friendship of Palamon and Arcite by their mutual love for Emily, a love triangle with fatal consequences; and Thomas Elyot's *The Governour* (1531), dealing with a similar situation, which Elyot resolves by having one friend nobly give up his fiancée to the other, and (as in *Two Gentlemen*), without referring to the lady's wishes. (Elyot's version was apparently dramatized for the Court in 1577 as *The History of Titus and Gisippus*, no longer extant).

Other source texts in English dealing with a similar love triangle theme are Richard Edward's two plays *Damon and Pythias* (performed in 1564 and published in 1567), and *Palamon and Arcite* (performed in 1566, no longer extant). Also possibly *Felix and Philiomena* (performed in 1585; author unknown, no longer extant) (Bullough 1.206). The same theme occurs in Lyly's prose novel *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1579), Spenser's long narrative poem, *The Faerie Queen* (1590-6), and of course the play *Two Noble Kinsmen* by Shakespeare (and Fletcher). Most agree that the play's most important source was neither English nor Italian but the Spanish Romance novel by the Portuguese Jorge de Montemayor, *Diana Enamorada* (c.1554).

Shakespeare's great contribution to the problem of Friendship vs. Love was to introduce Italian elements into the story by situating the action in the contemporary setting of an Italian Comedy, imbuing it with a strong element of Greek Romance (both heroines take considerable risks in pursuing their loves) and creating a pastoral setting for the resolution.

The Plot

Two Gentlemen opens with a conversation between the two friends of the title. Much to the dismay of Proteus, Valentine, craving adventure and to broaden his scope, prepares to leave Verona to offer service to the Duke of Milan. There, as becomes his name, he falls in love with the Duke's daughter Silvia, with whom he plans to elope. Meanwhile Proteus, also true to his name, having exchanged vows and rings with Julia, is forced to leave for Milan himself where he too falls in love with Silvia, then treacherously betrays his friend's marriage plans to the Duke. Banished by the Duke, Valentine finds sanctuary among some high-minded outlaws in the nearby forest. As Proteus sets about to win Silvia's love, Julia arrives in Milan disguised as a boy and offers to serve as page to her former lover, who gives her the unenviable task of pressing his love upon Silvia, ironically with the ring which Julia herself had given Proteus as a binding token of her love. Silvia rejects Proteus and, escaping from her father, follows Valentine into the woods.

In the melodramatic and compressed final scene, Silvia is overtaken by Proteus, who now threatens to take her by force. When Valentine intervenes, Proteus, joyful at being reunited with his friend, offers him all his "interest" in Silvia, causing Julia to swoon. Upon reviving and revealing her identity, Proteus's love for Julia is rekindled, while the Duke arrives in time to forgive everyone, including the outlaws.

Despite the fact that *Two Gentlemen* possesses, as the editor of the *Riverside* version puts it, "a delicate, lyrical charm," strong female roles, and amusing and poetic lines, it has one serious problem that no director can totally overcome. In the final act, after Proteus apologizes to Valentine for attempting to rape his mistress Silvia, Valentine forgives him by offering his own interest in Silvia to his friend, as though she were a horse or a pet dog: "And that my love may appear plain and free, all that was mine in Silvia I give thee" (5.4.82).

Although the occurance is brief, it is too crucial to smooth over. Equally peculiar is that from the moment that Proteus asks forgiveness of Valentine, Silvia, despite her importance to the story up to that point, is never mentioned again. No one has ever been able to explain this "mistake," one that has caused many critics to see *Two Gentlemen* as an early trial or "apprentice" effort. Nevertheless, audiences continue to enjoy the play for its many good qualities.

Commedia Erudita

One form of Italian comedy, the Commedia Erudita or *Learned Comedy*, would have been available to Shakespeare from printed sources, though none in English. It emerged in the early sixteenth century at Italian courts as a more refined version of the popular Commedia dell'Arte that was just then bursting into robust life. Erudita relied less on popular characters and more on a literary tradition stretching back to the Roman playwrights, Plautus and Terence.[3] Miola asserts that when Shakespeare came to write comedies, he found at his disposal "familiar characters in familiar contexts but with a rich history of adaptation from writers [of] prose fiction such as Boccaccio and Bandello and contemporary playwrights in Italy, France, Spain and England" (88). In 1582, the

Puritan reformer Stephen Gosson complained about the use by contemporary playwrights of foreign literature in translation:

