

Literary Rivalry: Oxford's Response to Sidney's Defence of Poesie

by Kevin Gilvary

The longstanding rivalry between Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586) and Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604), runs deeper than many scholars of early modern literature have hitherto considered. Firstly, as suitors for Anne Cecil: a betrothal between Philip and Anne was arranged in 1569–70, but William Cecil managed to secure the Earl of Oxford as his son-in-law. Secondly, both were renowned poets and their poems circulated in manuscript. Thirdly, there was the infamous public quarrel at the tennis-court in 1579, which resulted in Sidney's dismissal from court. Less well known is the Oxfordian contention that Sidney was parodied in the plays of Shakespeare as Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*, as Slender in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and as the Dauphin in *Henry V*.

In this essay, I wish to show that the rivalry went even further. Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* (or *Apologie for Poetry*, composed in the early 1580s) was a work of profound literary criticism, the earliest such work in English. This work, however, includes a petty diatribe on contemporary theatrical practices. These must be aimed mainly at Oxford's plays, which had been performed at court from 1576 onward. Sidney's criticism clearly relates to many of Shakespeare's plays which emphatically follow different precepts. While Sidney's analysis of poetry has been very influential, his complaints about the theatre have been ignored. The standard narratives, casting Sidney as the heroic figure, soldier and courtier and poet, with Oxford as the spendthrift, eccentric, inferior poet, need a far more nuanced treatment.

Life of Sidney

The competition between these two courtier-poets probably began in their formative years, when both were resident at Cecil House. Born in November 1554, Philip was four years younger than Edward. For much of his childhood, Philip's father, Sir Henry Sidney, was absent from court, serving as Lord Deputy Governor of Ireland and as President of the Marches, based at Ludlow Castle. Philip's mother Mary (née Dudley), eldest daughter of the Duke of Northumberland, was one of the Queen's closest confidantes. Philip's board and education was entrusted to Sir William Cecil at Cecil House. There he enjoyed the same Renaissance education as



Portrait of Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586), based on a work of c. 1576, in the National Portrait Gallery. Wikimedia.

some of the Queen's wards, most notably Edward de Vere (Hurstfield 1958: 119–120). It is intriguing to consider how much time Philip and the older Edward de Vere spent together in Cecil House. They probably shared tutors and classes in Latin, Greek, French, penmanship, fencing and dancing. It may be during this period that Oxford composed a poem, *Were I a King*, which was answered by Sidney's *Wert thou a king*. For short periods Philip attended Shrewsbury School (about thirty miles north of Ludlow, where his father was based for a while), Christ Church Oxford, and Gray's Inn (where Oxford was already a student).

Early in 1569, Sir Henry Sidney wrote to Cecil suggesting a betrothal between his son Philip and Sir William's 12-year-old daughter Anne. Cecil's reply of 2 February showed him reluctant to consider the match. Cecil noted

Kevin Gilvary obtained his BA and MA in Classics from the University of Southampton and then taught English for over 30 years in Great Britain and abroad. He later obtained his PhD in English Literature from Brunel University. He is editor of *Dating Shakespeare's Plays* (Portsea Press, 2022) and author of *The Fictional Lives of Shakespeare* (Routledge, 2017).

in his journal Sidney's likely income as well as his daughter's likely dowry. Sir Henry pressed further and with the intervention of Philip's uncle, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester, Cecil agreed a financial settlement if Philip and Anne "shall like to marry." However, Sir Henry was found to be impoverished and unlikely to meet his commitments to his son's maintenance (Baughan 1938). As Master of the Court of Wards and Liveries, Cecil had the right to arrange marriages for the Queen's wards. While he himself was still a knight, he could not arrange for his daughter Anne to marry into the nobility, but Cecil's status changed when the Queen raised him to the peerage in February 1571 as Baron Burghley. The understanding with Sir Henry was immediately forgotten: Anne was married to Oxford in December 1571 and Burghley now rejoiced in his daughter's title, Countess of Oxford. Whatever the feelings of those involved—and Sidney seems to have shown little affection for Anne herself—it must have been "intensely galling [for Sidney] to see Oxford's wealth and rank preferred to his own talent and promise" (Duncan-Jones, 1991, 52). Sidney did not marry until September 1583, when he was 29 years old.

The rivalry between Sidney and de Vere continued into the early 1570s when Sidney was allowed to travel on the Continent while Oxford was forced to remain in England against his wishes for a few years. In 1572, Sidney joined a delegation to France where he witnessed the massacre on St. Bartholomew's Day. Leaving Paris, he traveled on the continent for over two and a half years, mainly in Germany and territories of the Emperor. His travels and correspondence have been reconstructed in detail by Osborn (1972). This now left Oxford to rue his own lack of travel opportunities. In 1574, Oxford suddenly left for Flanders without permission but was summoned back to England. Eventually, Oxford left for France in January 1575, four months before Sidney returned from his own grand tour. Thus, Sidney was at court, unmarried, and moving in the same aristocratic circles as his former betrothed, Anne Countess of Oxford, who was soon to be a mother in July 1575.

Oxford returned to England in April 1576 and began to forge a reputation as a fine dramatist, writing plays for performance at court and running his own companies of actors, adults and boys, as well as musicians. Sidney was also a known poet at court for much of this period, but of less standing. In 1578, Sidney attended the Queen on her progress through East Anglia. At Wanstead Manor in Essex, one of Leicester's homes, he composed a masque called *The Lady of May*, his first known literary work, which was published posthumously in 1598. Sidney chose the dramatic form of a masque, an allegorical performance in which one situation was to be understood to stand for another. In this masque, an "honest mans wife of the countrey, where crying out for iustice, and desiring all the Lords and Gentlemen to speake a good word for her, she was brought to the presence of her Maiestie to whom

upon her knees she offered a supplication." She begs the Queen to help her daughter, the Lady of May, to choose between rival suitors. The venture was a thinly veiled invitation to Queen Elizabeth to choose Sidney's uncle Leicester in marriage. Perhaps Sidney was also presenting himself as a courtier, ready for further royal service.

