

# *Was Shakespeare Don Quixote (Or Was He a Jacobean Dramatist)?*

by Sky Gilbert

Shakespeare was a fiercely anachronistic figure. He lived at a cultural turning point of monumental importance. Why does a writer whose work is largely incomprehensible to so many at first sight—because it is written in the often obscure and dense syntax of early modern rhetoric—still manage to obsess us? It is not just Shakespeare’s rhetorical skill or his psychological insight that separates him from the rest; his work was created at a particular point in time when a fundamental aesthetic debate was pitting poets against each other. Shakespeare dared to align himself with a point of view that was in danger of becoming anachronistic. His work was the aesthetic personification of an old, romantic world order that was reluctantly giving way to a new, more pragmatic one, and he waged a valiant, passionate final crusade in the name of medieval rhetoric and chivalry. Shakespeare’s prodigious talent aside, this is the principal key to the irresistible urgency and mystery of Shakespeare’s work.

## *Double Falsehood*—Shakespeare’s “Jacobean” Work?

Consider the recent scholarly debate over *Double Falsehood*. Clearly inspired by a chapter of Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, *Double Falsehood* was published and produced by Lewis Theobald in London in 1727. Theobald claimed it was an adaptation of *Cardenio* by William Shakespeare and John Fletcher. The actual text for the legendary *Cardenio* has never surfaced, but *Cardenio* is referred to in the accounts of the King’s Men in 1613 and in The Stationers’ Register

in 1653—in which a scribbled entry attributes authorship to Fletcher—with “and Shakespear” added later. In *The Quest for Cardenio*, Breann Hammond (one of the contributors to *The Quest for Cardenio* and also the editor of the Arden version of *Double Falsehood*) asserts that Shakespeare collaborated on three plays after 1612: *Henry VIII*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Cardenio*. However, the notion that Shakespeare wrote plays well into the Jacobean era is not supported by a close examination of his rhetorical style and thematic obsessions. His sensibility was far from Jacobean; rather, it was Elizabethan, even verging on medieval.

However, Gary Taylor, Hammond, and the other defenders of *Double Falsehood* in *The Quest for Cardenio* are not interested in Shakespeare’s rhetoric or his thematic obsessions. They use stylometrics to advance their arguments. Stylometrics collects statistical information on word usage extrapolated from digital databases to support arguments for authorship. For example, in *The Quest for Cardenio*, Taylor makes much of the pronunciation of the word “aspect” in relationship to *Double Falsehood*, quoting an 18th century Shakespearean scholar: “Farmer noted that, ‘The word Aspect, you perceive, is here accented on the first Syllable, which...was never the case in the time of Shakespeare’” (38). Taylor triumphantly contradicts this, apparently because Farmer “did not have access to databases” (38). He missed the fact that “Cyril Tourneur indisputably used the modern accentuation in 1609” (38). Later, Taylor dismisses his own conclusion, saying: “One word, or phrase, does not in itself establish an eighteenth-century origin” (39). But “nevertheless, we can clearly identify idioms in *Double Falsehood* that could not have belonged to the 1613 play” (40). Pages and pages of sometimes contradictory and stupefyingly boring stylometrics follow. Recently in the *The New Yorker* magazine, Taylor said he changes his mind constantly when presented with stylometric evidence: “If you’re an empiricist, when you get new data, you change your mind.... Unlike politicians, it’s a good thing for a scholar to be a flip-flopper” (Pollack-Pelzner).

Call me old-fashioned for wishing to differentiate the forest from the trees, but in this case, the trees are stylometric discussions of Shakespeare, and the forest consists of the two paradigms that pervaded medieval life and

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Shakespeare's work: rhetoric and chivalry. In most of Europe, it was twilight for these medieval tropes. However, Shakespeare's tenacity in unabashedly adoring them marks his work with a singular intensity. And speculation about whether Theobald's *Double Falsehood* was an 18th century adaptation of a play by Shakespeare must necessarily involve these facts.

It's relatively easy to make a superficially convincing, if not persuasive, argument for *Double Falsehood* as an adaptation of a lost play by Shakespeare, as there is no so-called "Ur text" to compare it to. The writers in *The Quest for Cardenio* take advantage of the fact that the work has three proposed authors—Shakespeare, Fletcher, and Theobald (their supposed later adapter). On the face of it, *Double Falsehood* is a very uninspiring play, but it does, in certain aspects at least, seem "Shakespeare-esque." However, if the play's structure is faulty and/or un-Shakespearean, Theobald's defenders can say, "well the structure was probably imagined by Fletcher," and if a speech isn't up to the usual Shakespearean poetic standard, they can say, "that part was obviously written by Theobald." Hammond's essay in *The Quest for Cardenio* assures us that "the play is a rattling good yarn, largely plot-driven though not entirely lacking the pensive metaphorically dense soliloquies for which Shakespeare is best known. There are, as I point out in the edition, lesions that must have been filled in earlier versions" (75). So, the poetry we normally associate with Shakespeare is missing because Theobald chose to cut it. But might a "rattlingly good yarn" better describe a TV episode of *Law and Order* than *Troilus and Cressida*?

## Theobald and Pope versus "Old Rhetoric"

Theobald is part of the 18th century tradition famous for its "re-imaginings" of Shakespeare, which includes Alexander Pope and David Garrick. Yet that is not enough context to produce a rewarding analysis of *Double Falsehood*. What is missing in *The Quest for Cardenio* is a judicious consideration of the literary biography of Lewis Theobald. For instance, Hammond's introduction to the Arden version of *Double Falsehood* mentions that Theobald obtained a royal license for an adaptation of Shakespeare. Hammond rationalizes: "would Theobald have knowingly sold a forgery by means of a signed and legal document?" (17). In fact, Theobald had a reputation as a forger; he had been accused of forgery not once but twice: once by a Henry Mesteyer, and once by William Warburton. Mesteyer claimed that he had given Theobald his own play to read and Theobald had passed it off as his own. Hammond mentions these forgery accusations yet somehow concludes that Theobald's "career does not suggest he was a likely forger" (75). Yet Theobald's scholarly work on Shakespeare points in exactly that direction.

Theobald discovered Shakespeare at a time when The Royal Society (1660) had ushered in a new attitude to language that was fundamentally opposed to

the rhetorical style of Shakespeare's work. It was one of the first western "scientific" organizations (Isaac Newton was a member) dedicated to practical experiment as a testing ground for facts. Their motto—*nullius in verba*, roughly translated as "take nobody's word for it"—says it all. The most important subject in the medieval classical trivium—grammar—taught medieval students that the world must be studied through poetry, not via a microscope and scientific experimentation. The world could not just be read like a book; in fact, it *was* one. But the Royal Society believed that the scientific revolution could only occur if the human imagination was controlled. Richard Nate suggests that "The early modern scientists' distrust of the imagination has almost become a commonplace" (412).

In the 18th century, theorists like Addison and Corbin Morris criticized the use of the fundamental rhetorical devices like metaphor and simile. David Garrick had a disdain for quibbles, i.e. puns, and cleared his Shakespeare adaptations of them. Ramus' (1515–1572) rhetorical teachings were all the rage in early modern graduate schools, and became the norm in the 17th century. Ong describes Ramus' definition of a poem: "An oration or poem stripped down to its essentials is a string of definitions and divisions somehow or other operating through syllogisms" (192). The onerous task assumed by Ramus, the Royal Society, and many 18th century adapters of Shakespeare was to clear away the frippery, allusions, and, ultimately, the *illusory nature* of dense rhetoric, and penetrate to the moral lesson that lay hidden beneath.

The quarrel between Alexander Pope and Lewis Theobald was between two men who disagreed only on exactly how to clarify Shakespeare's text and clear it of moral ambiguity. (This quarrel had its basis in the larger conflict between the "polite wits," exemplified by Jonathan Swift and Pope, and the academicians like Richard Bentley and Theobald. The polite wits viewed the academics as boring and lifeless; the academicians deemed the poets inexact.) The influence of the bitter enmity between Pope and Theobald cannot be overestimated. In 1725 Pope published *The Works of Shakespear*, which featured his own heavily edited versions of Shakespeare's plays. In 1726 Theobald published *Shakespeare Restored*, in response, correcting what he clearly thought were Pope's errors. He published his adaptation of *Cardenio*, *Double Falsehood* in 1727. Pope responded to this "double whammy" with another edition of Shakespeare's works in which, surprisingly, he acknowledged the use of Theobald's corrections. The civility was short-lived, however, as Pope went on to create an enormously successful satire of Theobald called *The Dunciad*, published in three different editions from 1728 to 1743. In response, Theobald issued his *own* complete edition of Shakespeare's work (1733), which was based on Pope's edition of Shakespeare. But Theobald's revenge was that, unlike Pope, he didn't acknowledge his debt to his rival. Theobald's 1733 edition of Shakespeare ultimately became the basis of Malone's enormously influential Shakespeare edition in 1790. Thus, the

Shakespeare texts we know today had their origins in the bitter feud between two 18th century interpreter-adapters who collaborated while simultaneously hating each other. The intensity of this quarrel alone might be proof enough that Theobald had enough of a grudge against Pope to forge an adaptation of Shakespeare.

Pope and Theobald attempted to cleanse and clarify Shakespeare's work in very different ways. David Wheeler quotes Warburton, a friend and editor of Pope's, who says that Shakespeare's "architecture" has "nobler apartments though we are often conducted to them by odd and uncouth passages. Nor does the whole fail to strike us with greater reverence, though the parts are childish, ill-placed and unequal to its grandeur" (442). Pope used an aesthetic frame to display the "grandeur" of Shakespeare by separating the noble passages from the ignoble ones. Theobald, in contrast, used scholarly exegesis to replace all language that was "confusing" or "unworthy" of Shakespeare with words he thought more suitable.

In *Shakespeare Restored*, Theobald says: "where Shakespeare has yet through all his editions labored flat nonsense and invisible darkness I can with the addition or alteration of a single letter, or two, give him both sense and sentiment" (vi). He will correct what was before "absurd, unintelligible, and intricate" (v). He applies a quotation from *Hamlet* to Shakespeare's work, comparing it to "an unweeded garden that grows to seed" (I.ii.139–41). (Note that in this metaphor weeds are evil, revealing Theobald's moralistic intent.) Some of Theobald's edits still appear in modern editions of *Hamlet*; doubtless they make clearer the confusion caused by warring quartos. But his demand for clarity at times radically alters the polysemous nature of the text. For instance, Theobald changes Laertes' phrase "sanctity of the kingdom" to "sanity of the kingdom" (in most modern editions the phrase now reads as "health and safety of the kingdom"). Sanctity—unlike sanity—implies the religious and perhaps holy nature of a feudal royal marriage, the subject of Laertes' speech. In choices like this Theobald favors clear literal meaning over allusion.

In addition, this detailed parsing of Shakespeare's word usage was the ideal preparation for someone planning to forge a play in Shakespeare's style. Shakespeare's tendency to use parts of speech interchangeably is mentioned in *Shakespeare Restored*: "I shall only shew by a few instances that it is familiar to him to make verbs out of adjectives" (11). Hammond, in his introduction to the *Double Falsehood*, refers to an instance where a noun is used as a verb as particularly Shakespearean: "Kenneth Muir, for example, points to the use of the word 'heir' in the opening scene" (49). But this is not proof that Shakespeare wrote *Double Falsehood*, it is instead evidence that Theobald carefully analyzed Shakespeare's style in *Shakespeare Restored*, and applied his unique literary research in service of his forgery.

## Was Shakespeare Don Quixote or was He a Jacobean Dramatist?

There are several instances in *Double Falsehood* where Theobald appears to be trying desperately to imitate passages in Shakespeare with little success. At one point Henriquez demands music:

Strike up my masters  
But touch the strings with a religious softness  
Teach sound to languish through the nights dull ear  
Til melancholy start from her lazy couch  
And carelessness convert her attention. (I.iii.10–14)

This sounds Shakespearean because it is a ham-handed imitation of the justly famous and memorable “if music be the food of love play on.” In another instance, Hammond highlights an ode to friendship in *Double Falsehood* as typically Shakespearean:

Is there a treachery like this in baseness  
Recorded anywhere? It is the deepest,  
None but itself can be its parallel - And from a friend profess'd  
Friendship? Why, 'tis  
A word forever maimed. In human nature  
It was a thing the noblest. (III.i.15–20)

This ponderous declaration of a “philosophy of friendship” is a pale imitation of the heart wrenching admissions made humbly and naturally by Shakespeare’s male characters in dialogue with their friends in *Two Gentleman of Verona*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Winter’s Tale*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and many other plays. Consider for example, when Bassanio says to Antonio:

I married to a wife  
Which is as dear to me as life itself  
But life itself, my wife, and all the world  
Are not with me esteemed above thy life. (IV.i.282–83)

Or when Solanio says of Antonio’s feelings for Bassiano, quite simply “I think he only loves the world for him” (II.viii.50). Theobald’s clumsy imitation of Shakespeare’s eloquence was ridiculed by Pope, who claimed Shakespeare would not write a phrase as banal as “none but itself can be its parallel.” But ultimately however, the goal of the interpretative battles between these two fiercely competitive Shakespeare obsessives was to shoehorn Shakespeare’s work into the new theory of a leaner, more modern rhetoric favored by Petrus Ramus.



## Shakespeare's Style versus Cervantes

The particular phrase “none but itself can be its parallel” has the rhythm of a Shakespearean paradox, and yet barely qualifies as one. Shakespeare's rhetorical style is uniquely recognizable and very different from other Elizabethan writers. Even orthodox scholars are now beginning to accept the notion that rhetorical skill—and most of all rhetorical learning—is an essential element of Shakespeare's work. One recent example of a renewed interest in Shakespearean rhetoric is Quentin Skinner's *Forensic Shakespeare*. You will find here a slightly different view from Skinner's. It appears to me that Shakespeare was more influenced by the Greek rhetorician Hermogenes than the Roman rhetorician Cicero. But it's pleasing to see that even the most conservative and established scholars are finally recognizing that a better understanding of Elizabethan rhetoric can only lead to a better understanding of Shakespeare.

Though Shakespeare's rhetorical style is not difficult to distinguish from the style of other early modern writers; there is little of it in *Double Falsehood*. There are four characteristics that distinguish Shakespeare's style from that of his contemporaries. He is fond of odd syntax, and particularly fond of long sentences that begin with subordinate clauses and delay the subject of the sentence to its end. He cannot resist two things; first, thoughtful paradox and second, wordplay: puns, alliteration, and a euphuistic balance in sentence structure. More than anything he cannot resist those paradoxes which play on the contrast between art and truth, form and content, beauty and evil, outside and inside. But what truly distinguishes Shakespeare's writing from his contemporaries are the sudden changes in rhetorical decorum. For not only does a Shakespearean scene often veer suddenly from comedy to drama, but characters leap from grandiose complex metaphors to concise, colloquial expression *within a single speech*. It is my opinion that Shakespeare was well acquainted with the Greek rhetorician Hermogenes. Hermogenes specialized in a style of writing that mixed many styles. This was directly in opposition to the Ciceronian ideal of using only one style of writing at a time, employed by most of Shakespeare's contemporaries.

The dense, flexible, obscure, euphuistic style of Shakespearean rhetoric would have been considered “old style” by 1600. Ramus, whose philosophy diminished rhetoric and strengthened dialectics (what we now call science), was on the side of plain speech. Philip Sidney championed his teachings in England. And Ramus' arguments for poetry as moral tool were taken up in Sidney's *The Defence of Poesy*. In the great English rhetorical quarrel of the late 16th century, Gabriel Harvey, Sir Philip Sidney, and the Puritans were on one side, arguing for clear poetic diction. On the other side were Thomas

Nashe, John Lyly, and the 17<sup>th</sup> Earl of Oxford—who I and many others think was the real Shakespeare. Nashe, Lyly, and Oxford held the old “grammatical” position, that poetry is magical and deliberately obscure. McLuhan tells us, “The fight between Nashe and Harvey seems to have its origin in the argument between Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford and Sidney in 1579. Spenser was Ramistic in theology and rhetoric like Sidney, versus the Italianate Earl of Oxford, who was an obvious mark for puritans. Lyly sided with Greene and Nashe against the Ramistic Harvey. Sidney’s secretary was a Ramist—Sir William Temple. Oxford’s secretary was the patrist old-style Lyly” (210).

Cervantes, whose work was the inspiration for *Double Falsehood*, was, unlike Shakespeare, a disciple of the new rhetoric. Even if Shakespeare had read *Don Quixote* he would have found very little inspiration there. Thomas Nashe was on the side of the old rhetoric, and a comparison between his defense of dense rhetoric—and Cervantes’ dismissal of it—says it all. In *The Anatomy of Absurdity* Nashe teaches: “I account of Poetrie, as of a more hidden and divine kind of Philosophy, enwrapped in blind Fables and dark stories...in Poems, the things that are most profitable are shrouded under Fables that are most obscure” (36–37). In Cervantes’ novel, the narrator’s friend summarizes the author’s new and very different approach to style:

And since this book of yours is only concerned to destroy the authority and influence that chivalry enjoy in the world and among the general public, there isn’t any need to go begging maxims from philosophers, counsel from the holy scripture, fables from poets, clauses from rhetoricians, or miracles from the saints, but rather attempt using expressive, decorous and well-ordered words in a straightforward way to write sentences that are both harmonious and witty, depicting what is in your mind to the best of your ability, setting out your ideas without complicating or obscuring them (16).

Cervantes and Shakespeare occupy fundamentally opposing rhetorical positions.

The rhetorical style of *Double Falsehood* is essentially the same as *Don Quixote* (though of course Cervantes is a much better writer than Lewis Theobald). Nevertheless, Hammond, in his introduction to the play, makes claims that Proteus’ soliloquy in *Two Gentleman of Verona* is “very close in dramatic content and function to that of Henriquez in 2.1 of *Double Falsehood*” (7). It is certainly true that they have a similar subject—being caught between the love of two women and the possible loss of a friend—but the resemblance ends there. Theobald’s Henriquez offers pretentious, unpoetic moralizing:

Oh, that a man could reason down this fever in the blood,  
Or soothe in words the tumult of his heart!



Then, Julio, I might indeed be thy friend. They, they only should condemn me, Who, born devoid of passion have never prov'd the fierce disputes of virtue and desire  
While they who, like me, the loose escapes of youthful nature known, must wink at mine, indulgent of their own. (II.i.52–61)

Proteus is also caught in the same throes of romantic desire, but instead offers seductive wordplay climaxing in a troubling paradox:

I cannot leave to love,  
and yet I do;  
But there I leave to love where I should love,  
Julia I lose and Valentine I lose.  
If I keep them, I needs must lose myself.  
If I lose them, thus find I by their loss: for Valentine, myself, for Julia, Sylvia. (IV.i.17–22)

Henriquez' thinking is not fundamentally paradoxical, he clearly is asking for forgiveness for a hateful act, the rape of Violante. Proteus, on the other hand, offers a complex paradox: true love means the loss of a friend but the discovery of himself. The clear moralizing tone of Theobald's poetry and prose is in direct contrast to the euphuistic rhetorical flourishes that dominate Shakespeare's style.

## Shakespeare's View of Women

However, when Shakespeare began writing in the last half of the 16th century, there were two revolutions going on. One was rhetorical, and the other was socio-economic. At roughly the same time rhetoric moved from obscure poetry to plain speech, Elizabethan culture was leaving chivalry behind. Shakespeare's women are fundamentally treated as chivalric women, as damsels in distress; and one of Shakespeare's obsessions is the careful examination of the psychology of women who have been raped. But in *Double Falsehood*, Henriquez excuses his rape of Violante as a youthful indiscretion that most men might understand, and Violante seems merely embarrassed:

Whom shall I look upon with a blush?  
There's not a maid whose eye with virgin gaze  
Pierces not to my guilt. (II.ii.1–3)

She then waxes melodramatic, but ponders only exile, not suicide:

The tomb of my own honour, a dark mansion  
For death alone to dwell in....The way I go  
As yet I know not—sorrow be my guide. (II.ii.35–46)

Later, after hiding as a boy, she dramatically reveals herself to Henriquez, and somehow (it's not really clear how) definitively confirms his guilt. But she still marries him, despite his heinous act and offensive apology: "Virtuous Violante—Too good for me—dare you still love a man so faithless as I am?" (V.ii.211–13). After this, Violante is silent, never to be heard from again.

It is true that there are several instances in which women are threatened with rape in Shakespeare's comedies and are treated relatively lightly. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, for instance, Proteus attempts to rape Sylvia. However, the situation is hardly as dire as Violante's, not only because the rape does not occur, but because Valentine witnesses the act and is available to rescue her from the start. Also, Sylvia does not marry her attacker as Violante does.

But when rape actually occurs in Shakespeare's work, he takes it very seriously—in precisely the opposite way Theobald does—by blessing the victim with boundless eloquence. After Lavinia is raped in *Titus Andronicus*, Demetrius and Chiron cut off her tongue and her hands, which might seem like a potent enough comment on the violence done to her. But Lavinia also "aestheticizes" her rape by turning it into a performance. She attempts to act out her rape for father, utilizing Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Deborah Willis quotes Mary Laughlin Fawcett: "her silence after her humiliation appears to be a development, an increase in eloquence, rather than a stopping or reversal" (43). Titus then stages the actual murder of the raped Lavinia in front of the woman who ordered it. As Willis says: "yet in a peculiar way Titus seems to be critiquing the ideology of rape in staging the murder of Lavinia for Saturninus and Tamora.... It is a defiant act of mastery that 'returns' dishonour back to them and reveals the brutality of Rome's own assumption about appropriate responses to rape" (49–50).

Shakespeare's attitude to rape is fully on display in *The Rape of Lucrece*, and the poem is thus as radical now as it was then. A third of *The Rape of Lucrece* is consumed by Lucrece's response to her rape, which is articulated by Shakespeare with remarkable psychological insight. Unlike Violante, Lucrece's agonizing journey takes her through approximately 11 stages of grief that are marked by torturous indecision. Initially she wants to rip off her flesh, then she curses the night, then she blames herself, then she curses chance, opportunity, and time, and finally Tarquin, the man who raped her. Then she opines "this helpless smoke of words does me no right" and decides "the remedy is to...let forth my soul defiled by blood" (298). However, she can't find a knife, and waffles between life and death, finally deciding to kill herself, because "my shame is dead, my honour is reborn" (306). She says a raped woman is not evil "no more than wax should be accounted evil when stamped with the semblance of the devil" (309), and "proud lords to blame, make weak-made women tenants to their shame" (310).

Lucrece's rape is also aestheticized by Shakespeare and this aestheticization only increases our horror. In a classic moment of rhetorical ekphrasis Lucrece compares her own plight to a painted rendering of the sacking of Troy. The truth of the depiction is confirmed by her reference to it as "lifeless life" (316). As Judith Dundas suggests, Shakespeare uses Lucrece's critique of the painting to make us forget that she is a character in a poem, making her suffering more real. The painting, after all, has "has less claim upon our feelings than the suffering of the heroine...we forget that Lucrece and her tragedy are just as illusory as the painting of Troy" (14). By highlighting the painter's deceitful technical skill Shakespeare seduces us with poetry, while keeping an ambivalent, paradoxical, meta-distance from art. The fact that Shakespeare blesses both Lavinia and Lucrece with an agonized and detailed elegance of style is related to the chivalric notion that it is the job of the knight to protect the lady; most of Shakespeare's heroines can be viewed through this lens.

## Chivalry and the Courtier in Elizabethan England

At times, Shakespeare refers directly to chivalric memes. At the height of her agony Lucrece muses on the eminent return of her husband Collatine: "Knights by their oathes should right poor ladies' harms" (331). Shakespeare loved chivalry; perhaps it would be more accurate to say that *he was chivalry*; that his life and work existed within that romantic paradigm. He is not singular, as a writer, for this love of chivalry in age of its decline (he shared this with Philip Sidney), but Shakespeare brought the trope of popular chivalric romance psychological, political, and tragic depth. Lucrece, like Lavinia and Ophelia and so many of Shakespeare's female victims, is "a damsel in distress" because she is a good woman who is relentlessly tortured by an evil man. This is an archetypal character in medieval chivalric romance.

The first books printed in England by William Caxton (1476) were *The Book of Order and Chivalry* by Raymon Llull and Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. The social structure in England was no longer feudal, as Queen Elizabeth ruled the country and her nobles were obligated to bow to her. But the nostalgic appeal of chivalric romance still had a furious hold on the public's attention. As Francis Yates tells us: "though feudalism as a working, social, or military structure was extinct, its forms were still the vehicle of living emotions" (108). She also mentions that Llull, in *The Book of Order and Chivalry*, advises "that public jousts or tourney should be heard regularly...this will cause gentlemen to resort to the ancient customs of chivalry" (107). This resurrection of the old romances had political utility. After the British conversion to Protestantism the public yearned for the "Pope's holidays." Yates says the Accession Day Tilts—a royal event involving chivalric competitions and rituals performed for the queen—"bridged religious gaps" (110). Edward de Vere participated in the tilts at least four times, according to biographer

Mark Anderson. Catholics and Protestants alike could enjoy the new holidays together without acrimony. Yates concludes “the chivalrous formula suited the aristocratic structure of Elizabethan society; it was the vehicle for the expression of its hopes and fears” (111).

The courtier is an icon image of the chivalric warrior/knight transformed into an Elizabethan knight/poet. In the early modern period, the transformation of the romantic concept of brave warrior into the similarly romantic (but somewhat different) trope of thoughtful aesthete was a necessary element of the social revolution from feudal state to commercial nation. A major force in this development was Castiglione’s *The Art of the Courtier*. Susan Gaylard describes Castiglione as “a nobleman or cavalier writing in an age in which the medieval chivalric ideal was alive only in the pages of literature. In place of the self-determining, arms-bearing knight, were men obliged to entertain lords and ladies at court with speeches, music, poetry, and the occasional chivalric spectacle” (2). Jennifer Goodman tells us that “Castiglione’s book represents a major shift of medieval knight to the cultivated Renaissance gentleman...[although] his ideals still overlap to some extent with those of Ramon Llull” (33).

Scholars have long acknowledged Shakespeare’s debt to Castiglione, noting that Hamlet seems to be modeled after Castiglione’s courtier ideal. Jonathan Dewald says: “In *Hamlet* conversation mainly traps the unwary...everyone understands that court life demands careful self-control, the ability to conceal one’s inner thoughts. European nobles regarded the court with a mixture of excitement and anxiety” (127). Hamlet is a noble, learned, artistic courtier poised between action and contemplation, who must guard his thoughts while confronting unmitigated evil. Mark Rose says that when Claudius poisoned Hamlet’s father he “in effect poisoned chivalry” (299)—and thus Hamlet, like a virtuous medieval knight, sets out to defend it. Mark Anderson offers Edward de Vere’s introduction to the first English translation of *The Book of the Courtier*, where de Vere makes it clear that, for him, the early modern courtier has much in common with Llull’s romantic ideal of the perfect knight:

For what more difficult, more noble, or more magnificent task has anyone ever undertaken than our author Castiglione, who has drawn for us the figure and model of a courtier, a work to which nothing can be added, in which there is no redundant word, a portrait which we shall recognize as that of the highest and most perfect type of man. And so, although nature herself has made nothing perfect in every detail, yet the manners of men exceed in dignity that with which nature has endowed them; and he who surpasses others has here surpassed himself, and has even out done nature which by no one has ever been surpassed (52).

De Vere's conception of nature is akin to Hamlet's. For Shakespeare, nature did not mean reality, but an artistic improvement upon it. His plays and poems offer countless displays of the power that art has not only to mimic but ultimately supersede nature. To Shakespeare art is more real than reality. As David Haley suggests, when Hamlet speaks of 'holding a mirror up to nature:' "The nature Hamlet means is not the physical realized world... investigated by modern science or naturalistic novelists. Rather 'nature' refers to what becomes apparent only in the mirror. Nature has no discernible feature (shape) until the dramatic mirror creates it" (34).

It is important to differentiate Shakespeare's concept of reality—which was actually artistic truth—from the notion of reality that was found in a post-chivalric, scientific era. Reality, by the year 1600, was beginning to be defined by a scientific study of the world around us. The confessional nature of Hamlet's soliloquies led some to label the play a precursor of the modern realist novel. But what Shakespeare offered was not realism. His consummate skill is to create the illusion of truthful psychological observation through dense, sometimes obscure metaphorical poetry; to create a fiction that is better and worse than ours but *seems* real. Haley quotes Berger: "The Renaissance glass was invested with idiomatic and prismatic powers deriving from the interpretative activity of the human mind. Its exclusiveness was therefore seized as a guarantee of the mind's freedom from the tyranny of the actual world" (35). Even when Shakespeare's poetry points to the deceptiveness of art, as when Touchstone says "the truest poetry is the most feigning"—this meta-theatricalness leads us back, as does Lucrece's appreciation of the Trojan War painting, to appreciation of the mysterious truth of poetry. Shakespeare's Elizabethan chivalry was expressed not only in his treatment of female characters, or his medieval rhetorical style, but in his attitude to reality and 'realism.'

## Contrasting Shakespeare with Cervantes

It was Cervantes, not Shakespeare, who wrote the precursor of the modern "realistic" novel. The sensibility of the man who created *Don Quixote* was the very opposite of the sensibility of the man who created *Hamlet*. Shakespeare's characters and situations are steeped in fantasy, myth, improbability and magic that nevertheless deceive us with their perceived truthfulness. Cervantes, on the other hand, creates characters and situations in which the falsity of fantasy is relentlessly juxtaposed against reality. Shakespeare never destroys the fourth wall; Cervantes consistently does so. Cervantes is always present, as author, and often digresses in a quirky personal way that pulls us out of the work. Shakespeare is completely invisible in his plays and poems; the purpose seems to be to make us forget he exists. In the sonnets, the

author/narrator is a character so mysterious and mythic that he seems simultaneously both real and unreal. This simultaneity is key. All of Shakespeare's (sometimes honestly admitted) deceptions are in the cause of myth, fantasy, and story; he never actually stands outside the chivalric episteme.

Shakespeare romanticized the knight errant, luring us into believing in his world. Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Antony, Coriolanus and Hamlet are all failed knights, but they are not touching laughingstocks like Don Quixote; they are tragic heroes in a consistently chivalric universe. And their plight leads us to understand deeper truths. Cervantes' satire, in contrast, leads us only to one deeper truth: that knights are self-deceiving anachronisms. The wider implication is a moral one: that it is man's sad plight to ignore reality. Don Quixote imagines that he is fighting dragons but in fact he is fighting windmills; he imagines he is rescuing damsels in distress but his beloved Dulcinea is a woman of decidedly loose morals. None of his bumbling chivalric interventions into the real world have any real effects. Cervantes critique of chivalric fiction wishes to free us from the dangerous entrapment of poetry and fiction; he is essentially anti-poetry, and anti-fantasy. No matter how critical Shakespeare is of art or illusion, he never removes us completely from it.

The character Falstaff, a true comic knight errant, comes closest of all Shakespeare's characters to Don Quixote. But perhaps Shakespeare arrived at this character because, as Mark Rose suggests, "the Henry plays are about the end of chivalry" (298). And Falstaff, unlike Don Quixote, is blessed with a tragic eloquence, because Shakespeare cannot quite bear to leave the beautiful, noble, chivalric world behind. As Roberto Gonzales Echevarria notes in his introduction to *Don Quixote*, Cervantes "began to see how myths could be deflated with injections of real life and real life ennobled in mythical robes" (xii). Whereas according to Mark Rose, what Shakespeare did was "convert the material of Elizabethan romance into tragedy" (311).

## Shakespeare's World versus Jonson's and Beaumont's

In the context of his fellow playwrights, Shakespeare's allegiance to chivalric values appears old-fashioned. Rose quotes Jonson's masque *Prince Henry's Barriers*: "Jonson's plays look forward in a way that Shakespeare's, with their marvels, anachronisms, and freedoms of time and place, do not."

These were bold stories of our Arthur's age;  
But here are other acts, another stage  
A scene appears, it is not as then:  
No giants, dwarfs or monster here, but men. (308)



In contrast, Shakespeare's heroes are explicitly giants, as in Cleopatra's description of Antony:

His legs bestride the ocean; his reared arm created the world  
His voice was propertyed  
As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;  
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,  
He was as rattling as thunder. (V.ii.81–85)

Jacobean playwrights like Jonson and Beaumont, who followed Shakespeare but were so unlike him, are concerned not with poetry and chivalry, but with real people in more modern situations, and with a critique of human vice (much in the style of *Don Quixote*).

Beaumont's *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607) is in fact the theatrical equivalent of *Don Quixote*. It's crypto-Brechtian 'alienation of the audience' exemplifies the kind of play *Don Quixote* would be if it were not a novel. This groundbreaking work, written like Cervantes' novel on the cusp of the 16th and 17th centuries, displays a revolutionary new attitude to rhetoric and chivalric romance. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, unlike Shakespeare's comedies—and like Jonson's—has a clear satiric point never obscured by Shakespearean fable.

Significantly, Beaumont's first theatrical venture, delivered at Gray's Inn a few years before *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, was a comic critique of the old rhetoric in the form of a faux grammar lecture. What's interesting about the performance is that, as Zitner tells us: "Beaumont's oration follows the plan of the famous Latin grammar by William Lyly, the grandfather of John Lyly" (9). John Lyly was Edward de Vere's secretary, and a devotee of the florid style so despised by Sidney and Harvey. In this satire of old-style rhetoric Beaumont (quoted by Whitting) mentions the Greek rhetorician whom I consider to be Shakespeare's mentor—Hermogenes—and then proceeds with his parody of Lyly's overly ornate, euphuistic style. He makes fun of an unnamed poet who executes "prosodical speeches with certain grammatical flourishes pick'd out of euphuies and his England as Apelles the painter, Hermogines the musician, or Cicero" (410). This places Beaumont firmly in the Ramistic plain speech camp, focusing his satire on Lyly, Nashe, the Earl of Oxford, and other old-style rhetoricians.

Because of the similarity of its theme to that of *Don Quixote*, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is assumed to have been influenced by the novel, which, though not translated into English by Shelton until 1611, is thought to have been earlier circulated in manuscript form. Succinctly summarized, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, like *Don Quixote*, juxtaposes reality and fantasy. The real

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is exemplified by a lowly grocer and his wife, who have come to see a play, called *The London Merchant*, which—though overflowing with middle class detail—bores them with the falsity of its fantasy. The couple wish instead to see a chivalric romance acted out by their favorite grocer's apprentice Rafe. Rafe, for all his fantastical speechifying, is rooted in the real; he is a comic figure embodying a hilarious bumbling satire of romantic fakery, i.e. chivalry.

*The Knight of the Burning Pestle* references Shakespeare even more explicitly than Beaumont's Grammar Lecture. Rafe first appears quoting *Henry IV*. This situates his performance within the old-fashioned, post-1600 ridiculous genre of romance:

By heaven methinks it were an easy leap  
To pluck bright honour from the pale fac'd moon,  
or dive into the bottom of the sea,  
Where never fathomed line touch'd any ground  
and pluck up drown'd honour from the lake of hell. (3–4)

Later, his 'Freudian slip' is to suggest Rafe act out a scenario called Rafe and Lucrece.

Rafe, like Shakespeare, believes telling chivalric tales requires a high poetic style, pointing out that horses must be referred to as palfrey because "there are no such courteous and well-spoken knights of this [i.e. the present] age... one [woman] that Rosiclear would have called 'right beauteous damsel' they call 'damned bitch'" (73). The Prologue affirms the author's allegiance to the modern clear, plain rhetoric, warning us that the play will:

fly far from hence  
All private taxes, immodest phrases,  
Whate'er may but show like vicious  
For wicked mirth never true pleasure brings,  
But honest minds are pleased with honest things. (61)

The content of the play was as radical for its time as the style. Rafe's chivalric moniker "knight of the burning pestle" is a dirty joke. Burning pestle was Jacobean slang for a penis inflamed by venereal rot. Thus, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* drags Castiglione's vision of the perfect, virtuous knight from his pedestal. The episodic plot involves the grocer and his wife inventing new scenarios for Rafe to perform. For example, they suggest that Knight Rafe travel to Moldavia and fall in love with a princess. But in his real life Rafe is involved with a lowly serving maid, so the fantasy princess must bid him 'adieu,' which she regrets, as she had hoped to visit England and try British liquor.

Zitner suggests that *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* fed the public's nostalgia for an earlier time—one that was impossible to take seriously, because of the transition from feudalism to capitalism: “both courts and civic ceremony were heavily medievalist in tone and imagery, and the manners and ideals they embodied had the nostalgic attractiveness of clearer and more salted imperative than those imposed by an increasingly complex commercial society” (30). Zitner confirms the anti-Shakespearean dramaturgy of the play: “Beaumont undercuts the idea of stage illusion itself” (36). Zitner says (quoting Robert M. Adams) “the play accepts the stage as a fraud and a conventional fraud at that, and attacks fantasy as preposterous.” In contrast, chivalry, myth, fantasy, fable, fairies, imagined cities, ghosts, old school rhetorical poetry, and bewitching theatrical illusion... these are the elements that constitute Shakespeare's aesthetic. It's hard to imagine Shakespeare challenging the tropes he held so dearly or juxtaposing them against “dull reality.” Mark Rose sums it up: Shakespeare “was not ready to write anti-Romances like *Don Quixote* or *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*” (310).

### *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

In terms of Shakespeare's medieval rhetoric and chivalric aesthetic, none of his plays seems so singularly marked by his personal obsessions, or seem more like a freakish fairy tale to us today, than *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Arguably, it is one of Shakespeare's strangest creations; perhaps that's why it has only lately been embraced by scholars. But no play is more relevant to a discussion of *Double Falsehood*. Both *Cardenio* (the play *Double Falsehood* is supposedly based on) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are allegedly collaborations between Fletcher and Shakespeare, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* appeared the same year as *Cardenio* in 1613.

How does *Double Falsehood*, a play whose authorship is debatable, differ from *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, confirmed by most scholars to be, at the very least, partially written by Shakespeare? Act 1 and Act 5 of *The Two Noble Kinsmen* are replete with the seductive, dense, obscure style associated with Shakespeare's late work, a style starkly absent from *Double Falsehood*. But there is another significant difference. *Double Falsehood* is alleged to have been inspired by *Don Quixote*; a novel with a sensibility precisely the opposite of Shakespeare's. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, on the other hand, is steeped in Shakespeare's obsession with chivalry, and therefore somewhat incomprehensible to audiences today.

These two nearly identical knights seem wildly improbable characters to a modern eye. They are Greek warriors who, anachronistically, abide strictly by the moral code of feudal England. They personify the essence of Castiglione's courtier—beautiful on the outside and the inside—in other words,

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perfect. They are so unbelievably brave, eloquent, polite and stoic that they are capable of turning even the direst situation into an inspiring one; if ever there were sunny optimists, it would be these two. When they are jailed by Theseus, Arcite keeps a stiff upper lip:

Let us think this prison holy sanctuary  
To keep us from corruption of worse men...  
What worthy blessing  
Can be but our imaginations  
May make it ours? (II.ii.70–77)

Even as Palamon is being led to the scaffold he looks on the bright side. If he *must* die, it is a good thing, because:

we prevent  
The loathsome misery of age, beguile  
The gout and rheum that in lag hours attend  
For grey approachers; we come towards the gods  
Young and unwrapped... (V.iv.6–10)

This is unimaginable courage in the face of imminent death.

Yet it is in their display of the chivalric virtue of courtesy that would seem to a modern audience most ridiculous. When they discover they are in love with the same woman (Emilia), they agree to fight to the death to see who will ultimately win her. Yet they dress each other for mortal combat with astonishing politeness and care:

ARCITE. I'll arm you first.  
PALAMON. Do. Pray then tell me, cousin  
Where gott'st thou this good armour?  
ARCITE. (arming Palamon) 'Tis the Duke's,  
And to say true, I stole it. Do I pinch you?  
PALAMON. No.  
ARCITE. Is't not too heavy?  
PALAMON. I have worn a lighter,  
But I shall make it serve. (III.vi.45–54)

A few seconds later they are promising to kill each other, but of course, again politely:

PALAMON. I warrant thee, I'll strike home.  
ARCITE. Do, and spare not.  
I'll give thee cause, sweet cousin. (III.vi.65–67)

The two young men not only confront each of the vile circumstances that comes their way with courtesy and good cheer, but they exemplify every single chivalric virtue, managing to pity those who deserve it, and to be fiercely, unwaveringly loyal to each other—and to the woman (Emilia) they both love.

This chivalric menage-a-trois has befuddled critics for centuries. For the two young men appear to be as much in love with each other as with Emilia. In prison, Arcite says:

We are an endless mine to one another;  
We are one another's wife, ever begetting  
New births of love. (II.ii.79–81)

This could possibly be excused, as it often is, by a poet's penchant for poetic hyperbole, and, anyway, this passage is attributed to Fletcher, not Shakespeare. But in Act 5, when Arcite is dying from an accident that occurs after defeating Palamon in battle (and nearly sending him to the gallows), Palamon rushes to his side: "I am Palamon, / one that yet loves thee dying" (V.iv.88).

In contrast, the two cousins' love for Emilia is suspect. They fall in love with her simultaneously at first sight (love at first sight is a trope common in chivalric romance). More significantly, their obsession with her opens what seems, at first, to be an incurable rift between the two young men. Palamon attacks Arcite: "thou liest, and art / a very thief in love," (III.i.39–40) and Arcite later retorts: "Kinsman you might as well / Speak this and act it in your glass as to / His ear which now disdains you" (III.i.69–71). Their love for Emilia makes the two kinsmen suddenly seem less noble. They not only betray their friendship but their truths; each accuses the other of deception.

Not only does their love for Emilia seem less pure than their love for each other, Emilia's feelings are also suspect. As they are both alike in virtue, she can only differentiate them physically, but still cannot choose one over the other. So, she curses herself: "that having two fair gauds of equal sweetness, / cannot distinguish but must cry for both!" (IV.ii.53–54). And if that is not sufficient evidence of the superficiality of her feelings, the stage directions indicate that when she complains of this amorous dilemma she is gazing at their portraits. For Shakespeare, obsession with a portrait of a lover is often the sign of a sensual, not a spiritual response. As John Vyvyan points out, when Proteus demands a portrait of Sylvia in *Two Gentleman of Verona*, "he is in the condition Castiglione calls 'wandering in vanity' due to 'the falsehood of the senses'" (71).

Castiglione is the key to understanding the love of the two warriors in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. He demanded the perfect courtier be not only handsome, a perfect speaker, and a perfect warrior, but in addition, Castiglione's

ideal knight was required to achieve the highest spiritual awareness. For Castiglione, as John Vyvyan tells us, love was the Neoplatonic path to the realm of pure spirit. It began with a kiss and ended at a union with God. In between were various stages. The lover must “keep alwaies fast in his minde, that the bodie is a most diverse thing from beautie” (54). Realizing that he then “beholde no more the particular beautie of one woman, but a universal” (55), then beauty is “seene with the the eyes of the minde” (56). Finally, the lover “seeth the heavenly beauty” (56) which means, he essentially sees God, and “thus the soule kindled in the most holy fire of true heavenly love, fleeth to couple her selfe with the nature of Angels” (57). For Horatio, Hamlet represents Castiglione’s ideal courtier, as when Hamlet dies, Horatio’s epitaph is “flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.”

So, what does Castiglione’s ideal of Neoplatonic love have to do with *The Two Noble Kinsmen*? It was problematic for Elizabethans that heterosexual love inevitably involved sex. Thus, women were blamed, or to be more accurate, their *physical beauty* was blamed, for sexualizing love. As Stephen Orgel says of the Elizabethan ban on female actors: “Behind the outrage of public modesty is a real fear of women’s sexuality, and more specifically, of its power to evoke men’s sexuality” (17). This is one aspect of Shakespeare’s metaphorical obsession, with the “inside and outside” —with “the serpent hiding in the flowers” (a reference to the evil sexuality of Eve). But it’s important to note that in Neoplatonism—and consequently in all of Shakespeare’s work—this attitude is not so much puritanical as careful. The Neoplatonic notion was not necessarily that sex was evil, or that women were evil, but that women offered a temptation that could lead to evil if men were subsumed by lust. One had to be careful of physical attraction, as even just a kiss could lead to fetishizing a woman’s body rather than discovering the pathway to God. For Shakespeare and the Neoplatonists, physical beauty offers either a road to enlightenment or the trail to degradation. The question is, how can one be sure to take the right road?

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, as in much of Shakespeare’s work, the love of one man for another is equivalent to the highest stage of Neoplatonic love because it is assumed that homosexuality does not exist. This makes the play strange to us because the physical beauty of both noble kinsmen is praised over and over by everyone, including Theseus. Then the two confirm their love in prison, on the battlefield, and in death. In order to make sense of all this, it must be viewed through the lens of Castiglione’s Neoplatonism. At the center of this drama is the possibility that the noble cousins will be lured from their higher love for each other by physical love for Emilia.

Another woman in the play is associated with physical love. The Jailer’s Daughter is driven mad by the beauty of Palamon. Her father the Jailer quotes her mad rant: “Palamon fair Palamon’ / And ‘Palamon was a tall



young man” (IV.i.81–82). The Doctor who treats her suggests her Wooer pretends to be Palamon because “It is falsehood she is in, which is with falsehoods to be combatted” (IV.iii.87–88). Thus, both the leading female characters in the play (Emilia and the Jailer’s Daughter) are associated with the lying trick of physical beauty. Lest Shakespeare be blamed for the cultural prejudices of his day, it’s important to remember that Emilia is enjoying a Neoplatonic affair with one of her best female friends, Flavia: “the true love ‘tween maid and maid may be / more than in sex dividual” (I.i.81–82). Any love but heterosexual love thus holds the possibility of divine purity.

## Was Shakespeare Don Quixote?

Shakespeare’s attitude to lust was, from the beginning to the end, Neoplatonic. Roger Stritmatter gives us Edward de Vere’s poem, “The Lively Lark Stretched Forth Her Wing” written in 1576, when de Vere was 26 years old, which speaks of a

knight,  
Clad in colour carnation fair;  
I did value this gentle wight,  
Of him I did his name inquire.  
He sighed, and said he was desire. (85)

De Vere walks hand in hand with the knight clad in fair colors; it appears that they are—like the two noble kinsmen—engaged in some sort of Neoplatonic affair. But the “knight who is desire” says, “Desire can have no greater pain / Than for to see another man / That he desireth to obtain” (85). This sentiment is perhaps expressed more succinctly by Shakespeare much later in *The Sonnets*, when Shakespeare labels lust “th’ expense of spirit in a waste of shame” (639).

Shakespeare was obsessed with chivalry. Mark Rose says: “not just Othello’s imagination but, I would suggest, Shakespeare’s own, is informed by the patterns of chivalric romance” (295). He adds, “One might interpret Othello as a kind of tragic *Don Quixote*, a play in which Shakespeare explores the ways in which a romanticizing imagination can lead to a devastating error” (295). From the beginning of his life to the end, Shakespeare was fixed on the notion of the medieval knight’s aspiration to virtue, as well as on the complexities and obscurities of medieval rhetoric. If we turn away from stylometrics and deeply examine his obsession with rhetoric and chivalry, it’s clear Shakespeare was not a Jacobean playwright but an Elizabethan (or even a medieval) one.

*Was Shakespeare Don Quixote?* Would he have been, for the poets who followed him in Jacobean England, the epitome of a knight errant, devoted

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to a tragic quest to maintain a dense medieval rhetoric, shrouded in fable and mystery—along with the values of chivalric romance? Mark Rose compares Shakespeare's tragic aesthetic quest to that of Don Quixote. Shakespeare sought to extol poetry in the ancient grammatical and rhetorical manner, as not simply beautiful in a superficial way, but as the holy truth incarnate. He sought to return to a pre-Renaissance aesthetic where poetry was more real than reality:

The cosmos is a single vast text, and knowledge is a form of interpretation, a matter of reading the mystic signatures written in things.... (Don Quixote) seeks to re-establish a world of magical resemblances; his entire journey is a quest for similitudes... the Renaissance cosmos has dissolved. In its place the empire of fact is emerging, and language is retreating into a special domain, literature (309).

The sadness is that after *Don Quixote*, poetry was depleted, it became just a suspect representation, not a magical world itself. Ironically, Shakespeare's allegiance to an earlier medieval era—and his lack of connection with the Jacobean era—adds immeasurably to the prophetic urgency of his work. His work points us to a world where, like today, we only have an elegiac relationship to high rhetoric and chivalric romance.

Gary Taylor in *The Quest for Cardenio* tells us that Edmund Gayton wrote the first study of *Don Quixote* in English in 1659, a year before the foundation of the Royal Society and its rejection of poetry in favor of reality. In his study, Gayton labelled Don Quixote “the Shakespeare of La Mancha” (309). Gary Taylor asks, “Why should Gayton think of Shakespeare, rather than any other playwright, in relation to Quixote?” (36).

Cervantes was apparently in Naples in 1575, at the same time that the Earl of Oxford—a twenty-five year old, dreamy, boastful, young knight—was challenging the citizens of the city of Palermo, Sicily to a medieval style joust for the honor of Queen Elizabeth. In her film *Nothing is Truer than Truth* Cheryl Eagan-Donovan suggests that Cervantes may have been a witness or heard via the grapevine of de Vere's exploits, which so closely resemble those of Don Quixote.

The term ‘the Shakespeare of La Mancha’ does not originate from the idea that Shakespeare might have had a hand in the Cervantes-inspired play *Double Falsehood*. Shakespeare was ‘the man of La Mancha’ because he belonged to another world—one that was disappearing even during his own lifetime—a world where he was still willing to heroically shake his spear for rhetoric and chivalry, and defend them to the death.

Shakespeare WAS Don Quixote.

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