> I may boldly say it because I have seen it that *The Palace of Pleasure, The Golden Ass, The Ethiopian History, Amadis of France*, *The Round Table*, bawdy comedies in Latin, French, Italian and Spanish have been thoroughly ransacked to furnish the playhouses in London.[4] (qtd in Chambers 4.216)

Most of these had been translated into English by 1582, but by 1594, the assumed date of composition of *Two Gentlemen* (*Riverside* 50), none of the works that most influenced it had yet been published in English. These include plays by Plautus, Montemayor's *Diana*, and Italian comedies such as *Gl'Ingannati* (1531). Gillespie asserts that Shakespeare may have used both the Italian original of *Gl'Ingannati* as well as French translations from Bandello's Novelle (1554) and Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1559-82) (194). The only English version of *Gl'Ingannati* at that time was an abridged adaptation by Barnabe Riche from his prose novella *Farewell to the Military Profession* (1581). Before this there had been only two adaptations of Italian comedies in the Elizabethan period: Ariosto's *Il Suppositi* (1509) translated by Gascoigne and performed at Gray's Inn in 1566 as *The Supposes*, and the unremarkable *Two Italian Gentlemen: Fedele and Fortunio*, thought to be by Anthony Munday, presented at court in 1584.[5] Despite its English storyline, it's obvious that the traditions Shakepeare imitated in *Two Gentlemen* were Italian, not English.

From Italian comedy comes the use of generic names to indicate character. By tradition, *Valentine* is a lover, while from Homer onwards, *Proteus* signifies one who is constantly changing his mind and his plans. *Speed* reflects the clown's wit rather than his actions, while *Launce* (short for *Launcelot*) suggests a mild satire of traditional chivalry, now in comic decline. *Silvia*, the name of a heroine in *Amadis de Gaulle*, lends a pastoral touch; *Julia* has been a mistress in love poems from Petrarch onwards; and *Eglamour* was the title of a pastoral romance. Shakespeare not only knew the various comedic traditions himself but expected his audience to be aware of them as well.

A second standard element of Commedia Erudita concerns the clash between age and youth, usually dramatized as the conflict between fathers and grown-up-children-not-yet-married. Each of the four youthful lovers has a father, two of them in conflict with their grown children. In an early scene (1.3) we see Proteus's father Antonio decide peremptorily to act against his son's wishes by sending him after Valentine "to do service to the Emperor," a demand that Proteus, however unwilling, is required to obey. Thus it is the fathers who set the play in motion by forcing their sons into adventure. Another father/child relationship involves the time-honored dispute between the

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Duke's marital wishes for his daughter Silvia and her own. This is such a recurring feature of Shakespeare's Italian-style comedies (in other Italianate plays: Capulet, Brabantio and Shylock make similar summary decisions against their children's wills—to their sorrow) that many commentators overlook what (and who) first brought it to the Elizabethan Stage.

A third recurring feature of Commedia Erudita is the tangle of various love interests: lovers A and B honorably love respectively mistresses Y and Z, but, since the course of true love never can run smooth, B bizarrely transfers his affections from Z to Y, thus betraying both his friend and his mistress. Fortunately all is restored at the end with the faithfulness of the ladies held in contrast to the fickleness of the men, a plot followed by Shakespeare in *Two Gentlemen*. (We see essentially the same storyline in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.)

A common variation on the love motif is the elderly lover whose affections are mocked by the other characters (e.g. Plautus's *Mercator*, Gianotti's *Il Vecchi Amoroso*, c.1535, and the character of Gherado in *Gl'Ingannati*.) This occurs twice in *Two Gentlemen*, once with the foolish Thurio's suit to Silvia and again when the Duke asks Valentine for advice on how to woo a lover. The lengthy interchange that follows serves mainly to heighten the suspense, as the audience is aware that Valentine is on the point of eloping and that the cunning Duke is also aware of it:

DUKE There is a lady in Verona here
Whom I affect; but she is nice and coy
And nought esteems my aged eloquence:
Now therefore would I have thee to my tutor,
For long agone I have forgot to court;
Besides, the fashion of the time is changed,
How and which way I may bestow myself
To be regarded in her sun-bright eye.

VAL. Win her with gifts, if she respect not words:
Dumb jewels often in their silent kind
More than quick words do move a woman's mind. (3.1)

The Duke continues until Valentine is snared by his own net, at which point the angry father reveals his knowledge of the elopement plan and sends him packing.

Other characteristics of Commedia Erudita include: comic conflict between masters and servants (e.g. Valentine/Speed; Proteus/Launce); mistaken identities (Proteus and Julia), a girl dressed as a youth (Julia), a daring escape (Silvia, with the help of Eglamour) and a reunited family (The Duke with Silvia). *Two Gentlemen* is clearly a play in the tradition of Commedia Erudita.

Commedia dell'Arte

However Shakespeare may have acquired his knowledge of Commedia Erudita, he seems equally familiar with Italian street theater, the Commedia dell'Arte, whose conventions he could not possibly have learned in any way other than direct observation. In dell'Arte, actors of both sexes improvise on a variety of familiar tropes, each portraying a stock character appropriate for them in terms of their age, sex and various abilities in singing, dancing, juggling, performing acrobatic tricks and trading wisecracks with the audience. Due to its spontaneous nature, the Commedia dell'Arte could not possibly become familiar to an Elizabethan through texts and translations alone—personal experience was required. Much of our own knowledge of the stock situations and characters of the dell'Arte derives from a 1611 Italian publication of fifty scenarios and roles by the actor and director, Flamineo Scala, far too late for an Elizabethan playwright.

One of Scala's scenarios, *Flavio Tradito*, closely resembles *Two Gentlemen* in the following ways (Bullough 1.257-260):

		Flavio Tradito	*Two Gentlemen of Verona*
1	two loyal friends	Flavio & Oratio	Valentine & Proteus
2	a silly lover	Spavento	Thurio
3	a Host	Host	Host (4,2, not named)
4	two heroines & their fathers	Isabella, daughter of a Doctor Flaminia, daughter of Pantalone	Silvia, daughter of the Duke Julia (father is off-stage, 1,2)
5	main pair of lovers	Flavio & Isabella	Valentine & Silvia
6	complication	Oratio falls in love with Isabella	Proteus falls in love with Silvia
7	disregard of friendship	Oratio disregards Flavio	Proteus disregards Valentine
8	servants & letters	servants & letters	Speed, Launce and Lucetta handle letters; others are suggested
9	a friend's deception	Oratio deceives Flavio	Proteus deceives Valentine
10	deceived still a friend	Flavio finds Oratio in a brawl	Valentine saves Proteus from outlaws
11	forgiveness	Flavio forgives Oratio	Valentine forgives Proteus
12	double marriage.	Flavio marries Isabella & Oratio marries Flaminia	Valentine marries Silvia & Proteus marries Julia

Most stock characters are clearly related to figures in the Commedia Erudita, but the madcap servants known as *zanni* (from which we get our term *zany*) seem to be the distinguishing feature of the Commedia dell'Arte. As Salingar notes, the comedy routines of the two zanni in *Two Gentlemen*—Launce & Pantino in 2.3 and Launce & Speed in 3.1—are more characteristic of dell'Arte than of Classical comedy or Erudita (208).

Two Gentlemen also reflects the general tradition of Commedia dell'Arte in its portrayal of old men (Vecchi), two pairs of lovers and their crossed love, the hi-jinks of servants, and the survey of suitors discussed by Julia and Lucetta.

The Commedia dell'Arte took Europe by storm in the 1570s and on into the seventeenth century, giving rise to a tradition that branched into many offshoots, among them the Punch and Judy shows of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the English Pantomime, which to this day continues to display many traits of the Commedia dell'Arte.

Perhaps the most popular character of all has been the zanni, *Arlecchino—Harlequin* in English. Arlecchino is clever, but also lazy and deceitful, concerned mainly with satisfying basic appetites such as sleep, hunger and love. In *Two Gentlemen*, Speed, too, is mainly concerned with sleep and food: "True, sir; I was in love with my bed" (2.1.75), and "Though the chameleon Love can feed on the air, I am one that am nourished by my victuals and would fain have meat" (2.1.159). Arlecchino frequently resorts to lies and his actions tend to complicate the plot—often by misdirecting a letter. Speed lies when he claims to have delivered a letter from Proteus to Julia when in fact he has given it to her maid, Lucetta (1.2.38). Launce, too, fails to deliver the message to Speed that his master has been banished:

LAUNCE	Why, then will I tell thee—that thy master stays for thee at the North-gate.
SPEED	For me?
LAUNCE	For thee! ay, who art thou? he hath stayed for a better man than thee.
SPEED	And must I go to him?
LAUNCE	Thou must run to him, for thou hast stayed so long that going will scarce serve the turn.
SPEED	Why didst not tell me sooner? Pox of your love letters! (Exit)
LAUNCE	Now will he be swinged [beaten] for reading my letter; an unmannerly slave, that will thrust himself into secrets! I'll after, to rejoice in the boy's correction.