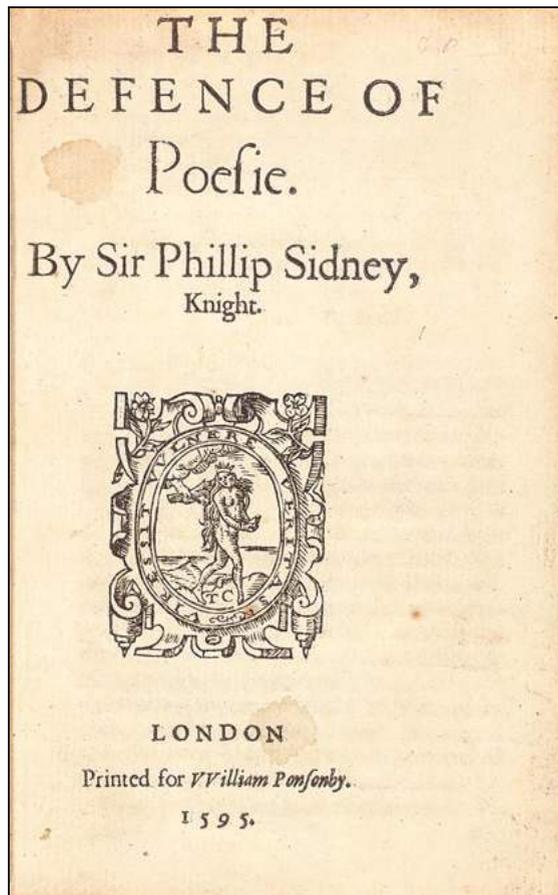
Their rivalry sharpened in their famous quarrel on the tennis court at Greenwich in 1579. Thus the dispute was probably the result of a simmering difference between two parties. There were insults, threats and accusations, with offers and denials, of duels. The Queen intervened and ordered Sidney to withdraw from Court. The main account of this quarrel was written over thirty years later by Fulke Greville around 1612 and first appeared in print in 1652 as *The Life of the Renowned Sir Philip Sidney*. The quarrel took place in front of a French delegation who were there to promote the marriage of the Duc d'Alençon with the Queen. Sidney was firmly on the side of Leicester and against the marriage. His open *Letter to Queen Elizabeth* "dissuading her from marrying the duke of Anjou" was an astonishing and presumptuous attempt to advise the monarch directly.

It may have been at this time that Oxford wrote a poem treating tennis as a metaphor (Chiljan *Poem 26*; Stritmatter *Poem 13*, 95–97):

Whenas the heart at tennis plays, and men to gaming fall,
Love is the court, hope is the house, and favour serves the ball.
The ball itself is true desert; the line, which measure shows,
Is reason, whereon judgment looks how players win or lose.
The jetty is deceitful guile; the stopper, jealousy,
Which hath Sir Argus' hundred eyes wherewith to watch and pry.
The fault, wherewith fifteen is lost, is want of wit and sense,
And he that brings the racket in is double diligence.
And lo, the racket is freewill, which makes the ball rebound;
And noble beauty is the chase, of every game the ground.
But rashness strikes the ball awry, and where is oversight?
"A bandy ho,"; the people cry, and so the ball takes flight.
Now, in the end, good-liking proves content the game and gain.
Thus, in a tennis, knit I love, a pleasure mixed with pain.

Each of the fourteen lines consists of fourteen syllables, fourteeners (which might be termed iambic septameter), a meter that had been used by Arthur Golding in his translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1567). This measure is very difficult to compose and relies on the inner sequence of a tetrameter followed by a trimeter. The poem might have been a song originally.

In 1579–82, Sidney spent much time at Wilton House with his sister Mary, Countess of Pembroke, where he devoted himself to writing. Over these years, he is thought to have completed the prose romance known as the



Title page of 'The Defence of Poesie', 1595, by Sir Phillip Sidney; published by William Ponsonby.

Knight of the Garter on behalf of Prince Casimir of the Palatinate. Soon afterwards he was appointed to help his uncle Ambrose, Earl of Warwick, who as Master of Ordinance was involved in preparing the defense of England against the likely Spanish invasion. That year, despite the proposals of marriage on behalf of two foreign princesses, Philip married Frances Walsingham, daughter of Elizabeth's Secretary of State. By this time, he had accrued debts of £1,500, which were paid off. The couple resided at Barn Elms, at Barnes on the River Thames between the palaces of Richmond and Whitehall. After the birth of a daughter, Elizabeth, Sidney headed off to the Netherlands, where he was seen by some as a potential ruler of the Netherlands. At the Battle of Zutphen, he proudly disdained to wear full armour and was shot by a musket in the unprotected thigh. Aged 31, he died of his wound at Arnhem in 1586. He was £6,000 further in debt (Woudhuysen 2004). Had he lived another two years, he would have inherited the earldom of Leicester; two years after that, he would have also inherited the earldom of Warwick. His body was placed in a lead coffin and brought back

Old Arcadia, the treatise *The Defence of Poesie* (also known as the *Apology for Poetry*), and the sonnet-sequence *Astrophel and Stella*. The exact sequence and timing of these works is unknown, partly because these works were not published until after his death and partly because of his own spirit of the Renaissance concept of *sprezzatura*.

Sidney resumed his life as a courtier. In January 1581, both Oxford and Sidney took part in a splendid tournament at Westminster in which Philip Howard delivered a challenge as Callophissus. Oxford appeared as the Knight of the Tree of the Sun, answering the challenge, and Sidney probably as the Blue Knight supporting the challenge (Nelson 2003, 261–265).

In 1583, Sidney's standing was enhanced when he was knighted so as to receive the

to England for an eventual funeral in 1587. Sidney's literary works only began to appear in print in 1590, four years after his death. Sidney's life had been guided by *sprezzatura*, a principle instilled in him at Cecil House while under the tutelage of Sir William Cecil, in line with *Il Cortegiano* by Castiglione.

Sprezzatura

Il libro del Cortegiano (*The Book of the Courtier*) exercised great influence over the behavior of courtiers across Europe. Its author, Baldassare Castiglione (1478–1529), was a writer, diplomat and soldier, who attended various dukes, bishops, and popes. The central character, Duke Federico of Urbino, set the standards of a Renaissance by requiring courtiers to be as proficient in the fine arts as much as in military prowess. *Il Cortegiano* presents a discussion of the ideal qualities of courtiers: courage, skills in weaponry, and military prowess; wit, magnanimity, humanity, and knowledge of classical literature and poetry. Book I deals with the outward appearance and qualities of the courtier, Book II with ways of ingratiating oneself with the prince, Book III with the conduct becoming ladies' courtiers and Book IV with spiritual love. This work was published in Italian in 1528 and published in 1561 in an English translation by the diplomat Sir Thomas Hoby (1530–1566). Hoby had traveled extensively in Italy and upon his return to England was visited at Bisham Abbey, the family home by Sir William Cecil in 1557. Hoby spent the following summer with Cecil at Burghley House near Stamford and married Katharine Cooke, a younger sister of Cecil's wife Mildred. (Hoby 1902: 126–27). A copy of an Italian edition of *Il Cortegiano* was in Cecil's library (Jolly and O'Brien 2004: 29). It is very likely that Hoby completed his translation at this time, perhaps with the help of the Cooke sisters who were renowned for their learning. It is also likely Cecil promoted its publication, especially as the printer, William Seres, was a servant of Cecil (Partridge 2009). In his address to the reader in the 1561 edition, Seres makes it clear that the translation had been circulating in manuscript:

NOWE at the length (gentle reader) through the diligence of Maister Hoby in penninge, and mine in printing, thou hast here set forth unto thee, the booke of the Courtier: which for thy benefite had bene done longe since, but that there were certain places in it whiche of late yeares beeing misliked of some, that had the perusing of it (with what reason judge thou) the Authour thought it much better to keepe it in darknes a while, then to put it in light unperfect and in peecemeale to serve the time.

Hoby's translation was frequently reprinted, e.g., in 1577, 1588 and 1603. *Il Cortegiano* was translated into Latin by Bartholomew Clerke in 1571 and published by John Day in London as *De Curiali*. The Latin translation, which aroused interest across Europe, was reissued in 1577, 1585, 1593, and 1603.

To ensure a Renaissance education in his charges, *The Courtier* was required study at Cecil House. Cecil himself was guided by the principles of *Il Cortegiano* as a monarchist, serving the commonwealth through a deferential personal relationship with Elizabeth, advising her how to rule wisely. As in *Il Cortegiano* public service was identified with personal service to a particular monarch. Cecil's social graces were celebrated by his secretary, Michael Hicke: "Here have you, Christian reader, the description of a perfect, wise, grave and great councillor" (Hicke 1990, 146). Table manners and dinner parties were a central concern of *Il Cortegiano*. Roger Ascham's *Scholemaster* (1570) opens with a description of a supper party hosted by William Cecil for the Queen and her notable Councillors. Similarly, Cecil's famous precepts "for the well ordering and carriage of a man's life, through the whole course thereof" show considerable influence directly from Castiglione and indirectly through Ascham (Vincent 1968, 100–101).

One important principle for Castiglione concerned *sprezzatura* so that courtiers:

eschew as much as a man may, and as a sharp and dangerous rock, Affectation or curiosity and (to speak a new word) to use in every thyng a certain Recklessness [*sprezzatura*], to cover art withall, and seeme whatsoever he doth and sayeth to do it wythout pain, and (as it were) not myndyng it. And of thys do I beleve grace is muche deryved, for in rare matters and wel brought to passe every man knoweth the hardnes of them, so that a redines therin maketh great wonder. (*The Courtier*, Book I, trans. Hoby).

The word *sprezzatura* seems to have been coined by Castiglione. It consists of "a kind of grace with a special essence: the ability to conceal art." The notion was considered by Aristotle and Cicero, and has influenced a number of fields, especially poetry and rhetoric (D'Angelo 2018). Both Oxford and Sidney were imbued with the spirit of *sprezzatura*, usually refusing to allow the publication of their poetic words under their own name (Detobel 2009). Edward de Vere also expressed his admiration for the idealized courtier. He wrote a polished dedication in Latin to Bartholomew Clerke's Latin translation of *The Courtier* in 1571, in which he asks:

Quid enim difficilius quisq(uam), quid praeclarius, quid magnificentius in se suscipit, q(uam) artifex ille Castilio, qui eam aulici formam effigiemq(ue) expressit, cui nihil addi possit, in quo nihil redundet, quem summum hominem & perfectissimu(m) iudicemus?

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 a highest and most perfect type of man?

There is the possibility that Oxford had a hand in the translation. Clerke was known as a diplomat and a lawyer but was not otherwise associated with translation. Due to *sprezzatura* a nobleman such as Oxford could never stoop to seeing his name in print. The concept *sprezzatura* was also very important for Sidney, who dismissed his prose romance *Arcadia* as "idle work" for "idle times." According to a modern editor, Richard Dutton:

Here as elsewhere, Sidney is invoking the sprezzatura tradition of authorship espoused by most Renaissance courtiers, playing down the craftsmanship, scholarship and seriousness of anything written by a gentleman. The same tradition frowns on publication, preferring select distribution in manuscript among a judging few to the vulgar professionalism of print. (Dutton 1987, 14–15).

Like other courtiers, Sidney did not write to gain patronage or public applause, but to entertain his friends and family, and to raise his own standing at court.

There were many other comparisons between Castiglione's ideal courtier and Oxford and Sidney. Oxford's courtly conduct was publicized by Gabriel Harvey in *Gratulationum Valdinensium* (1578). Harvey praised Oxford as an author in extravagant terms, saying that his literary works showed fluency and gravitas: indeed, Oxford was a model courtier ("ipso mage Castilione Aulica, compta magis"), that Oxford was more courtly than Castiglione himself, more polished (Harvey 1578, IV, sig. 3r. cf. Nelson 2003, 181). In the same book, Harvey also compliments Sidney as an ideal courtier. Sidney received similar praise, posthumously, from Thomas Nashe in the dedication to *The Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589). Nashe mentions a discussion "with manie extraordinary Gentlemen...touching the seuerall qualities required in Castalions Courtier." While *Il Cortegiano* presented an ideal, it was agreed "that England afforded many mediocrities, but neuer saw any thing more singular then worthy Sir Phillip Sidney" (Nashe 1589; McKerrow 1904, 7). The clinching factor for Nashe's view of Sidney as the ideal courtier was the martial prowess displayed in the glorious but ultimately fatal conduct at Zutphen.

The Courtier in the works of Shakespeare

The influence of *The Courtier* is readily apparent in the plays of Shakespeare, ranging from individual phrases, through sentiments, witty and informed dialogue, to the content and structure of entire plays. In *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (2.4.65–73), Proteus is described as an ideal gentleman in terms which clearly recall Castiglione (Bradbrook 1991). *Love's Labour's Lost* portrays a king and his courtiers interacting with a queen and her attendants in a manner strikingly similar to the structure of *The Courtier*. In particular, Berowne's wit is anticipated by Rosaline (2.1.64–76) which recalls extensive discussion in *The Courtier* where jesting is described as one of the highest forms of

entertainment, close to masking and dancing (Baldini 1997). Another play which also displays clever repartee is *Much Ado* (which is, of course, set in Italy). The sub-plot involving Benedick and Beatrice does not feature in the main source, Bandello's XXII *novella*, but loosely serves as a comic counterpoise to Hero's story. Like Pallavicino and Emilia, Benedick and Beatrice are detached from the other persons in the drama, are vividly portrayed. Their "merry war" closely resembles the verbal sparring between Pallavicino and Emilia Pia throughout *The Courtier* (Scott 1901). In addition, it has been argued that Benedick is the ideal courtier both for his martial prowess and for his courtly conduct (Collington 2006).

In *Julius Caesar*, Cassius bitterly denounces the dictator: "Why, man, he doth bestride narrow world / Like a colossus" (1.2.134). The term "colossus," would appear to derive from *The Courtier*, where Ottaviano's indicts tyrants: "They are (in my judgement) like the Colosses that were made in Roome the last yeere upon the feast day of the place of Agone, whiche outwardlye declared a likeness of great men and horses of triumph, and inwardly were full of towe and ragges." Similarly, Ottaviano asserts that tyrants "thinke... to be counted (almost) Goddes," whilst Cassius declares "this man / Is now become a god" (Reynolds 1973). In *Macbeth*, the Porter refers to "a farmer, that / hang'd himself on the expectation of plenty" (2.3.4), which recalls a story that "M. Augustin Beuazzano toulde, that a couetous manne which woulde not sell his corne while it was at a highe price, when he sawe afterwarde it had a great falle, for desperacion he hanged himself" (Reynolds 1973).

At times, Hamlet is the embodiment of an ideal courtier. Ophelia tells us that the prince possesses all the qualities:

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

Hamlet 3.1.164–168.

He is the noblest figure at court, one on whom all others base their own behavior. In addition, his wit and somber dress sense conform to Castiglione's ideal (Henderson 1928, xiv–xv, introduction to Hoby 1561). Moreover, the play is full of advice (usually ignored) on courtly conduct. Polonius' advice to Laertes at 1.3.58–79, coincides with precepts throughout *The Courtier*. Both Polonius and Laertes lecture Ophelia on how to behave lady-like towards Hamlet. Claudius and Gertrude advise Hamlet to moderate his mourning. Hamlet instructs the players on how to deliver a speech. Hamlet chides Gertrude for her marriage to Claudius. Finally, we may note that the play within a play is called *The Murder of Gonzago*, based on actual events at Urbino. The Duke, Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino, had been assassinated by a relative, Luigi Gonzaga (Bullough 1973, 30–31).

In *Measure for Measure*, the Duke temporarily withdraws from public life, which reflects a prolonged discussion in *The Courtier* on the qualities of an ideal ruler, with special consideration on how to delegate authority: never credit nor trust any officer so much as to give him the bridle into his own hands. This, of course, is depicted in the Duke deputizing Angelo. A verbal trace might be detected in the term "Justice an undefiled virgin," which might well anticipate one aspect of the plot concerning Isabella (Gent 1972).

The Courtier was available from booksellers in Elizabethan London, but mainstream scholars have been puzzled as to why a dramatist from a provincial background apparently writing for a popular audience at the public playhouse should reflect the ideals of an Italian court. The answer is that the plays were written by a courtier who had been brought up in high society and who had himself studied the work of Castiglione. Edward de Vere was first identified as the author of the works of Shakespeare by Thomas Looney in 1920, and the case has greatly expanded ever since. Taking Oxford as the author of the plays throws considerable light on the portrayals of courtiers in the works. It also illuminates the poetic rivalry between Oxford and Sidney.

Poetic Rivalry

The following exchange of epigrams between Oxford and Sidney appears to be an educational exercise and an indication of an early rivalry. Oxford's six-line epigram in iambic pentameter with alternating rhyme and a rhyming couplet in the stanzaic form *ababcc*. (Printed by Grosart 1872).

WERE I a king I could command content.
Were I obscure, unknown should be my cares.
And were I dead, no thoughts should me torment,
Nor words, nor wrongs, nor loves, nor hopes, nor fears.
A doubtful choice, of three things one to crave,
A kingdom, or a cottage, or a grave.

Oxford's poem was printed anonymously in John Munday's *Songs and Psalms* (1594; reprinted by Grosart 1872). In *The Poems of Edward de Vere* (2019, 109–110), editors Roger Stritmatter and Bryan Wildenthal cite many parallels in the theme, language and structure with works of "Shakespeare." Sidney's answer came in the same verse form:

Wert thou a King yet not command content,
Since empire none thy mind could yet suffice,
Wert thou obscure still cares would thee torment;
But wert thou dead, all care and sorrow dies;
An easy choice of these things which to crave,
No kingdom nor a cottage but a grave.

The closeness of the language and form suggests respect on the part of Sidney toward Oxford and a desire to surpass him.

In the late 1570s or early 1580s, Sidney composed a number of sonnets and songs that were published posthumously, first by Thomas Newman in 1591 under the title: *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella. Wherein the excellence of sweete poesie is concluded. To the end of which are added, sundry other rare sonnets of diuers noble men and gentlemen.* Another poet included in this volume was Edward de Vere. It seems that Newman copied these poems from manuscripts that were in circulation. Sidney's sonnet sequence apparently tells the story of Stella ("star"), beloved by Astrophel ("star lover" or "beloved of a star," a play on Sidney's name). The poet describes his passionate feelings for Stella, his struggles with conflicting emotions, and his decision to abandon her in favor of a life of public service. "Astrophel" is usually interpreted as a self-portrait by Sidney, while Stella has usually been identified as Penelope (née Devereux), Lady Rich (1563–1607).

However, this identification has not been confirmed from contemporary records. Furthermore, the same unanswered questions remain as with Shakespeare's sonnets: When were they written? Did the author place them in the accepted order? Were the poems confessional and about real people? Were they at least some kind of exercise? Various clues have been cited in favor of Sidney's confession of love for Lady Rich (Duncan-Jones 1991): they did not fall in love at first sight (sonnet 2); the poet regrets spurning his love and letting her marry elsewhere (33); she is musical (57); she is a fluent letter-writer (song iv). She is unhappily married to a man identified as 'rich' (sonnets 24 and 37). Oxfordians can point out that most of these could equally apply to Anne Cecil, which would be especially poignant in the years 1575–81, when the Oxfords were estranged. Indeed, one scholar has suggested that Sidney maintained a scandalous relationship with Anne while Oxford was abroad in 1575–76 (Nelson 2023).

It is possible to see in Shakespeare's sonnets Oxford's poetic responses to Sidney. For example, Stella, especially her eyes, are described in glowing terms in Sidney's Sonnet 7 (1–8)

When Nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes,
 In color black why wrapp'd she beams so bright?
 Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,
 Frame daintiest lustre, mix'd of shades and light?

Or did she else that sober hue devise,
 In object best to knit and strength our sight,
 Lest if no veil those brave gleams did disguise,
 They sun-like should more dazzle than delight?

Sidney expresses much the same idea in Sonnet 8 (8–11):

At length he [Cupid] perch'd himself in Stella's joyful face,
Whose fair skin, beamy eyes, like morning sun on snow,
Deceiv'd the quaking boy, who thought from so pure light
Effects of lively heat must needs in nature grow.

Again in Sonnet 9 (1–4), Sidney praises Stella's face:

Queen Vertue's court, some call Stella's face,
Prepar'd by Natures chiefest furniture,
Hath his front built of Alabaster pure;
Gold is the covering of that stately place

Shakespeare dismisses such extravagant praise in Sonnet 130:

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

Another example of their rivalry is depicted in Edmund Spenser's *The Shepherdes Calender*, published in 1579 (Greenblatt 2006). Section VIII applies to August and consists of a rhyming match between two poets. This poetic contest match draws on the classical poetry of Theocritus and Virgil. Two shepherds sing a song before a third shepherd who is too sad to judge, but sings his own poem of unrequited love.

Willie [Oxford]: Tell me, Perigot, what shall be the game,
Wherefore with mine thou dare thy music match?
Or been thy bagpipes run far out of frame?
Or hath the cramp thy joints benumbed with ache?

Perigot [Sidney]: Ah! Willie, when the heart is ill assayed,
How can bagpipe or joints be well a-apaid?

The exchange continues through a succession of stanzas and grows into a wild volley of contrapuntal rhyming, such as:

Perigot: It fell upon a holy eve,

Willie: Hey, ho, holiday!

Perigot: When holy fathers were wont to shrieve.

Willie: Now 'ginneth the roundelay!

Perigot: Sitting upon a hill so high,

Willie: Hey, ho, the high hill!

Perigot: The while my flock did feed thereby.

Willie: The while the shepherd self did spill!

This interchange portrays the current rivalry between the leaders of England's two literary factions: Willie is Oxford, head of the Euphuists, then aged 29 and Perigot is Philip Sidney, then aged 25 (Whittemore 2006, Reason 47).

Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* and Oxford's response

Apart from his own poetry and romances, Philip Sidney wrote an important work of literary criticism during his periods of rustication at Wilton House (c. 1579–82). It appeared in print posthumously in 1595 in two slightly different versions: *The Defence of Poesie* published by William Ponsonby and another version which was issued as *An Apologie for Poetrie* by the stationer Henry Olney. Mary Sidney used Ponsonby's version in the 1598 edition of her brother's works. In the *Defence of Poesie*, Sidney extols the virtues of literature which will lead the reader towards a better life, in line with the ideals of Castiglione. Sidney combines his moral arguments with discussion of technique, such as genre, meter and rhyme. Sidney includes prose romance as part of poesie. Sidney draws on a wide range of authors, especially Aristotle (Payne 1990).

Sidney's essay is wide-ranging and loosely organised, perhaps not fully revised for circulation. It stands against Puritan dogmatism, which questioned the social utility of literature. For Sidney, emotions such as pain, love, and delight are natural and should be treated in poetry so as to enhance our understanding of the human condition. He attempts to highlight that poetry is a craft, i.e., the art of imitation, but more importantly that poetry should serve a didactic function as a means of improving the mind and conduct of the reader. In this respect, he is following the views put forward in many, including *The Courtier*. Shakespeare scholars have often wondered whether Shakespeare knew the essay and how, if at all, he might have been influenced by Sidney's precepts. The *Defence of Poesie* inspired many passages in *Love's Labour's Lost*, according to H. R. Woudhuysen in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play (1998). An important study by Thaler (1947) sought to establish a strong connection firstly in verbal parallels, but mainly in structural similarities. He cites their descriptions of genre, their attitudes to poetasters, their dislike of pedantry, their preference for matter over art and creativeness over imitation. Most scholars have been skeptical of Thaler's argument that Shakespeare reflects the influence of the poet-critic Sidney (Bullough 1949). Indeed, from a biographical viewpoint, there is little opportunity for overlap. Sidney mixed with courtiers bred in the same intellectual and literary tradition as himself and died in 1586, when William of Stratford was just 22 and, as far as we know, he was living in Stratford with a young family. A dramatist such as Marlowe, born in 1564 and working for one of the major theatre companies such as the Admiral's Men or the Chamberlain's Men, is unlikely to have had the opportunity to read *The Defence* until it emerged in print in 1595, too late to be an influence on his style.

Within *The Defence* is a short section, amounting to 1,400 words, which might originally have been intended as a separate essay, perhaps entitled *An Attack on Drama*. Sidney was reacting contemptuously to contemporary theatre practices. The contrast between Sidney's incisive analysis of poetry and his petty railing against the theatre has only been acknowledged by Hardison (1972). Furthermore, Sidney's complaints can be seen as an attack—in an amazingly prescient manner—on the plays of Shakespeare. Sidney's standpoint seems to be personal invective, aimed at a rival rather than as informed criticism intent on establishing principles of drama. Sidney analyzes three strands: form, function and technique. His main criticisms of drama are as follows (paragraph numbers added):

1. Our tragedies and comedies (not without cause cried out against), observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful poetry, excepting *Gorboduc* (again, I say, of those that I have seen), which notwithstanding, as it is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca's style, and as full of notable morality, which it doth most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of poesy, yet in truth it is very defectious in the circumstances, which grieves me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time... [the doctrine of the unities], which is evident both by Aristotle's precept and common reason.
2. But if it be so in *Gorboduc*, how much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived? Now ye shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden.
3. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock... While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers [shields], and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched [battle] field?
4. Now, of time they are much more liberal, for ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love. After many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours' space: which, how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine, and art hath taught, and all ancient examples justified... Now in his parts, kinds, or species, as you list to term them, it is to be noted that some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds,—as tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragi-comical; some, in the like manner, have mingled prose and verse, as Sannazzaro and Boethius;

some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral; but that comes all to one in this question, for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful.

5. ...But besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion.
6. And the great fault, even in that point of laughter, and forbidden plainly by Aristotle, is that they stir laughter in sinful things, which are rather execrable than ridiculous; or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied than scorned. For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar or a beggarly clown, or, against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers because they speak not English so well as we do? what do we learn?

Sidney mentions only one text, *Gorboduc*, for which he reserves guarded praise. This play had been performed at court in 1561 (when Sidney was about six years old) and perhaps restaged later. It is likely that he knew the play from its publication in 1565. As for his other remarks, he seems to be describing and criticizing drama presented at court in the period after his return to England in 1575 (aged 20) until the time of his withdrawal from Court in 1579. The most important company to perform at court during this period was Leicester's. They had set up a permanent base at the Theatre in Shoreditch in 1576 and played an important part in his uncle's attempts to influence and control the court. Sidney had been adopted by Leicester as his heir so criticism of the dramatic techniques used by Leicester's Men would seem unlikely. Sidney's criticisms therefore must have been aimed at one of the other companies, the most important of which was Oxford's (Gurr 1992, 28–31). Yet it is difficult to dissociate Sidney's criticism from Shakespeare. Indeed, many of Sidney's complaints seem to be aimed directly at the plays of Shakespeare, as if they had already been performed, but, like his own works, were to remain unpublished for a long time. Let us look at his objections more closely.

In paragraph #1, Sidney makes two complaints: (a) that the dramas lack the gravity of Seneca. Sidney seems oblivious to the unremitting tedium of any play by Seneca. He is unaware that the considerable wit in a play such as *Hamlet* contrasts with the ultimate pathos of the tragedy. We might note also that Sidney could scarcely claim to be reaching the "height of Seneca's style" in the recently composed *Lady of May* (a light piece which had a serious motive), or in his sonnet sequence; (b) Sidney further complains that they fail to observe the unities of time and place, as prescribed in his opinion by Aristotle. As such, Sidney refuses to enter into the same imaginative engagement as was required when reading his own prose romance *Arcadia*. Perhaps

Sidney had read some comments by Castelvetro in 1570, but his insistence on the unities was not widely accepted. Sidney disagreed with the other main concerns of Castelvetro, who asserted that pleasure, not instruction is the purpose of poetry, and that the appropriate audience for poetry is the common people (Bongiorno, 1984). Whatever the case, Sidney contradicts himself on the need to conform to reality, having previously stated:

Only the poet, disdainful to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like.

Sidney's *Arcadia* popularized chivalric romance for aristocratic audiences to such an extent that some readers found it hard to separate the world of his fiction from real life (Woudhuysen 2004).

Sidney's complaint of unreality can be directed at almost the entire contents of the First Folio, where only two plays, *The Tempest* and *The Comedy of Errors*, follow the unities. In 34 other plays, Shakespeare soars over time and place. He even tells the spectators how to be an audience and interact mentally with the action on stage:

On your imaginary forces work.
Suppose within the girdle of these walls
Are now confined two mighty monarchies,
Whose high upreared and abutting fronts
The perilous narrow ocean parts asunder:
Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts;
Into a thousand parts divide on man,
And make imaginary puissance;
Think when we talk of horses, that you see them
Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth;
For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings,
Carry them here and there; jumping o'er times,
'Turning the accomplishment of many years
Into an hour-glass.

Prologue to *Henry V*, Act I

This passage is an instruction to transform a group of spectators into a theatrical audience. They are told to "suppose" and to "piece out" the actors' imperfections. They must convert talk into thought. Sidney was simply refusing to use his imagination when watching drama.

We should also note this passage appears in the Prologue to *Henry V* Act I, but its main points could equally apply to any play. In fact, it seems very odd

that such admonitions to the spectators were used as a prologue to *Henry V*, which has traditionally been dated as the final composition in the run of eight historical plays from *Richard II* to *Richard III*. Why instruct the audience now that they must rely on their imagination? Or that in an hour or two, the drama will present events that occurred over many years? Another odd element is that the plot of *Henry V* does *not* cover many years. It covers two comparatively short periods: August to October 1415, the English campaign to Agincourt; then the negotiations over Henry's marriage to Catherine of Valois, which took place in 1420. This passage in *Henry V* is an early answer to Sidney's criticism.

In paragraph (2), Sidney complains that a character has to inform the audience of their location. This is true of almost all plays in the First Folio. Shakespeare enjoyed his exotic locations and we hear a prologue utter "In fair Verona where we lay our scene" to the expositions of the Duke of Egeus at the outset of *The Comedy of Errors* or Prospero's reminiscences on an island in the Mediterranean in *The Tempest*. As to precise locations such as a garden, attempts at realistic scenery or props slow down the action. In Act 3, Sc. 4 of *Richard II*, the Queen enters with an attendant and asks: "What sport shall we devise here in this garden / To drive away the heavy thought of care?" The location is made clear in a very economic way. It is also significant as she will soon overhear the head gardener say:

Go thou, and like an executioner,
Cut off the heads of too fast growing sprays,
That look too lofty in our commonwealth:
All must be even in our government.
Richard II, 3.4.33–36

Shortly afterwards, the gardener spells out the comparison in detail:

O, what pity is it
That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land
As we this garden!
Richard II, 3.4.55–57.

There is no need to have a real garden to appreciate the extended image. Sidney's criticisms in the second paragraph seem churlish, especially as he sets the scene frequently in his *Arcadia*.

In paragraph (3), Sidney refuses to accept that part of the stage might represent a rock as the place where a shipwreck took place: both *Pericles* and *The Tempest* depict shipwrecks on stage. Sidney then dismisses the appearance of a few actors with swords to represent an army in battle: Shakespeare presents battles on stage throughout the English history plays as well as the Roman plays.

In paragraph (4), Sidney decries plays which depict the passing of generations from romance to marriage, childbirth and so on. His description exactly fits plays such as *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*.

In paragraph (5), Sidney complains about the mingling of dramatic genres when one play might depict both kings and clowns, when they are best treated separately in tragedies and comedies. In so doing, Sidney's comments seem to contradict his own earlier assertion in *The Defence* defending a writer such as Sannazzaro, who composed the pastoral romance *Arcadia* in prose and verse. Sidney dismisses tragicomedies as mongrel even though they were known in Greek drama, e.g., Euripides' *Alceste*. The term originates with the Roman comic playwright Plautus in the play *Amphitryon*. One of the characters, the god Mercury, twice refers to the play as a tragicomoedia. In Italian Renaissance drama, there was tragicomedy by Cinthio (1543) and Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, published in 1590.

Sidney seems to anticipate much of Shakespeare's oeuvre. To the combination of love and tragedy in the Knight's Tale of Chaucer, Shakespeare adds a strong element of pastoral in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Gilvary 2005). There are acknowledged tragicomedies such as *Cymbeline* and *Pericles*. History plays are frequently tragedies: *Richard II*, *Henry VI*, especially part 3; *Richard III* and even *King Lear* where the Gloucester subplot derives from Sidney's *Arcadia*. So-called happy comedies such as *Much Ado*, *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It* have serious concerns regarding banishment and threat of death; problem plays such as *All's Well* and *Measure for Measure* also raise serious issues, but can only be called comedies because the protagonists remain alive at the end of the action; poetic works on classical subjects are mainly serious but often combine love and tragedy, some with comic moments such as *Venus and Adonis*, *Antony & Cleopatra*, and *Troilus & Cressida*.

The most famous passage in Shakespeare about the mingling of genres is almost certainly a direct riposte to Sidney. Polonius welcomes the "best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individuable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men" (*Hamlet*, 2.2, 391–396).

In Paragraph (6), Sidney complains that drama sometimes mocks characters who do not speak English well. Sidney might well have been complaining about *Famous Victories of Henry V*, which Jiménez attributes as an early play by Oxford, dating to the late 1560s. Scene 13 consists of a conversation between three Frenchmen, two of whom mangle their English. In *Henry V* we witness a scene involving four captains from the four nations of what is now the United Kingdom. The Welshman, Fluellen, is especially satirized.

It is difficult to be precise as to which plays (and in which versions) had been performed before at Court in the late 1570s and perhaps early 1580s, but it is clear that Sidney, in his censure, reveals the exact techniques employed by Shakespeare. Oxford as Shakespeare responded by developing his own ideas of staging, ignoring the strictures of the Aristotelian precepts, to the great enjoyment of generations of theatergoers. Sidney's criticism of drama fails completely.

Sidney Satirized in Plays of Shakespeare

While Sidney's importance as a poet-critic is established, on a personal level, he was "bookish, arrogant, prickly, and often willing to take offence when none was intended, he struck some of his contemporaries as solemn, and aloof" (Woudhuysen 2004). As such, he was an obvious target for satire. It is likely that his carping complaints in *Defence* arose from his portrayal on stage in those plays enacted in the late 1570s at court, others later in his lifetime, and many more after 1586 when his reputation was greatly enhanced by his glorious (yet futile) death. Unflattering portraits of Sidney occur among many minor characters in the plays of Shakespeare. The most notable satire is Sir Andrew Aguecheek in *Twelfth Night*. Oxfordians note that the play was most likely composed in 1579 at the time of the Elizabeth's marriage negotiations with Alençon. The points of satire are numerous: the name "Aguecheek" refers unkindly to his pockmarked face. Sidney suffered a bout of smallpox that badly scarred his face in 1562, when his mother was also badly affected caring for Queen Elizabeth (Clark 1978, who details many other points of comparison). In addition, the love triangle of Orsino-Olivia-Viola (like that of Proteus-Silvia-Julia) mirrors a subplot in Sidney's *Arcadia*.

Sidney is also heavily mocked in *Famous Victories of Henry V*, which Jiménez argues was first written by Oxford in the late 1560s. There, five comic figures, including Sir John Oldcastle, mingle with Prince Hal, heir to the throne of England, in the opening scene alone. He notes that there are so many comic scenes in this play that it might be called "a comedy punctuated by historical relief." Later, in its revised forms of *1 & 2 Henry IV* we see Prince Hal and Falstaff comically interchanging the role of King of England (Jiménez 2018).

We might further note that the over-proud Dauphin in *Henry V* shares characteristics with Sidney, whose given name—Philip—originally means "horse-lover." Sidney imagines his horse as his mistress:

I on my horse, and Love on me, doth try
Our horsemanships, while by strange work I prove
A horseman to my horse, a horse to Love,
And now man's wrongs in me, poor beast, descry.
Astrophel and Stella Sonnet 49

In *Henry V*, on the night before Agincourt, the Dauphin praises his horse extravagantly:

What a long night is this! I will not change my
horse with any that treads but on four pasterns.
Ca, hal he bounds from the earth, as if his
entrails were hairs; le cheval volant, the Pegasus,
chez les narines de feu! When I bestride him, I
soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air; the earth
sings when he touches it; the basest horn of his
hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes.

Henry V, 3.4.11–18.

After some covert irony at the expense of the Dauphin on this topic, the Duke of Orleans states that “I have heard a sonnet begin so to one’s mistress.” The Dauphin eagerly replies: “Then did they imitate that which I composed to my courser, for my horse is my mistress.” Only an educated audience at court who knew Sidney personally and was acquainted with the *Astrophel and Stella* sonnet sequence would appreciate this interchange.

We have already noted that *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is imbued with the ideal of a courtier as well as combining elements from the different genres of love, romance and pastoral. We might also see Sidney as Proteus, who is described as an ideal gentleman, but turns out to have spurned his true love Julia and to betray his friend, the faithful lover Valentine. The final scene involves the apparent reconciliation of Proteus with Julia (Penelope Rich?), but the lady remains mute and we are left unaware of her intentions.

In *Othello*, Michael Cassio is another burlesque of Sidney: both were soldiers who learnt their trade from books; both were quick-tempered; both received serious wounds to the leg; both were associated with women loved by Othello/Oxford; Cassio was accused of seducing Desdemona, falsely as it turned out (Feldman 1954). In *Cymbeline*, Oxford portrayed himself heroically as Posthumous, the orphaned hero deprived of his birthright to inherit and of his love, Imogen. The supplanter is the oafish Cloten. Jiménez notes how in Act I scene ii, Cloten brags of his apparent win in a duel with Posthumous, while the lords in attendance converse in asides and ridicule Cloten. One of the lords exclaims “Puppies!” in clear allusion to Oxford’s insult on the tennis court at Greenwich (Jiménez 2018).

Another major lampoon of Sidney occurred when he was portrayed as Slender, the comic suitor of Anne Page in *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Both are tedious in speech, thin of stature, only slightly interested in women, with a dependence on an uncle to secure a favorable match. Slender’s failure to win the hand of Anne Page mirrors Sidney’s fruitless efforts with Anne Cecil. Oxford presents himself as the debonair and deserving Fenton and Robert

Dudley, Earl of Leicester, is portrayed as Slender's uncle, Robert Shallow. At this time Leicester was Constable of Windsor Castle. Hugh Evans, a comic character with a Welsh accent who prepares the children in the Fairy masque, represents Henry Evans, Oxford's theatre manager, who managed the Children of St. Paul's (Beauclerk 1994).

Sidney's frequent appearance in the plays has remained largely ignored by mainstream scholars, who fail to appreciate the identity of Oxford as the true author. Oxford had known Sidney almost all his life and was 36 years old when Sidney died. At this time, William, as a provincial from Stratford, would have no means of knowing Sidney's conduct or his outlook on life, nor would he have the motive to ridicule a national hero. As Beauclerk asks: how could he [William] have hoped to have effected such a satirization with impunity?

Conclusions

The poetic rivalry between Edward Earl of Oxford and Sir Philip Sidney is likely to have permeated further works of both Sidney and Shakespeare and needs full treatment from someone who is well versed in each. After all, Sidney's poetry is not popular in the way Shakespeare's plays are, and his criticisms of contemporary theatre have been well and truly routed. The close interplay between the lives of Oxford and Sidney reflect a longstanding rivalry between the two courtier-poets. Sidney's attack on drama was ill-mannered and unfounded. Oxford's response was to continue to present magnificent plays according to his own rules and to satirize Sidney within them. According to the ideals expressed in *The Courtier*, both Oxford and Sidney followed the dictates of *sprezzatura* by allowing their literary works to circulate only among a very limited aristocratic audience, either in manuscript or on stage, but disdaining to publish any major works in their own name. Sidney's literary executors, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and Fulke Greville, ensured that literary honors were added to Philip's posthumous military reputation. Oxford had a different final wish: "My name be buried where my body is."

Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to many Oxfordian scholars who have written on the rivalry between Sir Philip Sidney and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, especially E.M. Jolly, Eva Turner Clark, Charles Beauclerk, and Ramon Jiménez.

Works Cited

- Ascham, Roger. *The Schoolmaster*. London, 1570. Lawrence V. Ryan (ed.). Ithaca, 1967.
- Baldini, Donatella. "The Play of the Courtier: Correspondences between Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* and Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost*." *Quaderni d'italianistica* 18:1 (1997) 5–22.
- Baughan, Denver Ewing. "Sir Philip Sidney and the Matchmakers." *The Modern Language Review*, 33:4 1938, 506–19.
- Beauclerk, Charles. "Sir Philip Sidney Satirized in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *The Elizabethan Review* 2.2 (1994).
- Bradbrook, Muriel C. "Courtier and Courtesy: Castiglione, Lyly and Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*." *Theatre of the English and Italian Renaissance*. J.R. Mulryne and Margaret Shewring (eds.). New York, 1991. 161–78.
- Bullough, Geoffrey. *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, vol. VII, London, 1973.
- . Review of Thaler, *Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney*. *The Modern Language Review*, 44:4, 1949, 559–60.
- Castelvetro, Ludovico. *La poetica di Aristotele vulgarizzata*, Vienna 1570. Edited and translated by Andrew Bongiorno as *Castelvetro on the Art of Poetry*, New York, 1984.
- Chiljan, Katherine (ed.). *Letters and Poems of Edward, Earl of Oxford*, 1998.
- Clark, E.T. *Hidden Allusions in Shakespeare's Plays*. 1931, reprint Kennikat Press, 1974.
- Collington, Philip D. "'Stuffed with All Honourable Virtues': *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Book of the Courtier*." *Studies in Philology*, 103:3, 2006, 281–312.
- D'Angelo, Paolo. *Sprezzatura: Concealing the Effort of Art from Aristotle to Duchamp*. Rome 2004. Translated by Sarin Marchetti. Columbia, 2018.
- