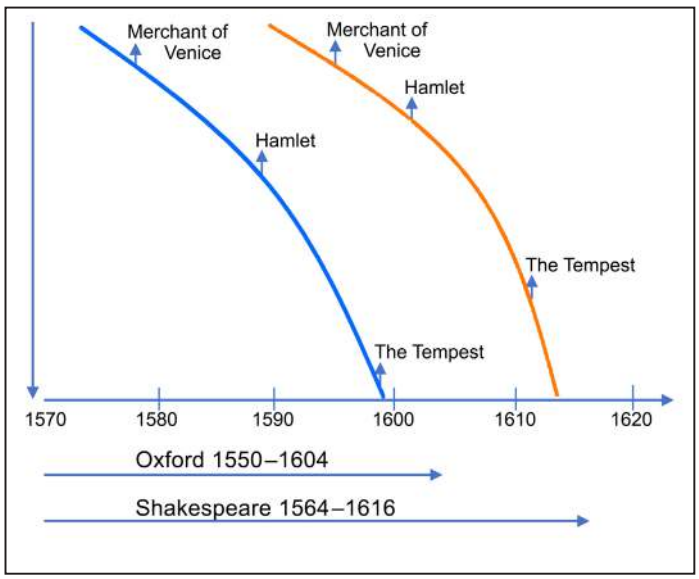
When Were Shakespeare's Plays Written?

Three Major Plays as Test Cases

by Matt Hutchinson

When examining the evidence for the dating of the plays from "first principles," we find that the conventional dating system of Shakespeare's plays is problematic and that the plays were likely written considerably earlier than is currently believed. We focus on three of Shakespeare's plays and argue for earlier dates for each of them: *The Merchant of Venice*, usually dated between 1595–98, is redated 1578–79; *Hamlet* moves from 1599–1601 to 1588–89; while *The Tempest*, often seen as Shakespeare's "swansong," appears to be known by 1598–99 rather than the conventional date of 1610–11 (fig. 1).



Introduction

The chronology of Shakespeare's plays has perhaps been most influenced by E.K. Chambers's "The Problem of Chronology," a chapter from the first volume of his 1930 book *William Shakespeare: A Study of Facts and Problems*. That Chambers included the word "problem" is telling. The chronology of Shakespeare's plays is mostly conjecture: we have no original manuscripts of

any Shakespearean play or poem, which makes knowing if they were revised or co-authored almost impossible. Topical allusions within the plays also confound matters: were they included when the play was originally conceived or inserted years later to add contemporary relevance?

Chambers's methodology consists largely of using dates both of first performance and publication together with the lifespan of William Shakspere (1564–1616) to arrive at a general timeline. While Chambers's methodology may seem sensible, it is not without its problems.

For instance, publication dates offer a *terminus ante quem*—they cannot have been written after this date. Yet it does not follow that a publication date was soon after the composition of the play. Indeed, *Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies*, usually referred to as the "First Folio," a collection of his plays published seven years after Shakspere's death in 1616, contained 36 plays of which 18—exactly half—had not previously been published, but kept in manuscript for many years:

Table: 18 plays published for the first time in the 1623 'First Folio'

Title (in order of conventional date of composition)	*Conventional date of composition*	*Time (years) between alleged composition date & printed date (1623)*
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	1589–91	32–34
The Taming of the Shrew	1590–91	32–33
Henry VI, Part 1	1591–92	31–32
The Comedy of Errors	1594	29
King John	1596	27
Julius Caesar	1599	24
As You Like It	1599–1600	23–24
Twelfth Night	1601	22
Measure for Measure	1603–04	19–20
All's Well that Ends Well	1604–05	18–19
Timon of Athens	1605–06	17–18
Macbeth	1606	17
Anthony and Cleopatra	1606	17
Coriolanus	1608	15
The Winter's Tale	1609–11	13–14
Cymbeline	1610	13
The Tempest	1610–11	12–13
Henry VIII	1612–13	10–11

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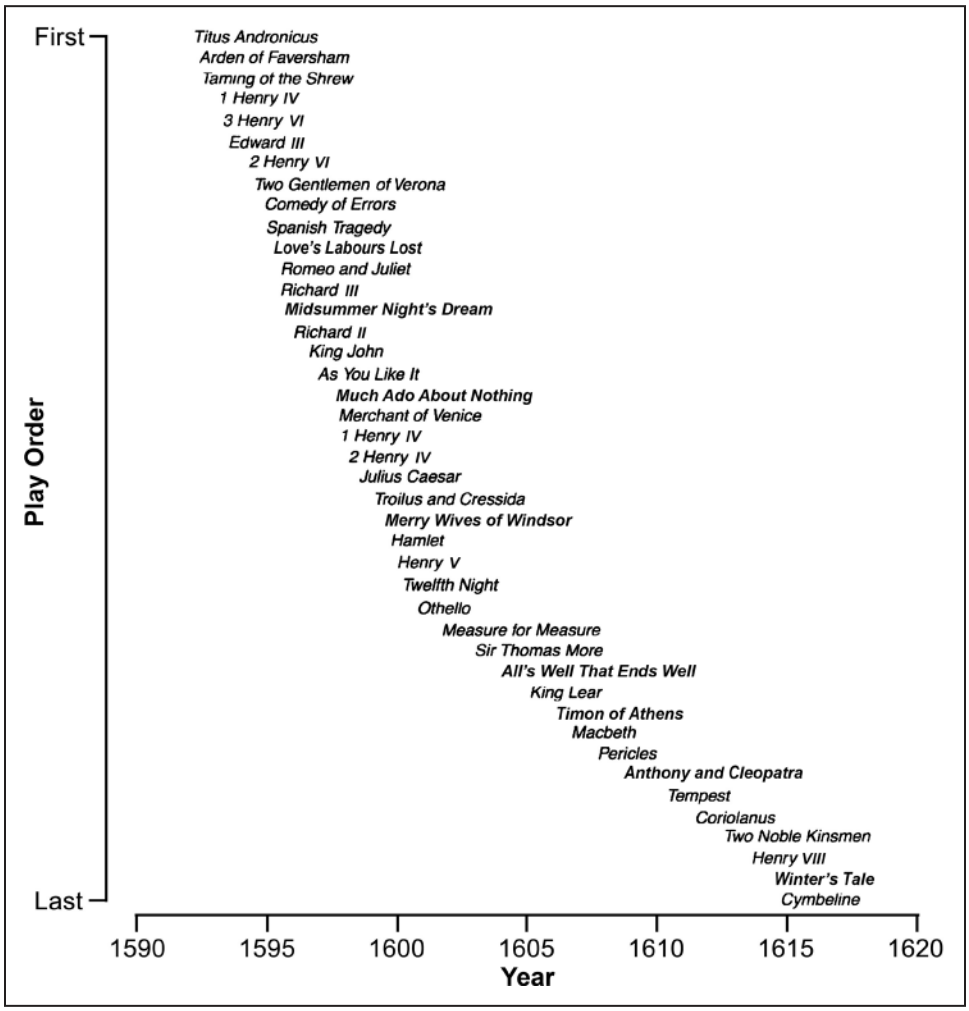
As can be seen from the above table, in many cases several decades elapsed between the alleged date of composition and printing. Print dates vary widely from alleged composition dates. It is also hypocritical to say that Oxford couldn't have authored plays published after his death when 18 of the 36 First Folio plays were published seven years after Shakespeare's death.

Dates of first performances are equally vexing as they are fragmentary and often not reliable. For instance, as Margo (formerly Mark) Anderson writes, *Henry VIII* is described as a "new" play at a 1613 performance, but Samuel Pepys, an English diarist who frequented the theatre, described the same play as "new" in 1663 (Anderson 401).

Most importantly, and disturbingly, the lifespan of William Shakspere (1564–1616) is used as a bedrock within which to sandwich the plays, a foundationally precarious notion if there was an authorship deception. The chronology below is seen as roughly representative of the majority view (fig. 2):



Nowhere is the dichotomy between William Shakspere's lifespan and allusions to Shakespearean plays better illustrated than in the case of *Hamlet*. Scholars have known that allusions to what appears to be a play called *Hamlet* date from at least 1589, but as this is seen as the earliest possible time Shakespeare could have arrived in London, and he was unlikely to have written such a masterpiece as one of his first plays, it has been largely rejected as referring to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. It has instead been hypothesised that there was an earlier play—dubbed the "ur-Hamlet" or "early Hamlet," written by another author, despite having no evidence to support their claim.

If the chronology is viewed from first principles, without any preconceptions towards the lifespan of the author, the plays appear to have been written much earlier. Kevin Gilvary's *Dating Shakespeare's Plays: A Critical Review of the Evidence*, found that the major sources for all Shakespeare's plays were all available by 1590 (Gilvary 2010).

Two recent books—Richard Dutton's *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist*, and W.R. Streitberger's *The Masters of the Revels*—have suggested that Shakespeare's plays were written primarily for court, with earlier performances than the accepted chronology (Dutton 2016, Steitberger 2016). For instance, the King's Men performed seven of Shakespeare's plays at court between November 1, 1604, and October 31, 1605—consistent with their performances being a tribute to Oxford during the year after his death.

Considerable evidence is presented by Oxfordian Katherine Chiljan and Orthodox scholar Penny McCarthy that the plays were composed earlier than the conventional dating structure, in some cases, decades earlier (Chiljan 2011, P. McCarthy 2004, 2006). Together they have collated hundreds of allusions to Shakespearean plays long before they were allegedly written.

McCarthy in particular makes a strong argument that satires of Shakespearean plays suggest they were in existence much earlier than the standard chronology reflects. She writes:

> Contemporary literary evidence in the form of parody of and oblique allusions to Shakespeare has been underutilized in the search for correct dates "before which" his plays must have been in existence. (P. McCarthy 2004, 175)

For example, *Macbeth* is usually dated to 1605, both to honor the Scottish heritage of King James following his ascension to the English throne in 1603, and after the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 when "equivocation" became a popular term. Why one would want to honor a Scottish King with such an unflattering portrayal of his heritage aside (including a homicidal titular character, and equivocation clearly being known well before then such as the trial

of Mary, Queen of Scots in the 1580s), there are earlier allusions to think the conventional dating is misguided.

McCarthy argues that Will Kemp in his 1600 publication *Nine Days Wonder* seems to allude to "the Scottish play" (P. McCarthy 2006, 31–32) writes:

> I met a proper vpright youth, onely for a little stooping in the shoulders: all hart to the heele, a penny Poet whose first making was the miserable stolne story of Macdoel, or Macdobeth, or Mac-somewhat: for I am sure a Mac it was, though I neuer had the maw to see it.

As Chiljan perceptively observes,

> As noted in the Variorum Editions of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the words, "to see it" coming from an actor implies the work referred to was dramatic. The "penny Poet's" story was "Stolen," and its title sounded like *Macbeth*. Kemp did not have the stomach ("maw") to see the play; he must have assumed that this stolen story resembled Shakespeare's very bloody play (Chiljan 378).

In a recent article, McCarthy pulls back the date of *Macbeth* further still:

> Nashe writes in similarly allusive vein in his *Terrors of the Night* (1594) of how "everything must be interpreted backward, as Witches say their Pater-noster." If that stood alone, one might take the reference to be unspecific. But Nashe narrows the scope when he adds "good being the character of bad, and bad of good." How else would one allude covertly to the chant of "Fair is foul and foul is fair" without giving the game away completely? This is typical Nashe practice, and combined with Kempe's evidence, opens the way for a drastic ante-dating of *Macbeth*. Its field of contemporary reference will accordingly be quite different from the Jacobean scenario imagined by most critics (P. McCarthy 2022, 6).

McCarthy finds an earlier allusion to *Macbeth* in Nashe's *Strange News* of 1592 (McCarthy 2005, 153), while Michael Marcus finds further allusions to the Sottish play in *Blurt, Master Constable*, published in 1602 (Marcus 2014b).

A steady stream of printed allusions to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* from 1599 to 1605 suggests Shakespeare's play, often referred to as his "swansong," was known to a coterie of writers long before the first record of it being performed at court in 1611. Indeed, one of Shakespeare's most famous speeches, Prospero's "Our Revels now are ended," appears to have been satirised at least five times in comedies published from 1599–1605.

Let us turn our attention to focus on three main plays in turn: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, and *The Tempest*.

Redating *The Merchant of Venice* (1579)

Shakespeare's play *The Merchant of Venice* was entered in the Stationers' Register in 1598 and printed in 1600. Its date of composition is usually given as from around 1595 to its date of publication (fig. 3).

Orthodox scholars have long known of Stephen Gosson's 1579 approving reference to the play *The Jew* in his pamphlet *The School of Abuse* (fig. 4), describing the play as "representing the greedinesse of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers." As Dennis McCarthy writes:

> Scholars agree this was certainly the source-drama for *The Merchant of Venice* (which at the time was also known as *The Jew of Venice*) because of the unique combination of the same two peculiar subplots. In The Merchant of Venice, we have 1) a Jewish Usurer who wants to exact a rather bloody penalty and 2) three world-traveling suitors who must choose correctly between one of three caskets in their efforts to win Portia. Greed leads two of these worldly choosers astray. (D. McCarthy 14).

Giving weight to this is the 1598 Stationers' Register entry for Shakespeare's play, which lists *The Jew of Venice* as an alternative title.

The previous year (1578), Oxford had invested—and lost—3000 pounds in an ill-fated expedition with Michael Lok. Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice* invested 3000 ducats with Shylock.

The same year Gosson's pamphlet was published, Edmund Spencer signed off a 1579 letter to Gabriel Harvey, "He that is fast bound unto thee in more obligations than any merchant in

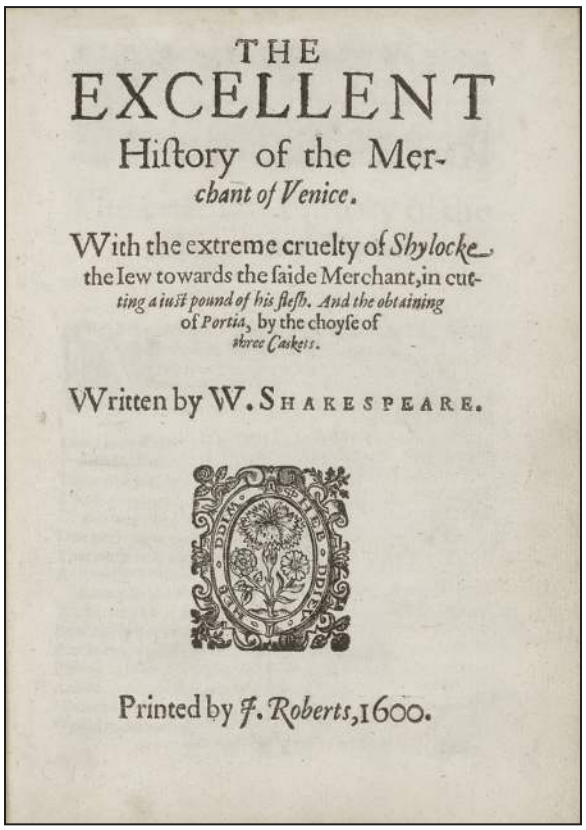

THE
EXCELLENT
Hiſtory of the Mer-
chant of Venice.
With the extreme cruelty of *Shylocke*,
the Iew towards the ſaide Merchant, in cut-
ting a iuſt pound of his fleſh. And the obtaining
of *Portia*, by the choyſe of
three Caskets.
Written by W. SHAKESPEARE.
Printed by *I. Roberts*, 1600.

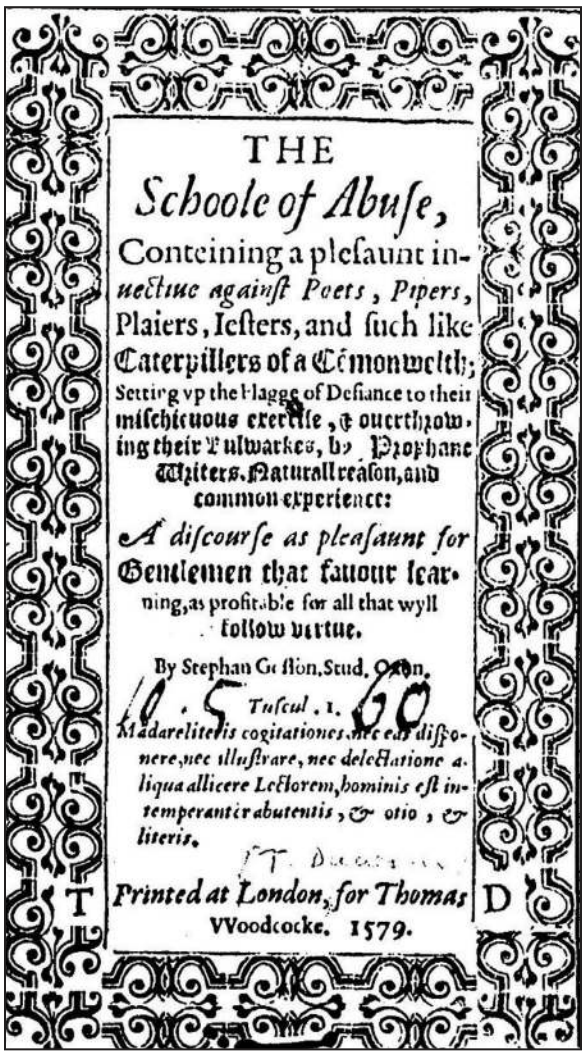
Figure 3: The Merchant of Venice*, 2nd Edition, by W. Shakespeare, 1600.*

Italy to any Jew," while author Stephen Batman wrote in his marginalia on a manuscript soon afterwards (1579–1584):

> The note of a Jew wch for the interest of his money required a li [pound] of the mans flesh to whome he lent the money, the bonde forfeit and yet the Jew went wthoute his purpose / the parti notwithstanding condemn'd by Lawe/the question whether he coulde cut the flesh wthoute spilling of blood.

1579—Further allusion in Gosson as discovered by J.C. Ross

While Gosson's mention of *The Jew* (1579) is well known, as J.C. Ross argues, the last section of Gosson's work (Ross, 2003) contains parallels with Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. As Ramon Jiménez writes:


THE
Schoole of Abuſe,
Conteining a pleſaunt inuectiue againſt Poets, Pipers, Plaiers, Ieſters, and ſuch like Caterpillers of a Cõmonwelth;
Setting vp the Flagge of Defiance to their miſchieuous exercyſe, & ouerthrowing their Bulwarkes, by Prophane Writers, Naturall reaſon, and common experience:
A diſcourſe as pleaſaunt for Gentlemen that fauour learning, as profitable for all that wyll follow vertue.
By Stephan Goſſon, Stud. Oxon.
Tuſcul. 1.
Madare litteris cogitationes, nec eas diſponere, nec illuſtrare, nec delectatione aliqua allicere Lectorem, hominis eſt intemperanter abutentis, & otio, & literis.
Printed at London, for Thomas VVoodcocke. 1579.

In Act II, as Shylock is about to leave his house to meet Bassanio, his former servant Launcelot Gobbo attempts to inform Jessica when to meet Lorenzo and his friends, who will be disguised as masquers. Shylock is alarmed at the prospect of masquers. He counsels his daughter to avoid the sights and sounds of playmaking in the streets during his absence, and to stay away from the windows, his house's "ears." (Jiménez 52)

Figure 4: The School of Abuse *by Stephen Gosson, 1579.*

Shylock says

> What, are there masques? Hear you me, Jessica:
> Lock up **my doors**; and when you **hear the drum**
> And the **vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife**,
> Clamber not you up to the **casements** then,
> Nor thrust your head into the public street
> To gaze on Christian fools with **varnish'd faces**,
> But **stop my house's ears, I mean my casements**;
> Let not the sound of shallow fopp'ry enter
> My **sober** house. 2.5.28–36 (emphases added)

Jiménez continues:

> In the next act, Gobbo commiserates with Jessica about the difficulty she endures as Shylock's daughter. He mentions the "bastard hope" that he may not be her real father. She replies that in that case she would be a victim of her mother's sin. (Jiménez 53)

Gobbo answers:

> Truly then I fear you are damn'd both by father
> and mother: thus when I shun **Scylla** (your father),
> I fall into **Charybdis**, your mother. 3.5.15–17 (emphases added)

A similar warning occurs in Gosson's tract, "where Gosson adds a few pages of advice 'To the Gentlewomen of London,' urging them to avoid plays and theaters" (Jiménez 53).

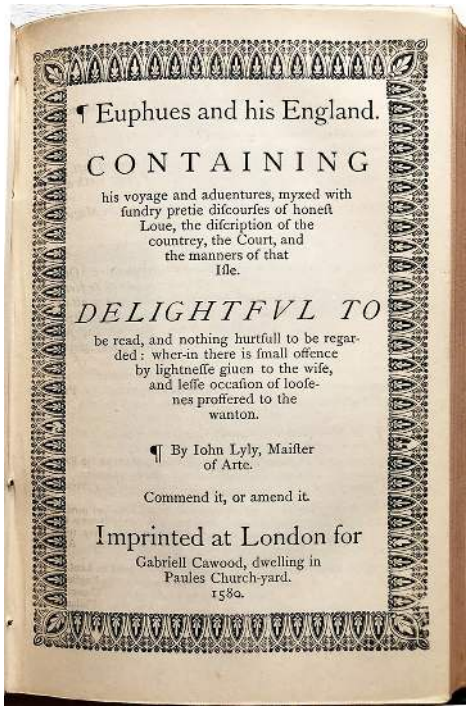
In Gosson's *School of Abuse*:

> When you are grieved, pass the time with your neighbors in **sober** conference…
> If your grief be such, that you may not disclose it, and your sorrow so great, that you
> loath to utter it, **look for no salve at plays or theatres**, lest that **laboring to shun Scylla**
> **you light on Charybdis...**
> You need not go abroad to be tempted; you shall be enticed at **your own windows**. . .
> And if you perceive yourselves in any danger at **your own doors**, either allured by
> courtesy in the day, or **assaulted with music in the night**, close up your eyes, **stop**
> **your ears**, tie up your tongues; when they speak, answer not. (emphases added)

As noted by both Jiménez and Dennis McCarthy, Ross' statement "It is as if Shylock has been reading Gosson," with the implication that Shakespeare had derived these lines for his play from Gosson's pamphlet, makes less sense than if Gosson had heard these in the play *The Jew*:

Gosson uses the same image and the same words and phrases as Shakespeare—in the same context of warning a woman against actors and playmaking. (Jiménez 53).

1580—Lyly's *Euphues and his England* and Anthony Munday's *Zelauto*, 1580


¶ Euphues and his England.

CONTAINING

his voyage and aduentures, myxed with fundry pretie diſcourſes of honeſt Loue, the diſcription of the countrey, the Court, and the manners of that Ile.

DELIGHTFVL TO

be read, and nothing hurtfull to be regarded: wher-in there is ſmall offence by lightneſſe giuen to the wife, and leſſe occaſion of looſenes proffered to the wanton.

¶ By Iohn Lyly, Maiſter of Arte.

Commend it, or amend it.

Imprinted at London for Gabriell Cawood, dwelling in Paules Church-yard. 1580.

Figure 5a: Euphues and his England *by John Lyly, 1580.*


ZELAVTO.

THE FOVN-taine of *Fame.*

Erected in an Orcharde of Amorous Aduentures, *Containing* A Delicate *Diſputation*, gallantly diſcourſed betweene two noble *Gentlemen of* Italye.

Giuen for a freendly entertainment to Euphues, *at his late arriuall* into England.

By A. M. *Seruaunt to the Right Ho-*nourable the Earle of Oxenford.

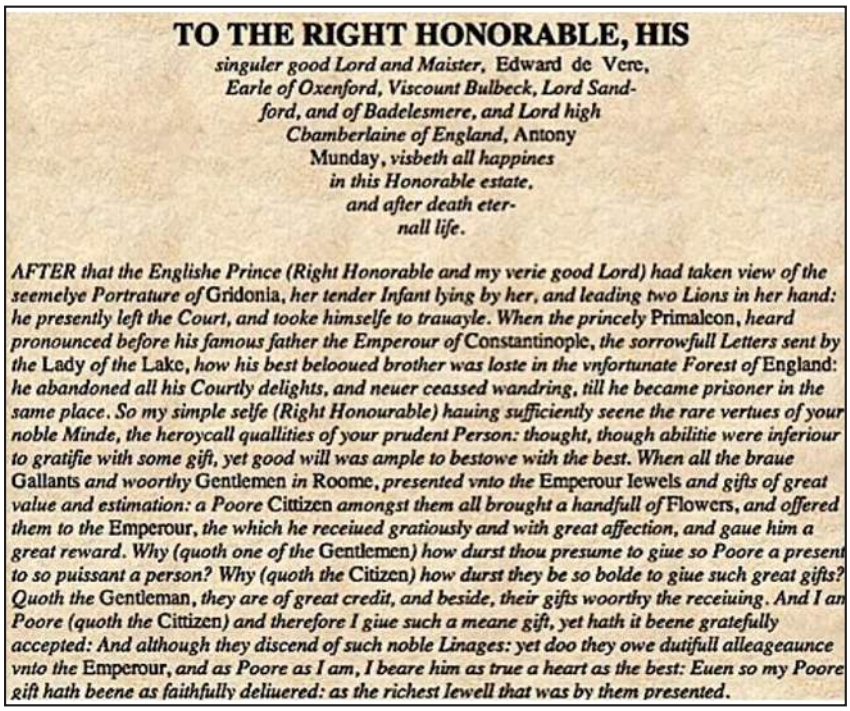
Honos alit Artes.

¶ *Imprinted at London by* Iohn A. Charlewood. 1580.

1558-45. 1603

Figure 5b: Zelauto *by Anthony Munday, 1580.*

It is worth noting that two of Oxford's secretaries also seem to allude to *The Merchant of Venice* within a year of *The Jew*'s performance, both dedicating their works to Oxford (fig. 6).



TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE, HIS

singuler good Lord and Maister, Edward de Vere, *Earle of Oxenford, Viscount Bulbeck, Lord Sandford, and of Badelesmere, and Lord high Chamberlaine of England,* Antony Munday, *visbeth all happines in this Honorable estate, and after death eternall life.*

AFTER that the Englishe Prince (Right Honorable and my verie good Lord) had taken view of the seemelye Portrature of Gridonia, *her tender Infant lying by her, and leading two Lions in her hand: he presently left the Court, and tooke himselfe to trauayle. When the princely* Primaleon, *heard pronounced before his famous father the Emperour of* Constantinople, *the sorrowfull Letters sent by the* Lady *of the* Lake, *how his best belooued brother was loste in the vnfortunate Forest of* England: *he abandoned all his Courtly delights, and neuer ceassed wandring, till he became prisoner in the same place. So my simple selfe (Right Honourable) hauing sufficiently seene the rare vertues of your noble Minde, the heroycall quallities of your prudent Person: thought, though abilitie were inferiour to gratifie with some gift, yet good will was ample to bestowe with the best. When all the braue* Gallants *and woorthy* Gentlemen *in* Roome, *presented vnto the* Emperour Iewels *and gifts of great value and estimation: a Poore* Cittizen *amongst them all brought a handfull of* Flowers, *and offered them to the* Emperour, *the which he receiued gratiously and with great affection, and gaue him a great reward. Why (quoth one of the* Gentlemen) *how durst thou presume to giue so Poore a present to so puissant a person? Why (quoth the* Citizen) *how durst they be so bolde to giue such great gifts? Quoth the* Gentleman, *they are of great credit, and beside, their gifts woorthy the receiuing. And I am Poore (quoth the* Cittizen) *and therefore I giue such a meane gift, yet hath it beene gratefully accepted: And although they discend of such noble Linages: yet doo they owe dutifull alleageaunce vnto the* Emperour, *and as Poore as I am, I beare him as true a heart as the best: Euen so my Poore gift hath beene as faithfully deliuered: as the richest Iewell that was by them presented.*

Figure 6: Munday's dedication to Oxford in Zelauto, *1580.*

In the same month as Gosson's work and while living in accommodation paid for by Oxford, Lyly registered *Euphues and his England* in 1579 (fig. 5a), published the following year. The character is an Italianate Englishman, as Oxford was described upon his return from Italy in the mid-1570s.

As Katherine Chiljan notes, it contains the following in which Lyly talks of the strange superstition of the time that smelling basil could grow scorpions in the brain (Chiljan 349):

> For as by basil the scorpion **is engendred**, and by means of the same herb destroyed: so love which by time and **fancy** is **bred in** an idle **head**, is by time and **fancy** banished from the **heart**: or as the salamander which being a long space **nourished** in the fire, at last quencheth it, so affection having taken hold of the **fancy**, and living as it were in the mind of the lover, in tract of time altereth and changeth the heat, and turneth it to chillness. (Bond II, 74–5) (emphases added)

In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* we find:

> Tell me where is **fancy bred**,
> Or in the **heart** or in the **head**?
> How begot, how **nourished**?
> Reply, reply.
> It **is engend'red** in the [eyes],
> With gazing fed, and **fancy** dies
> In the cradle where it lies.
> Let us all ring **fancy**'s knell.
> I'll begin it. Ding, dong, bell.
> Ding, dong, bell.
> 3.2.63–72

Nowhere else in Early English Books Online (EEBO) does the cluster of the words in bold appear, including three uses of "fancy" in each. Additionally, Katherine Chiljan has found numerous allusions in both of Lyly's *Euphues* books of 1578 and 1580 to numerous other Shakespearean plays, including *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Measure for Measure*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *King John*, *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Henry IV Part 2*, all much earlier than the standard chronology would indicate (Chiljan 345–46, 348–51).

The following year, two years after becoming Oxford's secretary, Anthony Munday published the Euphuistic novel *Zelauto*. In his dedication to Oxford, Munday praises "the rare virtues of your noble mind." Munday's comment "Given for a friendly entertainment to Euphues" seems to imply that the character of Euphues stood for Oxford.

The parallels between the third story in Munday's book and Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* have been documented by the Orthodox scholar J.R. Brown in his Arden edition of the play (Brown, 1964). Brown devotes an entire twelve-page appendix detailing the parallels, although his scholarship is seldom quoted, perhaps due to the connection between Munday and Oxford.

Stuart Gillespie's *Shakespeare's Books* cites *Zelauto* as a source for Shakespeare's play:

> *The Merchant of Venice* offers close local parallels with Munday's story of a (non-Jewish) moneylender, *Zelauto, or The Fountaine of Fame* (1580), notably in Shakespeare's courtroom scene. (Gillespie 375)

However, given the preceding information we must wonder if the direction of influence went the other way.

1598—Stationers' Register Entry for Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*

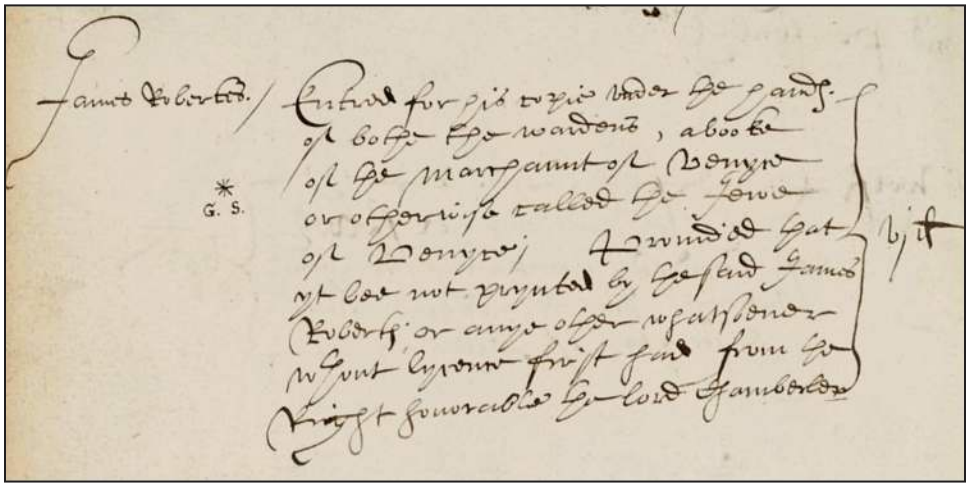


Figure 7: Stationer's register entry for Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice*, 1598.*

Transcription (fig. 7): *XXIJ Julij (July 22, 1598)*

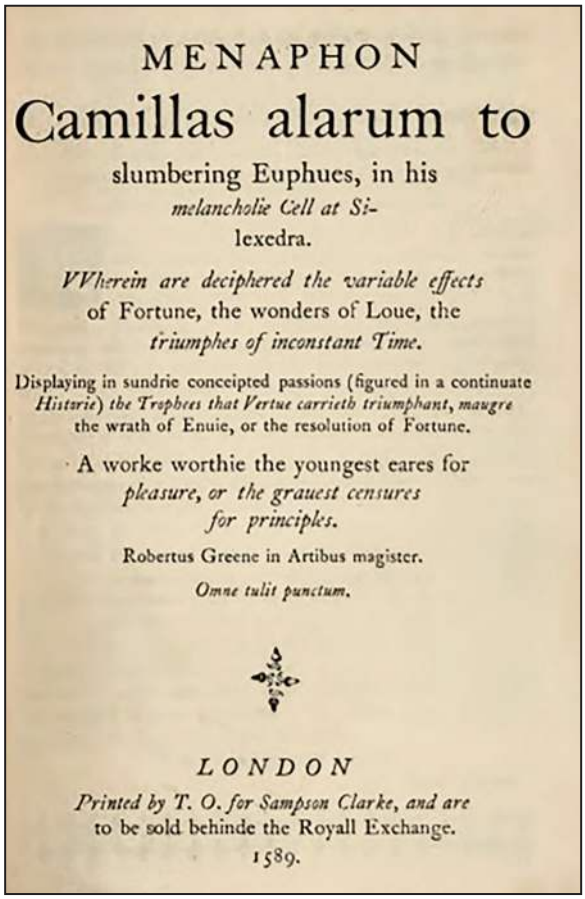
James Robertes./Entered for his copie under the hands
of bothe the wardens, a booke of
the Marchaunt of Venyce
or otherwise called the Jewe
of Venyce/ Provided that
yt bee not printed by the said James
Robertes or any other whatsoever
without lycense first had from the
Right honorable the lord Chamberlen

As Robert Detobel noted across two articles in *The Oxfordian*, the 1598 Stationers' entry for *The Merchant of Venice* implies that Oxford was the author of the play. Detobel argued that while copyright did not exist in England until 1709, a 1588 Stationers' Ordinance meant that publishers had to acquire a writer's permission to publish their work or face large fines or jail time. The reference to the "Lord Chamberlain," Detobel shows, implies the Lord Chamberlain as the author, and there were two people in England at the time who could be referred to in this way, the Lord Chamberlain of the Household, George Carey, 2nd Baron Hunsdon, who never wrote a play in his life, or Oxford, whose title 'Lord Great Chamberlain' was often abbreviated in legal documents (Detobel, 2001, 2002).

Redating *Hamlet* (1589)

1589—Nashe's preface to Greene's *Menaphon*

Menaphon (fig. 8) is dedicated to "slumbering Euphues in his melancholy cell at Silexedra." As we saw previously, Euphues was an Italianate Englishman character developed by Oxford's secretary John Lyly and whom another of Oxford's secretaries, Anthony Munday, implied was a persona of Oxford. Margo Anderson and others have argued that Silexedra was Fisher's Folly, a property Oxford used as a writing stable for the likes of Greene, who dedicated a 1584 work to Oxford (Anderson 232).


MENAPHON

Camillas alarum to

slumbering Euphues, in his
melancholie Cell at Si-
lexedra.

VVherein are deciphered the variable effects
of Fortune, the wonders of Loue, the
triumphes of inconstant Time.

Displaying in sundrie conceipted passions (figured in a continuate *Historie*) *the Trophees that Vertue carrieth triumphant, maugre* the wrath of Enuie, or the resolution of Fortune.

A worke worthie the youngest eares for
pleasure, or the grauest censures
for principles.

Robertus Greene in Artibus magister.

Omne tulit punctum.

LONDON

Printed by T. O. for Sampson Clarke, and are to be sold behinde the Royall Exchange.
1589.

Figure 8: Menaphon *by Robert Greene, 1589.*

Penny McCarthy notes allusions to four Shakespearean works in the introduction to *Menaphon* (P. McCarthy, 2004, 175), strengthening the notion that the following *Hamlet* allusion is to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The allusion mentions "English Seneca," the translator of Senecan works who "yields many good sentences,"

> and if you entreat him fair in a frosty morning, he will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls, of tragical speeches.

The naming of Hamlet with "tragical speeches" and the "frosty" Danish climate evokes the play *Hamlet*, although most gloss over "fair" being a potential pun on Vere, whose French origin was often spelled Ver and was a homonym of "fair." The "handfuls" of tragical speeches has also been seen by some as referring to one of the most memorable scenes in the play—Hamlet holding Yorick's skull (Marcus, 2015d).

The story proper of *Menaphon* climaxes with the revelation that the poet-Shepherd Melicertus is actually a disguised nobleman, Maximus. One of his pieces, "Sonetto," was later published in *England's Parnassus* in 1600 as "Love is a discord and a strange divorce" under Oxford's initials (Chiljan 259).

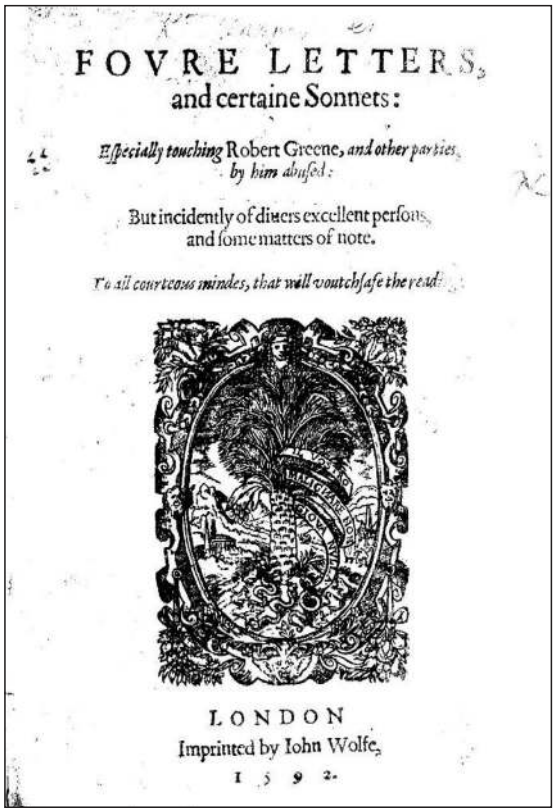
1592/3—Harvey's *Four Letters and Certaine Sonnets*

Registered in December 1592, (fig. 9) Harvey 's work mentions "the Earl of Oxford" and then writes:

> But the noble Earl [of Oxford], not disposed to trouble his jovial mind with such Saturnine paltry still continued, like his magnificent self: and that Fleeting also proved, like the other, a silly bull-beare, a sorry puff of wind, a thing of nothing.

Michael Marcus writes:

> By "the other" we are meant to understand an alleged earlier sojourn at her majesty's pleasure in the Fleet Prison (hence "fleeting"), which according to Harvey never took place. That is the surface meaning. (Marcus, 2015c)


FOVRE LETTERS,
and certaine Sonnets:

Especially touching Robert Greene, and other parties by him abused:

But incidently of diuers excellent persons and some matters of note.

To all courteous mindes, that will vouchsafe the read

LONDON
Imprinted by Iohn Wolfe,
1592.

Figure 9: Four Letters and Certaine Sonnets, *by Gabriel Harvey, 1592–93.*

Yet Marcus sees Harvey's quote as an allusion to *Hamlet*:

> 'Jovial mind' ("the front of Jove himself"), Saturnine paltry ['melancholic insignificance', such as the graveyard scene], continued (legal meaning: to delay, such as Hamlet's delay in taking action), fleeting (as transitory), bullbear = specter (the ghost), puff of wind ('blast of wind' = definition of 'ghost', *OED*), a thing of nothing.

"A thing of nothing" comes from Act 4, Scene 2 of *Hamlet*. Indeed, orthodox Professor John Hunt wrote an entire article around the quote: "A Thing of Nothing: The Catastrophic Body in Hamlet" and argues the quote represents a major theme of Shakespeare's play (Hunt 1988). Harvey seems to be tying an allusion to *Hamlet* with a direct mention of "the Earl of Oxford."

1593—Harvey's *A New Letter of Notable Contents*

Katherine Chiljan notes that Gabriel Harvey seems to allude to the most famous line in theatre history in his 1593 publication *A New Letter of Notable Contents* (fig. 10), while Dennis McCarthy also sees it as a *Hamlet* allusion:

> Did I ne**ver** tell you of a gra**ver** man, that wore a privy coat of interchangeable colours; and for the Art of Revolting, or recanting might read a Lecture to any retrograde Planet in Heaven or Earth? …After a stern and ruthful Tragedy, solemnly acted, who deeplier plunged in sober and melancholy dumps, then some good fellows; that from a pleasant and wanton Comedy, finely played, return as merry as a cricket, and as light as a feather? …What say you to a **Spring** [Ver] of **rankest** Villainy in February and a harvest of ripest Divinity in May? May they not surcease to wonder, that wonder how Machiavel can teach a **prince** to be **and** not to be religious? Another **question**, or two of a **sharper edge**, were at my tongue's end. (emphases added)

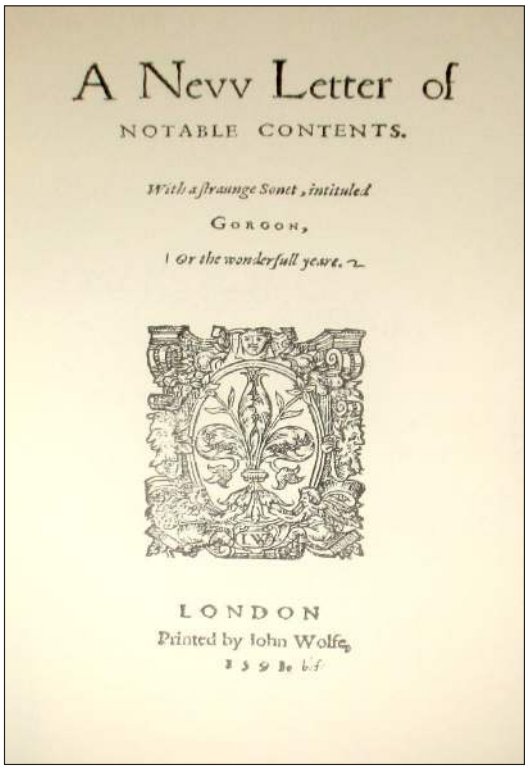

A Nevv Letter of
NOTABLE CONTENTS.
With a ſtraunge Sonet, intituled
GORGON,
Or the wonderfull yeare.
LONDON
Printed by Iohn Wolfe.

Figure 10: A New Letter of Notable Contents *by Gabriel Harvey, 1593.*

As McCarthy notes,

- "Graver man" would be a peculiarly apt description for Hamlet, due not only to his melancholy but also to his seemingly endless reflections on and allusions to the grave.
- "And for the art of revolting or recanting might read a lecture to any retrograde Planet in Heaven or Earth?" Due to the prince's ethereal philosophising on heaven and earth, the tragedy is the most peculiarly celestial in the canon. This is also true in the first quarto version in which we find a juxtaposition of heaven and earth no fewer than seven times, four of them in Hamlet's speeches.
- Ruthful tragedy, solemnly acted…melancholy dumps [i.e., tragical speeches, reiterating Nashe's previous comment on *Hamlet*] (D. McCarthy 91).

In Harvey's publication, "to be" and "not to be" are italicised, adding weight to it being an allusion to "To be or not to be." This is followed by "question" ("that is the question") and "or two of a sharper edge," which may be alluding to Hamlet's second question in his famous soliloquy, when he asks himself whether he should end his life with a "sharper edge," a "bare bodkin" [dagger].

Also worth noting is the double use of "ver"—first with "never" and "graver," then spring, or Ver in Latin. The "Spring" is of "rankest" villainy, perhaps punning on a man of rank. Nashe's play *Summers Last Will and Testament* contained a character Ver or "the Spring" who frittered money from the monarch away on artistic endeavors, seen by many as a caricature of Oxford. In the 1580s, John Soowthern used the spelling "Edward De Ver" without the terminal "e" throughout his *Pandora* (1584):

> Amongst our well renowned men,
> De **Ver** merits a syl**ver** pen…
> Can set vp in our Vni**ver**se,
> A Fame, to endure for e**ver**. (emphases added)

Anthony Bateman, an obscure Elizabethan who nevertheless left behind a large anthology of other writers' poems transcribed in his own hand, wrote of "L. Ver" on a manuscript dated around 1581, which Steven May deciphered as "Lord Ver or Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford" (May 1975, 387).

Harvey was a fan of punning on the original, pre-anglicised form of Vere, "Ver" such as the following from his *Gratulationum Valdinensium* of 1578:

> *Sp*. Is it a picture of **Vere**?
> *P*. **Ver**ily.
> *S*. Nothing is **ver**ier…
> *Co*. **Ver**ily; there's nothing **ver**ier than that same **ver**ity. (emphases added)

Within *A New Letter* Harvey also tells the reader of the "mightiest miracle of '93," which seems to be tied to an artistic work, and has been seen by some scholars as Harvey's response to the publication of *Venus and Adonis* (Barber 2009, 7):

> *A Stanza declaratiue: to the Louers of admirable Workes*
> Pleased it hath a Gentlewoman rare,
> With Phenix quill in diamont hand of Art,
> **To muzzle the redoubtable Bull-bare**,
> And play the galiard Championesses part.
> Though miracles surcease, yet Wonder see
> **The mightiest miracle of Ninety Three.** (emphases added)

As noted by Chiljan, Harvey used the exact term "bull-beare" to describe the "Earl of Oxford" in *Foure Letters and Certaine Sonnets* a few months previously (Chiljan 251).

Harvey uses the term bull-bare again in his *Pierces Supererogation*, also of 1593, in which he associates the word with a character described as "quicker then quicksil**uer**; and the liuely spring [again, 'Ver' in Latin], or rather the Vestall fier of that e**uer**-stirring **Ver**tue of Caesar." Given Harvey's predilection to punning on Ver, four puns in one sentence and the association with Caesar—whom Anthony Munday had associated with Oxford in his 1580 book *Zelauto*—seems to provide weight to Harvey referring to Oxford.

1594—Nashe's *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem* (2nd edition)

Dennis McCarthy notes that in Nashe's next publication, Nashe throws Harvey's *Hamlet* allusion back at him, calling Harvey "the only Gabriel grave-digger under heaven," which McCarthy states "likens him to the clownish grave-digger whom Hamlet denounces for being so brutish and vile with the bones and skulls of the buried" (D. McCarthy 93). This is supported by a seeming allusion to the gravedigger scene from *Hamlet* two sentences beforehand,

> His [Harvey's] vainglory (which some take to be his **gentlewoman**) he hath **painted over an inch thick**,

echoing *Hamlet's* "Now get you to my **lady's** chamber, and tell her, let her **paint an inch thick**." Chiljan also notes this and a further Shakespearean allusion in the next sentence, "the rest of his invention is nothing but an **ox with a pudding in his belly,**" echoing the description of Falstaff, "That roasted Manningtree **ox with the pudding in his belly**" from *1 Henry IV* (Chiljan 374) (emphases added).

1594—Henslowe's *Diary* Entries

As noted by E.M. Jolly, a play called *Hamlet* was performed at Newington Butts in 1594, alongside two other plays bearing titles very similar to those of Shakespeare (Jolly 162):

The 5 of June 1594 R/ at andronicous	xij^{s}
The 9 of June 1594 R/ at hamlet	viij^{s}
The 10 of June 1594 R/ at the tamynge of A shrowe	ix^{s}
The 12 of June 1594 R/ at andronicous	vij^{s}

The theme seemed to be performances of Shakespearean plays.

1596—Lodge's *Wit's Misery*

In Thomas Lodge's 1596 *Wit's Misery* (fig. 11), the allusion to *Hamlet* is well known, but the passage in which it occurs is obscure and rarely quoted. It is entitled:

> Of the great Deuill Belzebub, and what monstrous and strange Deuils he hath bred in our age.

A common esoteric technique was putting dangerous ideas into the mouths of fools, drunks and devils. Lodge addresses Belzebub and asks that "I must **straine** your patience a little to reckon vp your **pedigree**" and "yet it shall suffise mee to find out the beginning of your **sinfull progenie**":

> he walks for the most part in black vnder colour of grauity, & looks as pale as the Uisard of the ghost which cried so miserally at the **Theator like an oisterwife, Hamlet, reuenge**. (emphases added)

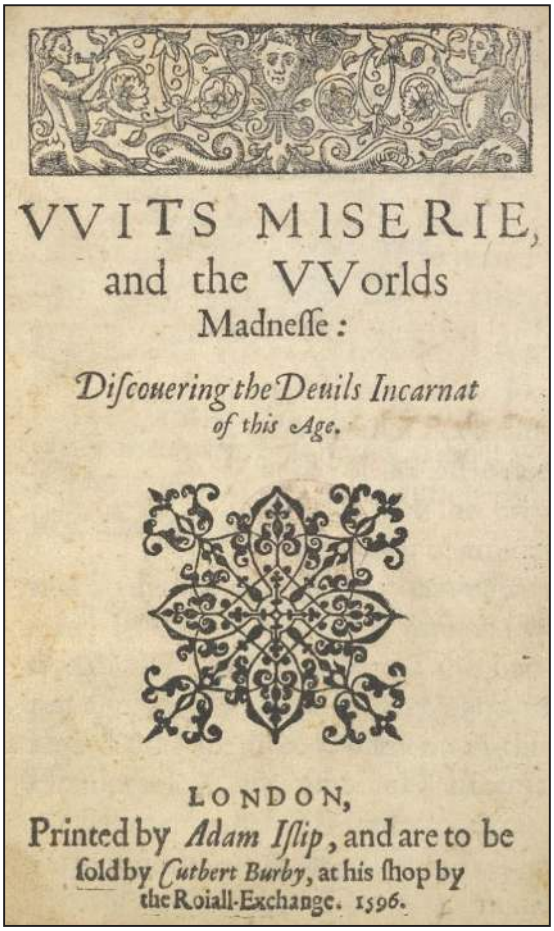

VVITS MISERIE,
and the VVorlds
Madneſſe:
Diſcouering the Deuils Incarnat
of this Age.
LONDON,
Printed by Adam Iſlip, and are to be
ſold by Cutbert Burby, at his ſhop by
the Roiall-Exchange. 1596.

Figure 11: Wit's Misery *by Thomas Lodge, 1596.*

An allusion to Hamlet is linked to pedigree and disputed paternity. Both the "Prince Tudor" theory (Beauclerk 2010) and Waugh's "Surrogacy Theory" (Waugh 2015) involve these issues, which could explain why this allusion to Shakespeare's play is in veiled language, yet they are hard to reconcile with the orthodox view.

The year after *Menaphon* was published to "slumbering Euphues," Lodge published a book subtitled *Euphues Golden Legacy* "bemoaning the loss of Silexedra" or Fisher's Folly, which had been sold in 1588 (Anderson 229–30), further connecting Oxford, Shakespeare, Euphues and Fisher's Folly.

1599—Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*

The character Macilente spouts Oxford's poetry ("My Mind to me a Kingdom is") while bewailing the rise of Sogliardo, seen by many as a caricature of Shakspere:

> *Maci*. Sbloud, why should such a prick-ear'd HineHind as
> this, Be rich? ha? a Fool? such a transparent Gull
> That may be seen through? wherefore should he have
> Land, Houses, and Lordships? O, I could eat my Intrails,
> And sink my Soul into the Earth with sorrow.

In *Every Man Out of His Humour* (fig. 12), is Jonson drawing a link between a character quoting Oxford's poetry and his dismay toward the rise of the character representing Shakspere, just after the name 'William Shakespeare' has been attached to the Shakespeare plays in 1598?

Charles Cathcart noted that the play *Histriomastix*, also performed in 1599, seemed to contain a joke on Hamlet's speech regarding the "paragon [excellence] of animals. And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?":

> *Vour*. One of the goodliest [excellent] Spaniels I haue seene.
> *Lyon*. And heere's the very quintessence of Duckes.

Histriomastix was written by John Marston, who interspersed a number of allusions from Shakespeare's plays into his own, as we shall see.

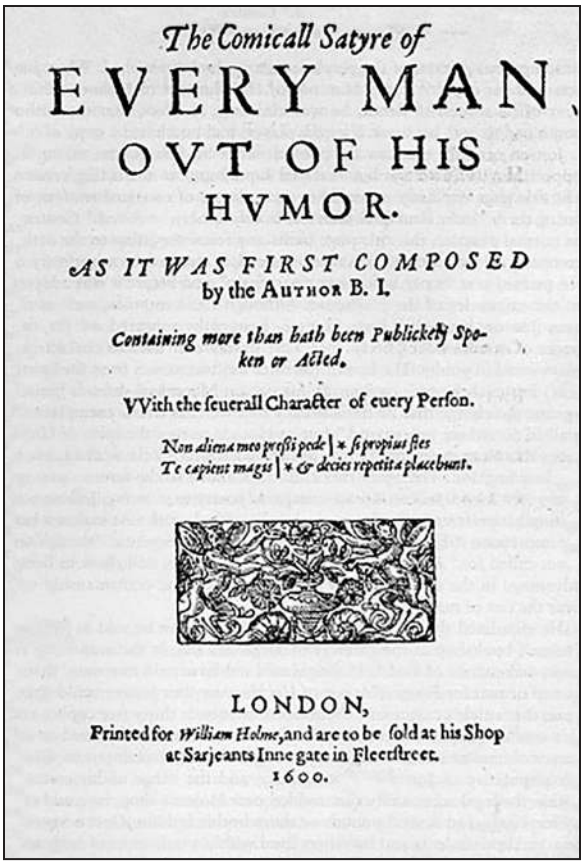

The Comicall Satyre of
EVERY MAN,
OVT OF HIS
HVMOR.
AS IT WAS FIRST COMPOSED
by the AUTHOR B. I.
Containing more than hath been Publickely Spoken or Acted.
VVith the seuerall Character of euery Person.
Non alienum meo pressi pede | * si propius stes
Te capient magis | * & decies repetita placebunt.
LONDON,
Printed for William Holme, and are to be sold at his Shop
at Sarjeants Inne gate in Fleetstreet.
1600.

Figure 12: Every Man Out of His Humour *by Ben Jonson, 1600.*

Cathcart also saw *Every Man Out* alluding to *Hamlet*:

> *Hamlet*. I haue of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custome of exercise; and indeed, it goes so heauenly with my disposition; that this goodly frame the Earth, seemes to me a sterrill Promontory; this most excellent Canopy the Ayre, look you, this braue ore-hanging, this Maiesticall Roofe, fretted with golden fire: why, it appeares no other thing to mee, then a foule and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of worke is a man! how Noble in Reason? how infinite in faculty? in forme and mouing how expresse and admirable? in Action, how like an Angel? in apprehension, how like a God? the beauty of the world, the Parragon of Animals; and yet to me, what is this Quintessence of Dust? Man delights not me; no, nor Woman neither; though by your smiling you seeme to say so.

From *Every Man Out of His Humour*:

> *Fasti*. O, the most Celestiall, and full of wonder and delight
> that can bee imagin'd Signior, beyond all thought and
> apprehension of Pleasure. A man liues there in that deuine
> Rapture, that he will thinke himselfe i' the third Heauen for the
> time, and loose all sence of Mortalitie whatsoeuer; when hee
> shall behold such glorious (and almost immortall) beauties,
> heare such Angelicall and Harmonious voices, discourse with
> such flowing and Ambrosian spirits, whose wits as suddaine as
> Lightning, and humorous as Nectar; Oh: it makes a man all
> Quintessence and Flame, and lifts him vp (in a moment) to the very
> Christall Crowne o'the skie, where (houering in the strēgth
> of his Imagination) he shall behold all the delights of the Hesperides,
> the Insulae Fortunatae, Adonis gardens, Tempe, or what else
> (confin'd within the amplest verge of Poesie) to bee meere Vmbrae,
> and imperfect Figures, confer'd with the most essentiall
> felicitie of your Court.

Cathcart spends several pages on the similarities between the two pieces and concludes

> Fastidius includes 'apprehension,' 'angellical,' 'quintessence,' 'the verie christall crowne of the skie' and 'delights' (which he uses as a noun): a match with *Hamlet* sufficient at least to raise the possibility that Jonson wished to satirize the speech written by Shakespeare. (Cathcart 428)

As we shall see, the same speech continues into what appears to be a veiled allusion to *The Tempest*.

1603—The First 'Bad' Quarto of *Hamlet*

E.M. Jolly shows that Q1 of *Hamlet* (fig. 13) is unlikely to be a pirated copy put together by memorialisation at the theatres, as Q1 is much closer to the source material *Les Histoires Tragiques* than Q2 is, having roughly double the number of echoes of the source book despite Q1 being only about half the length of Q2 (Jolly 2014).

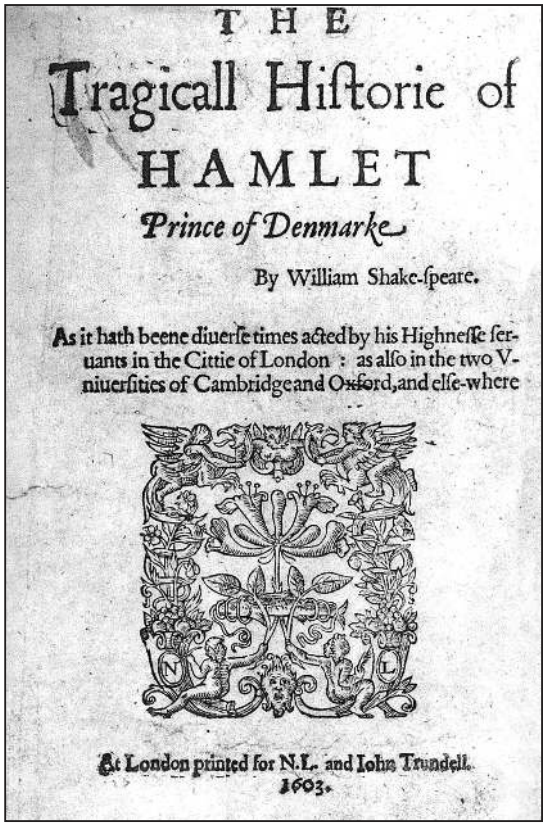

THE
Tragicall Hiſtorie of
HAMLET
Prince of Denmarke
By William Shake-ſpeare.
As it hath beene diuerſe times acted by his Highneſſe ſeruants in the Cittie of London : as alſo in the two Vniuerſities of Cambridge and Oxford, and elſe-where
At London printed for N.L. and Iohn Trundell.
1603.

Figure 13: The Tragical History of Hamlet, *Q1 printed in 1603.*

Paul Menzer demonstrated that the reference on the title page "as it hath beene diverse times acted by his highnesse servuants in the Cittie of London," was a specific term to an area in London about a square mile, in which performances of plays were banned after 1594 (Menzer 169).

Drawing on Menzer's work, Terri Bourus argues:

> The obvious explanation for this anomaly would be that the Chamberlain's Men, at the Cross Keys Inn 'in the City of London' in the winter of 1594–5, performed the same *Hamlet* play they had performed in Newington Butts (outside the city) earlier in 1594 and also performed at the Theatre (outside the City) in 1595 or 1596: in other words, that the *Hamlet* play of 1594 is the *Hamlet* play printed in 1603. (D.McCarthy 94, quoting Bourus 152–53).

1605—Sir Thomas Smythe's *Voyage and Entertainment in Russia* (Anonymous)

As noted in "When Did Shakespeare Die?," there is an allusion to *Hamlet* and its author in this 1605 publication, described as the "late English Ovid," to whom Shakespeare was linked by Meres and others. Shakspere would live to 1616.

Redating *The Tempest* (1598–99)

Strachey vs. Munday: A Case of Hypocrisy?

We begin by commenting on a hypocritical example of accepting certain source material for *The Tempest* while rejecting other potential source material that seems equally authentic. A letter describing a shipwreck in Bermuda by William Strachey written around 1610 is usually taken as a source for *The Tempest*, which was first performed in 1611. However, the letter was not published until 1625. Worse, the parallels between Strachey's letter and Shakespeare's play are tenuous at best, his letter describing the generalities of a storm at sea with no specific details matching the text of Shakespeare's play. Kermode writes

> There is nothing in *The Tempest* fundamental to its structure of ideas which could not have existed had America remained undiscovered, and the Bermudas voyage never taken place. (Johnson & Gilvary 43)

As Orthodox scholar Kenneth Muir stated in his book on Shakespeare's Sources:

> the extent of the verbal echoes of [the Bermuda] pamphlets has, I think, been exaggerated. There is hardly a shipwreck in history or fiction which does not mention splitting, in which the ship is not lightened of its cargo, in which the passengers do not give themselves up for lost, in which north winds are not sharp, and in which no one gets to shore by clinging to wreckage. (Muir 280)

Yet in "*The Tempest* and *Primaleon*: A New Source," Gary Schmidgall found no less than 17 parallels between Book III of *Primaleon*, translated by Oxford's secretary Anthony Munday (fig. 14), and *The Tempest* (Schmidgall 429).

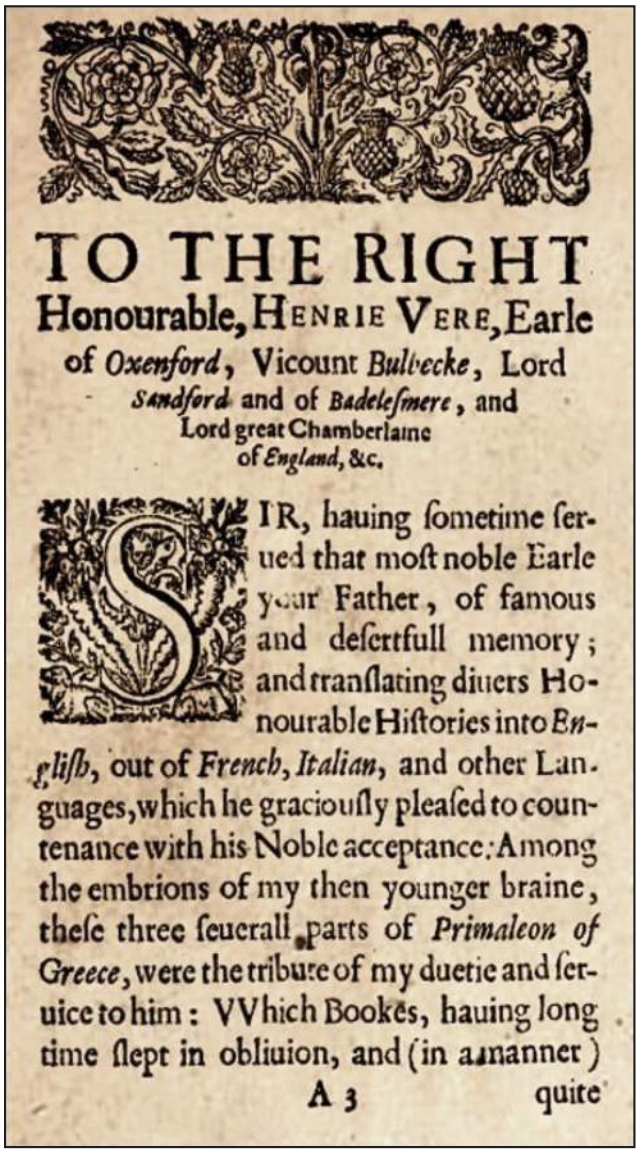
Schmidgall shows that it was probable Book III was published in 1597 and written in the early to mid-1590s (Schmidgall 430–32). All three books were published in one volume in 1619, dedicated to Oxford's son Henry de Vere, Munday writing in the introduction that he translated it during his time in Oxford's service, with the intention of dedicating it to the 17th Earl.

In *Shakespeare's Books: A Dictionary of Shakespeare Sources*, Stuart Gillespie states that:

> *The Tempest* has also been connected with Munday's translation of an anonymous Spanish romance, *Primaleon* yet the date of publication (1619) of the parts supposed to have affected Shakespeare's play

> means, as Schmidgall concedes, that Shakespeare would need to have read Munday's translation before it was printed. (Gillespie, 300)

This surely represents a double standard, in which the Strachey letter is allowed as a possible source despite existing only in manuscript until 1625, while *Primaleon* is disallowed for not being printed (with certainty) until 1619, yet according to Schmidgall was likely composed and printed in the 1590s.



TO THE RIGHT
Honourable, HENRIE VERE, Earle
of *Oxenford*, Vicount *Bulbecke*, Lord
Sandford and of *Badeleſmere*, and
Lord great Chamberlaine
of *England*, &c.

SIR, hauing ſometime ſerued that moſt noble Earle your Father, of famous and deſertfull memory; and tranſlating diuers Honourable Hiſtories into *Engliſh*, out of *French*, *Italian*, and other Languages, which he graciouſly pleaſed to countenance with his Noble acceptance: Among the embrions of my then younger braine, theſe three ſeuerall parts of *Primaleon of Greece*, were the tribute of my duetie and ſeruice to him: VVhich Bookes, hauing long time ſlept in obliuion, and (in a manner)

A 3 quite

Figure 14: Munday's Dedication of Primaleon *to Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford.*

1601—Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour* (Performed 1598)

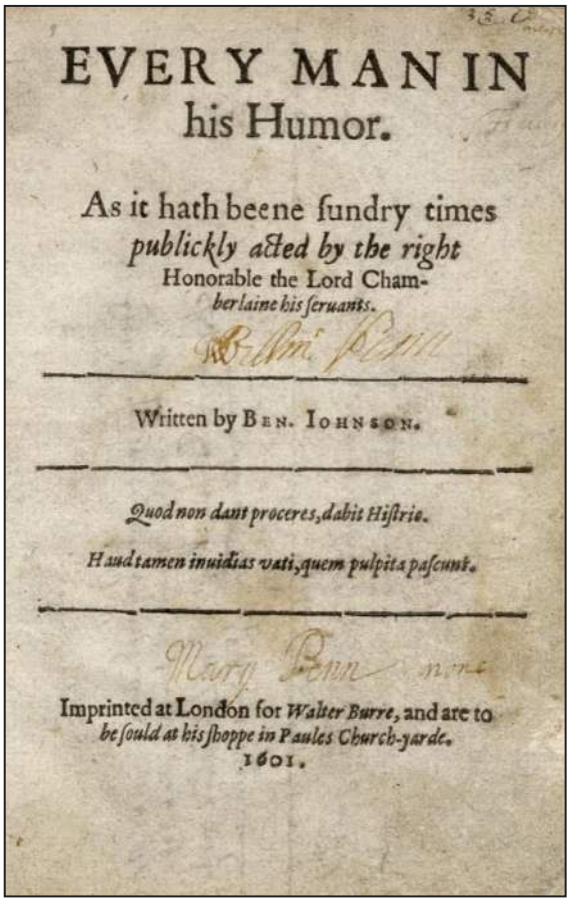
Ben Jonson's play (fig. 15) contains multiple character names from *The Tempest*. Stephano features in both plays, as does the main character Prospero. One of Prospero's early speeches is:

> Faith M. Doctor thats euen I, my hopes are small, and my dispaire shall be as little. Brother, sister, brother what cloudy, cloudy? and will no sunshine on these lookes appeare, well since there is such a **tempest towarde**, ile be the porpoise, ile daunce: wench be of good cheare, thou hast **a cloake** for the rayne yet, (emphases added)

So, in a satire whose main task is to make humorous allusions to contemporaneous events, we have a character named Prospero, referencing both a tempest and a cloak, a major plot device in Shakespeare's play.

Every Man In also contains imagery of other Shakespearean plays. Jonson intertwines *Othello* and *The Tempest*—both, according to the standard chronology, yet to be written—*Othello* is usually dated to around 1603. In addition to the character Thorello, Bianca features in both plays as well. Orthodox scholar Ian Donaldson in his biography of Jonson writes:

> Though it is not known which role Shakespeare played in *Every Man in His Humour*, one character in particular was to remain indelibly in his mind: Thorello, the obsessively jealous merchant, whose broodings over the imagined infidelities of his wife Bianca, Shakespeare was


EVERY MAN IN
his Humor.

As it hath beene ſundry times
publickly acted by the right
Honorable the Lord Cham-
berlaine his ſeruants.

Written by BEN. IOHNSON.

Quod non dant proceres, dabit Hiſtrio.

Haud tamen inuidias vati, quem pulpita paſcunt.

Imprinted at London for *Walter Burre*, and are to
be ſould at his ſhoppe in Paules Church-yarde.
1601.

Figure 15: Every Man In His Humour *by Ben Jonson, 1601, performed in 1598.*

> to recall in his own tragedy of *Othello* just a few years later. 'Bane to my fortunes: what meant I to marry?' asks Thorello in Jonson's play, in a meditation which Othello was soon to retrace, beginning with a similar question, 'Why did I marry?' (EMIHH, 3.3.15–25; Othello, 3.3.245–56). 'Sweet-heart, will you come in to breakfast?', Bianca asks her anxious husband, placing her hand solicitously on his forehead as he complains of an aching forehead (1.4.181–212). 'I pray thee, good sweetheart, come in', begs Desdemona of Othello, starting to bind his brow with her handkerchief when he similarly speaks of 'a pain upon my forehead, here' (3.3.277–93, at 287). (Donaldson 131)

I would argue it is more likely that *Othello* existed by this time and, in a satire which consisted of parodying existing works, this was the case here. Gabrielle Jackson, editor of *The Yale Ben Jonson* edition of the play, writes:

> Jonson is clearly poking fun at *Othello*; consider the following allusions:
>
> a. Kitely/Thorello (note the parodic name), who has just expressed his jealousy for the first time, is approached by his wife and asked to come to a waiting meal: "Sweetheart, will you come in to breakfast? …I pray thee, good Muss, we stay for you." As her husband answers only by speaking aside, she asks, "What ail you, sweetheart, are you not well? Speak, good Muss. He replies, "Troth, my head aches extremely, on a sudden." (1.4.184–91)
>
> Othello, who has just expressed his jealousy for the first time, is approached by his wife and asked to come to a waiting meal:
>
> *Desdemona*. How now, my dear Othello
> Your dinner, and the generous islanders
> By you invited, do attend your presence.
>
> *Othello*. I am to blame.
>
> *Desdemona*. Why do you speak so faintly?
> Are you not well?
>
> *Othello*. I have a pain upon my forehead here. (III, iii, 279–84)
>
> b. Kitely comes upon his associates, who have been brawling, while their swords are drawn, and exclaims, "Why, how now? What's the matter? What stir is here? Whence springs this quarrel?…/ Put up your weapons, and put off this rage. (3.4.160–62) This is an obvious conflation of Othello's two reactions to the drawing of swords: "What is the matter here? Why, how now, ho! From whence ariseth this? (3. 3.163, 169) and the famous "Keep up your bright swords,

> for the dew will rust them" (1.2.9). Kitely, like Othello, fails to get an answer to his questions; his subsequent "who enforced this brawl?" (170) is more than reminiscent of Othello's "put by this barbarous brawl:…Give me to know / How this foul rout began, who set it on." (2.3.172, 209–10)
>
> c. Most impudent of all is Stephen's comment on Bobadill's beating by Downright: "would any man have offered it in Venice?" (4.4.10)—a parody of Lodovico's comment on the blow Othello gives Desdemona: "this would not be believed in Venice" (4.1.251). (Jackson 237)

Donaldson mentions "one further echo" of Jonson's comedy in a later Shakespearian play:

> Thorello, the anxious merchant, rebukes his brother-in-law Prospero for the troubles he has brought to their house in the course of the day. Prospero protests to Thorello and Bianca that their troubles are all imaginary, and that no mischance has actually occurred. (Donaldson 131).

Donaldson then quotes from *Every Man In*:

> *Prospero*. No harme done brother I vvarrant you: since there is no harme done, anger costs a man nothing…
> *Bianca*. I but vvhat harme might haue come of it?

As Donaldson notes:

> "No harm done": Shakespeare remarkably gives these precise words to another character named Prospero in a play written towards the close of his career. (Donaldson 132)

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> *Prospero*. There's no harm done.
> *Miranda*. O, woe the day!
> *Prospero*. No harm.

Remarkable indeed if we adopt the orthodox timeline. Yet routine satire if the plays were already known to the satirist.

1599—Nashe's *Lenten Stuffe*

Orthodox scholar Penny McCarthy sees allusions to *The Tempest* in Nashe's final published work: *Lenten Stuff* of 1599. In Nashe's parody of *Hero and Leander*, McCarthy points out allusions to *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor,* and then writes "With antennae alerted by direct parody of *Merry Wives*…one can hardly shut down one's reception of Shakespearean parody" (P. McCarthy, 151). Nashe writes:

> All that live long night could she not sleep, she was so troubled with the rheum, which was a sign she should hear of some drowning. Yet towards cock-crowing she caught a little slumber, and then she dreamed that Leander and she were playing at checkestone with pearls in the bottom of the sea.
>
> You may see dreams are not so vain as they are preached of, though not in vain. Preachers inveigh against them, and bend themselves out of the peoples' minds to exhale their foolish superstition. The rheum is the students disease, and who study most, dream most. The labouring mens' hands glow and blister after their day's work, the glowing and blistering of our brains after our day labouring cogitations are dreams, and those dreams are reaking vapours of no impression, if our mateless couches be not half empty.