The lazy and deceitful servant is not normally a feature of Commedia Erudita, where slaves and servants tend to know their place.

Like Arlecchino, both servants are witty enough to spar verbally with their masters, each other and other servants. In fact, they usually have a better understanding of what is happening than do their masters. Traditionally Arlecchino will openly mock his master, something rare in most of Shakespeare, but Speed, too, is free to tease Valentine:

VAL	Why, how know you that I am in love?
SPEED	Marry, by these special marks: first, you have learned, like Sir Proteus, to wreathe your arms like a malcontent; to relish a love-song like a robin-

> redbreast; to walk alone like one that had the pestilence; to sigh like a school-boy that had lost his A B C; to weep like a young wench that had buried her grandam; to fast like one that takes diet; to watch like one that fears robbing; to speak puling like a beggar at Hallowmas. You were wont, when you laughed, to crow like a cock; when you walked, to walk like one of the lions; when you fasted, it was presently after dinner; when you looked sadly, it was for want of money: and now you are metamorphosed with a mistress, that, when I look on you, I can hardly think you my master. (2.1)

Traditionally, Arlecchino may address the audience directly. Launce shares with the audience his aggravation with Crab—

> I think Crab, my dog, be the sourest-natured dog that lives: my mother weeping, my father wailing, my sister crying, our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands, and all our house in a great perplexity, yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear: he is a stone, a very pebble stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog: a Jew would have wept to have seen our parting; why, my grandam, having no eyes, look you, wept herself blind at my parting. Nay, I'll show you the manner of it. (2.3)

—with which he launches into some bit of comic business. Such direct address to the audience is a characteristic only of Commedia dell'Arte. While there is some direct address to the audience in prologues and epilogues (and by Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or Chorus in *Henry V*) it is rare for a Shakespeare character to consciously address the audience.

The second major zanni of the Commedia dell'Arte was Brighella, the servant who has become an inn-keeper. When Julia, disguised as a boy, is searching for Proteus (4.2), she is helped by just such a character, who informs her (and the audience) of various plot developments. It was not necessary that the author include this stock character as in practice it would have been easier for Launce to inform Julia (as in The RSC production of 2004). Perhaps he needed a part for one of the company's other comedians.

In short, Shakespeare uses many features from the Commedia dell'Arte. Indeed, in his study, *The World of Harlequin* (1963), the Shakespearean scholar and editor, Allardyce Nicoll, offers frequent examples from Shakespeare. He concludes:

> Whether Shakespeare actually witnessed any performances given by the Italians, we cannot say with certainty, but we can declare that the inner spirit of his early comedies closely approaches that of Scala's plays. (223)

Greek Romance

While the most obvious elements of the play are characteristic of Comedy, *Two Gentlemen* also involves the standard tropes of Greek Romance: adventure, narrow escapes, and unshakable devotion to a lover. This definition is maintained by Pettet, who observes that "none of Shakespeare's comedies is more deeply infused with romantic elements than Two Gentlemen of Verona" (101). The following elements of Romance can be readily appreciated: 1) long separation of lovers (Julia and Proteus; shorter separation of Silvia and Valentine; 2) unflinching fidelity despite trial and temptation (Julia for Proteus; Silvia for Valentine; and 3) displacement (three of the lovers move from Verona to Milan; all four leave the comfort of the city for the lawlessness of the forest).

The earliest Greek Romances include the anonymous and now lost *Apollonius of Tyre*, *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus, and the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus.[6] In this last, the lovers Theagnes and Chariclea suffer one disaster after another, as the author jumps back and forth from one to the other during their many separations. We know that Greek Romance had reached the Elizabethan theatre by the 1580s because a play titled *Theagnes and Chariclea* was presented before the Queen and her Court during the Christmas holidays, 1572-3 (Gillespie 204). Renaissance translations of the Greek Romances drew various imitations, all of which seem to have influenced Shakespeare: two Italian: Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and two Spanish in the same tradition: *Amadis de Gaulle* and Montemayor's *Diana Enamorada*.[7] These last two were not available in English before 1596. Although the Spanish Romance, the *Diana*, was the single most influential text in all of Europe, the tradition was represented mainly in Italian literature.

In Renaissance England the Romance tradition was initiated primarily by Sidney's prose novel, *The Arcadia*, but there was very little by way of Romance drama before Shakespeare (Wilson 113). Salingar cites only three out of the twenty-nine plays known to have been performed at Court before 1590 as possibly identifiable as Romance dramas by their titles, among them Lyly's *Sapho and Phao* and Robert Greene's *Orlando Furioso* (32).[8] According to Bullough, Lyly's plays show some awareness of Latin texts, but little knowledge of contemporary European sources (1.204). In Greene's *Orlando* (probably 1594, after *Two Gentlemen*), an adaptation of Ariosto's poem, the hero is led hither and yon by the fame of the beauteous and ever-faithful Angelica. Unlike the proactive heroines of Greek Romance and *Two Gentlemen*, Angelica is essentially a passive type, forever waiting to be rescued. As noted by many commentators, Shakespeare's influence derived less from medieval sources (apart from Chaucer) than from Classical and Renaissance Romance (Highet 168, Gillespie 204-6). According to Charles Whibley, editor of *The Cambridge History of Literature* (1895) it is clear that Shakespeare was writing within a literary tradition, recently initiated, by an

> . . . Italianate Englishman, bitterly reproached by his contemporaries, [who] brought back from Italy with his fantastic costume and new-fangled manners, a love of Italian Literature and Romance. (9)

Who could he have had in mind?

The Pastoral Tradition

In contrast to the anxiety and corruption of life in cities and at royal Courts, Pastoral life and love are characterized by a simple naiveté. Pastoral literature as a form of escapism emerged from Alexandria in ancient times, primarily in the Greek poetry of Theocritus, later developed in Latin by Virgil. The pastoral landscape portrayed by Virgil stands in sharp contrast to the real Arcadia, a barren wilderness in southern Greece. Virgil's poetry was written for an intellectual élite that had no first-hand knowledge of the hardships of real country living.

The first major work in the pastoral genre in Renaissance literature was Boccaccio's *Admetus* (*Ameto* c.1341), in which prose narrative was interspersed with songs. Later Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (c.1504) circulated widely in Italy and was translated into French (1544) and Spanish (1549). Shortly afterwards, Montemayor's pastoral romance *Diana Enamorada* was published in Valencia in 1559. The first English translation of the *Diana* is especially interesting as it was not published until 1598. In his foreword, Bartholomew Young claims to have completed his translation of the *Diana* sixteen years earlier (in 1582), so we may propose as likely an extensive sharing among members of a literary coterie. The pastoral genre was already very popular in Elizabethan poetry, due chiefly to Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*. There is a record of a play performed before Queen and Court in Greenwich in 1585 called *Felix and Philiomena* (*Felismena*?), probably derived from Montemayor.

Certainly *Two Gentlemen* was influenced by the *Diana*. According to T.A. Perry, Shakespeare used elements of both the original and the translation (73-6). A major pastoral element drawn from *Diana* was the cross-dressing heroine, Julia. Unlike other Shakespeare heroines, who take up men's clothes to escape from Court, Julia, like Felismena in the *Diana*, does so to follow her lover *to* Court:

> FILISMENA I determined to adventure that, which I never think any woman imagined: which was to apparell my selfe in the habit of a man, and to hie me to the court to see him, in whose sight al my hope and content remained. (qtd. in Carroll 2.44)

Other similarities between *Diana* and *Two Gentlemen* include the device of the heroine seeing a letter from her lover but feigning disinterest—comic by-play develops when Julia pretends not to notice or be interested in the letter from Proteus (1.2). In traditional pastoral, the heroine arrives at an inn and is helped by the inn-keeper—here Julia arrives friendless in Milan and is similarly helped (4.2). As in traditional pastoral, the heroine has to endure her lover serenading an unseen rival. There is also conversation between the two heroines, as in the moving interchange between Silvia and the disguised Julia (4.4). These among other similarities make *Diana* the primary source for *Two Gentlemen* (Harrison 252, Bullough 1.205, Gillespie 351). Even the honorable outlaws seem to have their counterpart in as elements of the Italian pastoral genre (Salingar 225). The inclusion of such features was not casual, as noted by Salingar:

> The rhythm of the whole action is marked by the two men on their travels and then the two girls in flight. In spite of its weaknesses, this is something more than appren-

> tice work on Shakespeare's part. He has not tried simply to dramatize Montemayor's pastoral narrative; he has taken what he wants from it to fit a well-balanced comic structure. (226)

Pastoral as a dramatic form developed in Italy. In 1559, the Duke's court at Ferrara saw productions of Beccari's *Il Sacrificio* (*The Sacrifice*), and again in 1573, saw Tasso's *Amyntas*, in which the title character falls in love with a Silvia. In *All's Well* and M*easure for Measure*, Shakespeare was certainly influenced by one pastoral drama in particular: the large-scale 1585 play *Il Pastor Fido* (*The Faithful Shepherd*) by Guarini, which was not translated into English until 1602 (Clubb 23).

The specifically pastoral elements of *Two Gentlemen* are not extensive, but they are essential as they contribute to the play's resolution. The plot resembles *Il Pastor Fido* in its elements of hopeless love, deceit, repentance, a magnanimous pardon and finally a joyful marriage. The name of the heroine Silvia, derived from the Latin *silva* (meaning woodland), was carefully chosen, as can be seen from its repetition in the most famous lines of the play, spoken by Valentine:

> Silvia is myself. Banished from her
> Is self from self – a deadly banishment.
> What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
> What joy is joy is Silvia be not by?
> Except I be by Silvia in the night,
> There is no music in the nightingale.
> Unless I look on Silvia in the day,
> There is no day for me to look on. (3.2.172-181)

Sir Eglamour's name seems to derive from the medieval chivalry tradition, soon to be satirized into extinction by Cervantes. Eglamour's role in *Two Gentlemen* is to protect Silvia in the forest, but when confronted by real outlaws he proves a poor champion—his weakness emphasizing Silvia's courage. Was his name a subtle comment on the fragility of chivalry when confronted by reality?

As a final trope from the pastoral, it is in the natural setting of the forest that the play's problems are ultimately resolved. The Court and the City have witnessed the confusions and separations of various star-crossed friends and lovers; Valentine from Silvia; Thurio from Silvia; Proteus from Julia; Proteus from Valentine, the Duke from Valentine. When they meet up in the forest at the end, all problems are resolved. Furthermore, having elected Valentine as their leader (for his good manners and his knowledge of languages), the outlaws are pardoned by the Duke and restored to their fortunes and to membership in civil society.

After such wonderful reconciliations, one wonders why the characters would return to the City at all, having found love, self-awareness and forgiveness in the Forest? The answer is that the Arcadian life represents the Ideal, not the Real. Yet though the pastoral offers little more than a brief escape from reality, it can also provide a bit of philosophy that an audience can take back with them into the real world of the Court and the City, once the book is closed or the theater goes dark.

Friendship or Love?

Although the play begins and ends with affirmations of male friendship, the plot revolves around the complications that arise in real life when two friends fall in love with the same girl. Valentine's renunciation of Silvia out of friendship to Proteus derives from the medieval tradition of "anything for a friend." But unlike the passive heroines of the medieval tradition, Shakespeare's heroines are strong characters and crucial to the action. With the rejection of Valentine's offer, Shakespeare offers his admittedly ambiguous contribution to the Friendship vs. Love debate.

Authorship of *Two Gentlemen of Verona*

We have seen that the play *Two Gentlemen of Verona* makes extensive use of various sources and traditions. The knowledge and understanding of Italian Classic Comedy, Greek Romance, and Pastoral traditions indicate an author who was steeped in these general traditions and could draw on specific texts that were available only in Greek, Latin, French or Italian. That such a witty and sophisticated Italian comedy, consciously using and adapting elements from Greek Romance and the pastoral tradition, could have been composed in English by 1590 requires explanation. The traditional view that a young man, recently arrived in London from the provinces, perhaps with links to acting troupes, could utilize all these traditions and surpass them in his first play (*Riverside* 50) is beyond belief. Yet traditional editors and the biographers of William Shakspere of Stratford not only accept this but pass it over as unremarkable. Both Stanley Wells and Stephen Greenblatt refer to the play but do not include it in their narratives. Michael Wood, writing in 2003, is even more evasive when he says that *Two Gentlemen* was "perhaps modeled on a lost Queen's Men play," (103), which would push its composition back into the 1580s, far too early for a Stratford author.

While Shakspere of Stratford offers no point of contact in any way with any of these elements, Edward de Vere had access to his tutor's library from early childhood (Hughes 24, 26). On the shelves of this library were to be found exciting stories, most of which were in French or Italian, others in Latin and Greek. His Tutor, Sir Thomas Smith, a leading Cambridge professor of Greek philosophy and Roman Law, owned many of the titles that we see here as sources for *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. While with Smith, an advocate of early education, de Vere (later Earl of Oxford) would have cut his teeth on Boccaccio in Italian, on the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus in Latin, on Plutarch's *Lives* in Greek, Latin, and French (Strype 280). Smith had also Picolomino, Aretine, and the *Defense des Dames* by Christine de Pisan, which promoted the view that women were as capable and intelligent as men (281). Many of these can also be found on a library list of William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Oxford's guardian, with whom he spent his teenaged years and whose library eventually came close to 2000 volumes (Jolly 26-30). Burghley had other texts as well that point directly to the composition of *Two Gentlemen*: Terence in Latin, Bandello and Belleforest in French, *Amadis de Gaulle* in French and Spanish, Cinthio's *Hecatomithi* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, both in Italian (10-12).[10]

After finally getting the Queen's permission to spend a year abroad, the twenty-five-year-old

Oxford set forth in 1575, first to Paris, where, as a poet himself, he would surely have made it a point to meet the poets and playwrights of the famed *Pleiade*, Pierre Ronsard and his coterie; then to Italy, where he roamed from one cultural center to another, absorbing the art, literature, theater, music, wine, and sexual pleasures of Tuscany and Venice.

Oxford arrived in Italy during a period of immense growth and intellectual excitement, true of all of the Arts and particularly true of the Theater. A prince in his own country, he was welcome at the Court in every city he visited and so would have seen the rising stars of Italian Court theater in performance, while in the streets the earliest of the Commedia troupes, soon to be taking all the capitals of Europe by storm, turned somersaults, walked tight ropes from roof to roof as they poked fun at all and sundry.

Here he would also have seen women holding their own onstage, the first of our present-day female theater stars, actresses who could easily have brought to vivid life the kind of roles that Shakespeare would soon be writing for his female characters; roles that, back in England, would have to be played by boys. While in Siena in 1575 he may well have taken time to visit the famous comic playwright Alessandro Piccolomini and there enjoyed his annual presentation of *Gl'Inganatti*, a primary source for *Two Gentlemen* (Anderson 102-3).

Among the possible sources for Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* given above are works by some of his Elizabethan contemporaries: Arthur Golding, Richard Edwards, Edmund Spenser, George Gascoigne, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Arthur Brooke, Barnabe Riche, George Peele, Anthony Munday, Angel Day and Thomas Lodge. Many of these names can be connected to Oxford. Arthur Golding was his uncle. Lyly and Munday worked for some time as his secretaries. Edwards included him in his collection of poems. Brooke was a member of the Cobham family who lived with them (Green 59-70) during the period when Oxford lived nearby at Cecil House, a time when Gascoigne was working as an agent for Cecil. Spenser, Lodge, Greene, and Day all dedicated works to him. Other writers of the period, those whose works have not been noted as sources for *Two Gentlemen* or any other Shakespeare comedies, were neither secretaries of Oxford nor had they any ties to him. In other words, authors of works published in the 1590s or later, works now considered to be possible sources of *Two Gentlemen*, can be seen as belonging to a literary coterie to which Oxford also belonged.

These connections are too many and too strong to be brushed aside as coincidence. They suggest that the English playwright best suited to have written *Two Gentlemen of Verona* was the one who had learned to read Greek, Latin, French and Italian in childhood (Hughes 19-44), who had the opportunity to see at close hand Italian comedy of all sorts, who knew Italy intimately from the year he spent there in 1575, who was also, throughout his life, a patron of acting companies, and who was noted by a contemporary (Francis Meres in 1598) as "best for comedy." ❦

Endnotes

1 There are records of performances by one or more Italian companies in England for a short time in the 1570s. The troupe that played at Nottingham in 1573 was probably the same one that followed Elizabeth's Progress in 1574, first at Windsor, then at Reading (probably a pastoral, based on the props listed in the Household Revels book). The troupe included women, prompting the Puritan reformer Thomas Norton to comment that "the unchaste, shameless and unnatural tumblings of the Italian women . . . offended God and honesty." There are records of Court performances by Italian companies in 1576, '77, and '78, but none after that (Chambers 2.262).

2 Rejecting the widespread notion that Verona, Milan, Padua and Mantua are merely "Shakespeare's shorthand" for Italy rather than his description of particular places (Greenblatt 77), Magri pinpoints the consistent accuracy of the sixteenth-century geography as described in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (66-78).

3 Various plays by Plautus were known in the Italian Renaissance and to the Elizabethans. Two comedies especially, the Menaechmi (not translated by Warner until 1595) and the Amphytruo (not translated until 1893), had a direct or indirect influence on another early Shakespeare comedy, *The Comedy of Errors*. Plautus's *Miles Gloriosus* or 'The Braggart Soldier' clearly influenced the character of Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Falstaff and other characters (Highet 124-143, Salingar 76-174).

4 The earliest English translation of any Italian work was by Sir Thomas Hoby (1561) of *Il Cortegiano*. Arthur Brooke translated one of Bandello's *Novelle* from a 1554 French version into English verse as *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus & Juliet* (1562). This poem, over 3,000 lines long, was the basis of Shakespeare's version of the star-crossed lovers and may have provided a number of details for *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, among them the use of a rope ladder for a clandestine escape, a sudden shift from one object of affection to another, homicide as a reason for banishment, and the heroine's rejection of her father's choice of husband.

5 *The Two Italian Gentleman: Fedele and Fortunio* was more of an adaptation of *Il Fedele* by the Count Pasqualigo, published in Venice in 1576. The English version has a Commedia Erudita plot that includes the usual cross-wooings, letters, false messages, street fights, incantations and mock terrors. Its characters include a young noblewoman, her would-be lovers, and a comic pedant. Melchiori identifies key elements of the comedy of love in the adaptation: originally, the heroine Vittoria is a married woman who manages a number of lovers. In the adaptation, she is an eligible young lady. In Pasqualigo, there are a number of minor characters and many sub-plots; in Munday, the number of characters and sub-plots is reduced. For Melchiori, Munday's adaptation is a major influence on the comedies of Shakespeare and other, later dramatists (103).

6 *Apollonius of Tyre*, known through later re-tellings (e.g. Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, 1393), influenced *Pericles* (Bullough 6.351). *Daphnis and Chloe* was translated into Italian by Caro, into French by Amyot in 1559 and into English by Angel Day, 1587; it influenced Greene's *Pandosto* (1588) and possibly *The Winter's Tale* (Bullough 8.119). The *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus was translated by Amyot into French in 1547 and from a Latin version into English by Thomas Underdowne who dedicated it to Edward de Vere in 1569 (second edition in 1587)(Gillespie 204).

7 The *Decameron* greatly influenced Shakespeare's conception of his heroines as more sharply witted than the heroes, first among these being Julia and Silvia in *Two Gentlemen*. Salingar (244-5) asserts that women with the decisive role who carry the main share of understanding and decision in love are essentially

"heroines in the tradition of Boccaccio." The influence of the *Decameron* is clearly seen in the plot of *All's Well* and *Cymbeline*, but also *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*. Gillespie believes that Shakespeare may have known the text from the original Italian, as well as from a French translation by Le Maçon and from the sixteen stories translated by William Painter in his *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-75) (55). Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (translated by Harington in 1591) greatly influenced *Much Ado* and had some influence on *Othello* and *As You Like It*. Gillespie adds to his entry on Ariosto: "The assumption that [Shakespeare] could not read Italian has been weakening in recent years" (27).

A version of *Amadis de Gaulle* by Feliciano de Silva was published in 1542 and translated into French in 1551, a romance that influenced *A Winter's Tale* and possibly *The Tempest* (Graves) but, according to Bullough, was not translated into English until late in the seventeenth century (8.133). Since the original includes a hero called Florisel, the princely shepherd, and the statue trick, Bullough asserts that Shake-speare must have known this work, "perhaps in the French translation" of Colet (1577). Clark reports that the British Library has a translation by Anthony Munday, 1595, dedicated to the Earl of Oxford (101), one that Nelson fails to mention.

8 In *Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition*, Pettet shows that Lyly was aware of the tradition of Romance but his emphasis is more on courtship and marriage while Greene's is more on adventure (40). Although Greene's *Orlando* is thought by Chambers to date to 1591 (3.329) and by Gillespie to 1594 (25), it might date to c. 1588. If so it would pre-date *Two Gentlemen*.

9 Whibley refers to William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, of which the first volume was published in 1566, the second in 1567, and to Geoffrey Fenton's *Certaine Tragicall Discourses*, published in 1567. [The full text can be accessed at *http://www.bartleby.com/214/0103.html*].

10 Eddi Jolly cites a sales catalogue from 1687 in which Lord Burghley's library was listed (6). Some of the books in the catalog were no doubt purchased after Oxford had access to his library, but the dates on these suggest that they would have been available to him during his time at Cecil House from age twelve (1562) until, presumably, he acquired a library of his own.

Two Young Men
Crispin van den Broeck
(1542-before 1591)
Fitzwilliam Museum,
Cambridge

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