McCarthy writes:

> Who could fail to see here Miranda and Ferdinand (to whom Ariel sings of his father drowned "full fathom five" with pearls for eyes) playing chess at the end of *The Tempest*? And when Nashe starts the next paragraph with a disquisition on dreams, which are "reaking vapours of no impression," is he not making the connection as clear as day, recalling for us Prospero's beautiful "We are such stuff as dreams are made on" and his actor spirits who melt "into air, into thin air" leaving "not a rack behind"? (P. McCarthy 151)

Strengthening a link to *The Tempest*, within the same work by Nashe, Shakespeare's lines from *The Tempest*

> the cloud-capp'd **tow'rs**, the **gorgeous** palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Are echoed by Nashe's
> these **towered** walls, portcullised gates, and **gorgeous** architectures
> that condecorate and adorn it,… (emphases added)

1599—Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*

As noted earlier, the character Macilente spouts Oxford's poetry and is bereft at the rise of Sogliardo—seen by many as a caricature of Will Shakespeare. Orthodox scholar Robert Watson saw a speech near the end of the play by the very same Macilente as "anticipating" Prospero's "Revels" speech in *The Tempest*:

> Although the tone turns suddenly more casual at the end, the speech as a whole anticipates the farewell of Prospero…. He even anticipates Prospero's transformation from malice to pity and Prospero's musings on the ontological transience of the role-players around him—a topic at least as relevant to Jonson's vindication of his dramatic strategy as it is to Prospero's (or Shakespeare's) farewell. (Watson 75)

The speech reads:

> *Macilente*. Why, here's a change! Now is my soule at peace.
> I am as emptie of all enuie now,
> As they of merit to be enuied at.
> My humour (like a flame) no longer lasts
> Then it hath stuffe to feed it, and their folly,
> Being now rak't vp in their repentant ashes,
> Affords no ampler subiect to my spleene.
> I am so farre from malicing their states,
> That I begin to pitty 'hem. It grieues me
> To thinke they haue a being. I could wish
> They might turne wise vpon it, and be sau'd now,
> So heauen were pleas'd: but let them vanish, vapors.
> Gentlemen, how like you it? has't not beene tedious?
> — Folio edition, 1616
> (the final line was added in the Folio version)

As Michael Marcus contends:

> Why would Jonson conclude a solemn speech, one that registers a personal metamorphosis, by aggressively modifying the tone and asking the listeners "Has't not been tedious?". My response would be that Jonson was suggesting that his source had been "tedious" ["tired," "exhausted," OED]. Jonson's comment: that's so tedious it deserves nothing better than to be rounded with a sleep. (Marcus, 2014a)

So Macilente spouts Oxford's poetry, is devastated by the caricature of Shakspere's success and according to at least one Orthodox professor, seems to "anticipate" Prospero's farewell. Yet this may not be the only allusion to *The Tempest* in *Every Man Out*. As noted previously, scholars have found an

allusion to *Hamlet* in the following speech, although the ending may allude to *The Tempest* as well:

> *Fastidius*: O, the most Celestial, and full of wonder and delight, that can be imagin'd, Signior, beyond all thought and apprehension of pleasure! A Man lives there, in that divine Rapture, that he will think himself i' the Ninth Heaven for the time, and lose all sense of Mortality whatsoever, when he shall behold such Glorious (and almost Immortal) Beauties, hear such Angelical and Harmonious Voices, discourse with such flowing and Ambrosian Spirits, whose Wits are as sudden as Lightning, and humorous as Nectar; Oh: it makes a Man all quintessence and flame, and lifts him up (in a Moment) to the very Crystal Crown of the Sky, where (hovering in the strength of his Imagination) **he shall behold all the Delights of the Hesperides, the Insulae Fortunae, Adonis Gardens, Tempe or what else (confin'd within the amplest verge of poesie) to be meer Umbrae**, and imperfect Figures, confer'd with the most essential felicity of your Court. (emphases added)
>
> *Macilente*: Well, this Encomion was not extemporal, it came too perfectly off.

Macilente's observation that it was "not extemporal," that is, it must have been carefully conceived, invites us to look more closely.

Michael Marcus contends that it looks like "Jonson's burlesque version of Gonzalo's daydream" (Marcus, 2013), which includes:

> Nature should bring forth,
> Of its own kind, all foison, all abundance,
> To feed my innocent people. (2.1.158–160)

Marcus notes

- Delights of the Hesperides: in *The Tempest*, Sebastian on Gonzalo, who fantasizes optimistically over a productive, "green grass" island. "I think he will carry this island home in his pocket, and give it his son for an apple" (4.3). The Hesperides were the Apple-Garden, with golden apples protected by a dragon. (In Shakespeare, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the Hesperides had become the name of a place, and not the Nymphs they had been classically).
- Insulae Fortunae: The Fortunate Isles, sometimes applied to the Canary Islands, sometimes to the West Indies, later to the British Isles by Jonson himself. In *The Tempest*, old Gonzalo indulges in wishful thinking about a paradisiacal island, which he then dismisses as "merry fooling." In Erasmus' "The Praise of Folly," the humanist

> author locates the birthplace of Folly [foolishness] as the Fortunate Isles. Erasmus contrasts the flora that would grow in the Insulae Fortunae—'Glowflowers, Roses, Lilies, Basil and Violets'—with the destructive growths he calls "baggage": 'Nettles, Thistles, Mallows, Brambles, Cockle.' In the argument between Gonzalo and his disputants, Antonio and Sebastian, three plants are mentioned—nettles, docks and mallows—two of which occurred in *Praise of Folly*. Mallow occurs nowhere else in Shakespeare. In this context, the tone of both Gonzalo in *The Tempest* and *Praise of Folly* are strikingly similar.

Supplying an example of a comparable mythic location where such lush and unimpaired fertility could take place, Erasmus wrote of sweet-smelling herbs, as whilhom [once] grew in Adonis' Gardens…which leads without skipping a beat to:

- Adonis' Gardens: another example of prodigious fecundity.
- Which leaves Tempe. That was the name a beautiful vale in Thessaly celebrated by classical pastoral poets… another example of luxuriance. But there is more, particularly the similarity between the words Tempe and *Tempest* (Marcus 2013).

Marcus then puts forward a decipherment of the type of word game that was a common technique in esoteric writing to circumvent the censors. In *The Scourge Of Villainy*, published the year before in 1598, John Marston mentions his favourite author who is not getting the praise he deserves and whose name is hidden: he uses the description "whose silent name one letter bounds," which "**E**dward De Ver**e**" fits.

Marcus points out that Jonson seems to be using a similar rhetorical device. In the sentence

> "Tempe or what else (confin'd within the amplest verge of poesie)"
> "Confin'd" means "bounded," which may recall John Marston's work of the previous year.
> Bounded within "ample**st** verge" is "st," which when added to Tempe makes "Tempest." "The 'st' constitutes the 'what else'" (Marcus 2013).

1600—Ayrer's *Comedia von der schönen Sidea—The Beautiful Sidea* (Published in 1618)

Jakob Ayrer's 1600 *Comedia von der Schonen Sidea*, or *Comedy from the beautiful Sidea*, was named after a town in Italy. Usually dated to 1600, it was published posthumously in 1618, Ayrer having died in 1605.

Although this work is not well known, the scholars who have studied it have all noted the numerous similarities to *The Tempest*. In *The Reader's Encyclopedia*

of Shakespeare of 1964, Oscar Campbell and Edward Quinn state *The Beautiful Sidea* "reveals many similarities to *The Tempest*, for which no source has been found" (Campbell & Quinn 51, quoted in Stritmatter & Kositsky 101).

Stritmatter and Kositsky write that the

> arrangement as well as the single scenes and passages in both pieces display a most unmistakable resemblance…. In both pieces then we have two hostile princes, of whom the one…practices the arts of magic to get the son of the other into his power, in both pieces this prince has a spirit in his service, through whose power the enemy's arms are rendered innocuous, and lastly, in both pieces an attachment is formed between the only daughter of the one prince, and the captive son of the other, which is eventually the means of bringing about reconciliation between the two hostile families. Both pieces are based on the idea of a retributory justice…. In one piece as in the other, the captive son of the prince is obliged to pile up logs of wood, and in both pieces this scene leads to the attachment of the lovers (Stritmatter and Kositsky 2013, 102).

Ayrer was a literary journeyman who wrote over 100 plays, many of which incorporated elements from Elizabethan plays from English actors who traveled and performed in Germany around the turn of the 17th century, which has been well documented by Albert Cohn (1865). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* entry for Ayrer states that:

> he came under the influence of the so-called *Englische Komödianten*, that is, troupes of English actors, who, at the close of the 16th century and during the 17th, repeatedly visited the continent, bringing with them the repertory of the Elizabethan theatre. From those actors Ayrer learned how to enliven his dramas with sensational incidents and spectacular effects, and from them he borrowed the character of the clown. His plays, however…are inferior to the latter in poetic qualities. (Chisholm 1911)

In particular, his *Von zweien Brüdern aus Syragusa*, or "Two Brothers from Syracuse," derives its plot from Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*.

Given Ayrer was a hack who took other's ideas—including Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*—and produced no other work of great quality, while no scholar has ever proposed Shakespeare knew of, let alone was influenced by any of Ayrer's works, it would be quite remarkable for Ayrer to have written an original play that Shakespeare adapted. It would be far more likely that he too was borrowing from Shakespeare's play, which would have existed earlier than believed as Ayrer died in 1605 and *The Beautiful Sidea* is usually dated around 1600.

1602—*Blurt Master Constable* (Anonymous)

Allusions to Shakespearean plays abound in this comedy, published in 1602 (fig. 16). Henk Gras states the play "shows intertextual relations with *As You Like It*" (Gras 54). Another scholar writes

> The beginning of *Blurt* is strongly reminiscent of *Much Ado About Nothing* in the "battle of the sexes" banter that happens after the soldiers return from the war. Furthermore, one of the ladies in Blurt is named Hero, and Blurt finds a parallel in Dogberry. (Cleary 1)

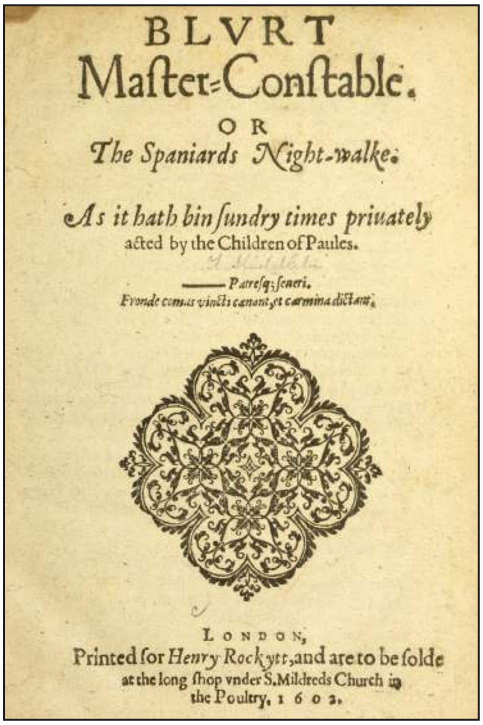

BLVRT
Maſter-Conſtable.
OR
The Spaniards Night-walke.
As it hath bin ſundry times priuately
acted by the Children of Paules.
—— Patreſq; ſeneri.
Fronde comas vincti cantant, et carmina dictant.
LONDON,
Printed for Henry Rockytt, and are to be ſolde
at the long ſhop vnder S. Mildreds Church in
the Poultry, 1602.

Figure 16: Blurt Master Constable *by Anonymous, 1602.*

The editors of the 1909 *Shakspere Allusion Book* pointed out that a *Blurt* character's line "Lady, bid him whose heart no sorrow feels Tickle the rushes with his wanton heels" evokes "Let wantons, light of heart, tickle the senseless rushes with their heels" from *Romeo and Juliet* (1.4). The editors found an allusion to *Macbeth* in the first highlighted passage below, but Michael Marcus also considers *The Tempest* to be alluded to in the second highlighted passage:

> *Camillo*: And when the lamb bleating doth bid **good night**
> **Unto the closing day**, then tears begin
> To keep quick time unto the owl, whose voice
> **Shrieks like the bellman** in the lover's ears.
> Love's eye the jewel of sleep, oh, seldom wears!...
> But say a golden slumber chance to tie
> With silken strings the cover of love's eye;
> **Then dreams, magician-like, mocking present**
> **Pleasures, whose fading leaves more discontent.**
> Have you these golden charms?
> [Enter Musicians:] Musicians: We have, my lord. (emphases added)

The first highlighted passage evokes "It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman which gives the stern'st good night" from *Macbeth*. Yet as Marcus observes, the concluding lines seem to evoke *The Tempest*, being a succinct summary of Prospero's "Revels" speech. He also points out that the use of

the word "charms" plays on the double meaning of "spell" and "music," as witnessed by both "magician-like" and the musicians entering to answer. Marcus notes Cambridge University Press editor David Lindley, who observes Shakespeare's predilection for this in *The Tempest*, such as at the conjured betrothal masque where "charm" is used both for the conjured masque and the harmony of the music (Marcus, 2014c).

Both plays, according to the Orthodox chronology, had yet to be written.

1603—Alexander's *The Tragedy of Darius*

Several scholars have noted that William Alexander, 1st Earl of Sterling's play *The Tragedie of Darius* (fig. 17), published in 1603, contains yet another allusion to Prospero's "Revels" speech:

> Let greatness of glassy scepters vaunt:
> Not scepters, no, but reeds, soon bruised, soon broken;
> And let this worldly pomp our wits enchant,
> All fades, and scarcely leaves behind a token.
> These golden palaces, those gorgeous halls,
> With furniture superfluously fair:
> Those stately courts, those sky-encountering walls
> Evanish all like vapours in the air.

The few orthodox scholars who have discussed this passage have had difficulty trying to explain the close similarities; none have suggested they resulted via coincidence. Was Shakespeare inspired by this passage? Confounding matters, as we have seen, others have already seemed to allude to it, which would indicate the opposite.

Alexander certainly seems to be imitating Shakespeare, as Stritmatter and Kositsky have

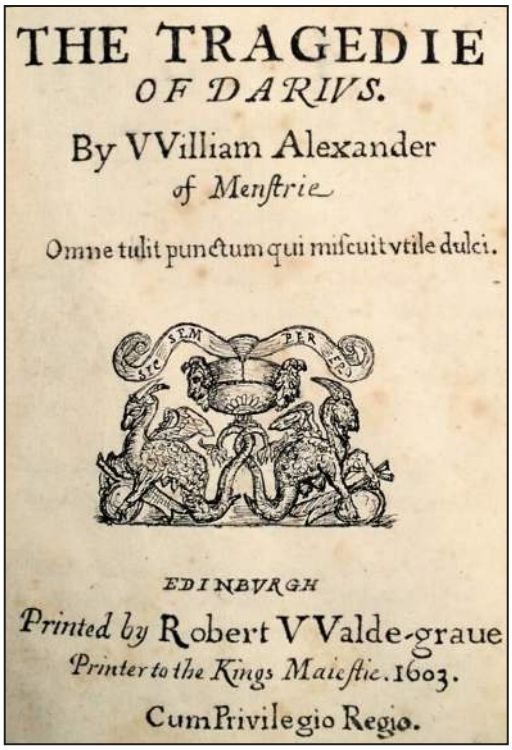

THE TRAGEDIE
OF DARIVS.
By VVilliam Alexander
of Menstrie
Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit vtile dulci.
EDINBVRGH
Printed by Robert VValde-graue
Printer to the Kings Maiestie. 1603.
Cum Privilegio Regio.

Figure 17: The Tragedy of Darius *by William Alexander, 1603.*

demonstrated, as the play contains allusions to other Shakespearean works, such as *Hamlet*:

> *Darius.* And when th' eclipse comes of our glories light
> Then what avails this glory of our name:
> A mere illusion made to mock the sight,
> Whose best was but the shadow of a dream.

From *Hamlet*:

> *Rosencrantz.* Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.
> *Hamlet.* A dream itself is but a shadow.
> *Rosencrantz.* Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow...

Yet no scholar has ever put forward evidence that Shakespeare was influenced by the works of Stirling.

1605—Chapman, Jonson and Marston's *Eastward Ho!*

Eastward Ho! (fig. 18) is a veritable compendium of allusions to at least eight Shakespeare plays, with no less than five to *Hamlet* alone. The play contains character names such as Touchstone, Hamlet and Gertrude, the name of Hamlet's mother. Yet the play also seems to contain allusions to *The Tempest*, whose plot is parodied several times throughout the play:

> The parallels between *Eastward Ho!* and *The Tempest* begin right away with the shipwreck and associated puns on drinking and drowning: Antonio asserts that the boatswain is drunk, and this is followed up by

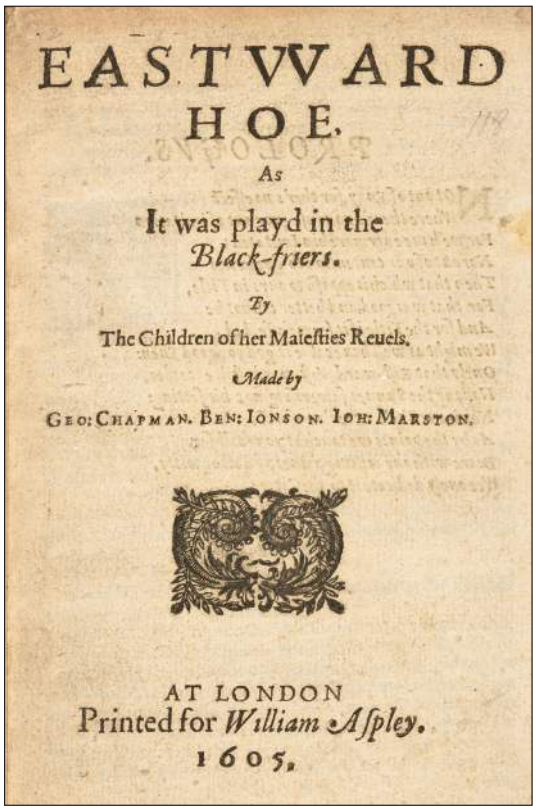

EASTWARD
HOE.
As
It was playd in the
Black-friers.
By
The Children of her Maiesties Reuels.
Made by
GEO: CHAPMAN. BEN: IONSON. IOH: MARSTON.
AT LONDON
Printed for *William Aspley.*
1605.

Figure 18: Eastward Ho! *by George Chapman, Ben Jonson and John Marston, 1605.*

> the arrival ashore of Trinculo and Stephano with his bottle. As a parallel to *Eastward Ho!'s* goldsmith, Touchstone, we have Prospero the magus. (Gibbons 151)

As Stritmatter and Kositsky perceptively note:

> Eastward Ho's well-established reputation as a work that parodies a number of Elizabethan plays, the vast majority of them by Shakespeare, must be considered when evaluating the most plausible direction of influence. (Stritmatter and Kositsky 2013, 108)

Travis Summersgill, in his article "Structural Parallels in Eastward Ho and the Tempest" details the multiple similarities between the two, writing:

> Numerous points of similarity between it and *The Tempest* have been generally ignored. For, regardless of fundamental differences between the two plays, there are numerous and extensive similarities. Each play depends upon the same basic plot device: a tempest interferes with the plans of a group of sinners by causing a shipwreck, and gives them time to repent as well as an immediate motive for repentance. (Summersgill 24)

Summersgill then gives many examples over several pages between the two.

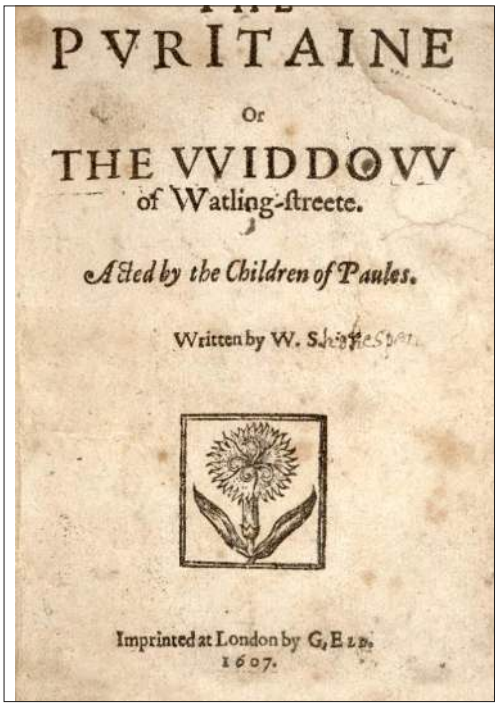
Stritmatter and Kositsky also find yet another possible allusion to Prospero's Revels speech in the play's conclusion:

> The cloud-capp'd tow'rs, the gorgeous palaces,
> The **solemn** temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, **shall dissolve**,
> And, like this **insubstantial pageant faded**,
> Leave not a rack behind.
> Farewell cheapside; farewell sweet trade
> Of Goldsmiths all, **that never shall fade**…
> See, if the streets and the fronts of the houses be not stuck with people, and the windows fill'd with ladies, as on the **solemn day of the pageant**! —
> Oh, may you find in this **our pageant** here,
> The same contentment which you came to seek;
> And, **as that show** but draws you once a year,
> May this attract you hither once a week.
> (Stritmatter & Kositsky 2014, 111)
> (emphases added)

1607—Anonymous ('W.S'), *The Puritan*, or the *Widow of Watling Street*

Published under the initials W.S. in 1607 but generally considered anonymous, *The Puritan* (fig. 19) is another raucous comedy in the style of *Eastward Ho*. In one scene we hear

> **spread your circle upon the ground**, with a little **conjuring ceremony** (as I'll have an **hackney-man**'s wand sil**ver**ed o'er o'purpose for you) then **arriving in the circle with a huge word** and a great trample, as, for instance, have you never seen a stalking, stamping, player that will **raise a tempest**, with his tongue and thunder with his heels? (emphases added)


PVRITAINE

Or

THE VVIDDOVV

of Watling-ſtreete.

Acted by the Children of Paules.

Written by W. Shakeſpeare.

Imprinted at London by G. E. for, 1607.

Figure 19: The Puritan, *or the* Widow of Watling Street *by W.S. (Anonymous), 1607.*

This seems a transparent allusion to Act V, scene 1 of *The Tempest*, in which Prospero says, "When first I raised the tempest," then draws a circle on the floor and charms the companions to enter the circle and delivers a rousing speech taken from Ovid. The stage direction states "They all enter the circle which Prospero had made, and there stand charm'd."

Who is the "Hackney man" with "sil**ver**ed wand?" Is he the same hackney man that Robert Armin alluded to in his pamphlet *Quips upon Questions*, writing "On Tuesday I take my Journey (to waite on the right Honorable good Lord my Maister whom I serve) to Hackney." James Bednarz wrote:

> since the earl of Oxford, who had strong ties with his son-in-law, the earl of Derby, had a house at King's Hold in Hackney, near the Curtain, and since both aristocrats wrote comedies and were interested in sponsoring theatrical productions, Armin was still probably serving one of these lords at the time. (Bednarz 267)

The word "sil**ver**ed" seems to add weight that Oxford was the person in question as it echoes John Soowthern's line in Pandora that "De ver merits a sylver pen…," which was evidently describing Oxford.

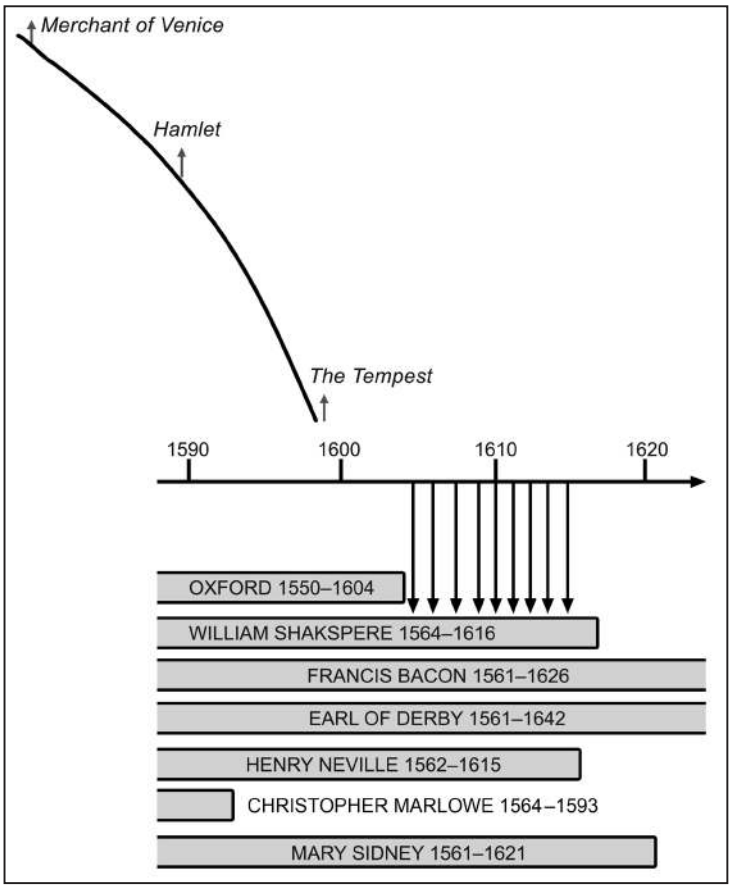
Conclusions

Orthodox experts have failed to address both the huge number of veiled allusions to Shakespeare hinting at scandalous behaviour and the satirization of the plays before they were allegedly written, with allusions to these plays often also alluding to the Earl of Oxford. Examples have been provided by Chiljan and Penny McCarthy for all the plays in the First Folio. When considering this evidence, one is reminded of historian Hugh Trevor-Roper, who wrote:

> I believe that the proper course is to return to square one and examine the problem *ab initio*, without any preconceptions. (Trevor-Roper 1981)

Analyzing the chronology of Shakespeare's plays *ab initio* will hopefully provide a much more robust and objective chronology than the flawed one currently accepted on dubious evidence.

Taken together with the findings of "When Did Shakespeare Die?", which showed a steady stream of allusions to Shakespeare being dead from late 1604 onwards, Oxford's death in June 1604, far from being detrimental to his candidacy for the works of Shakespeare, is a very strong piece of evidence in favor of it (fig. 20).



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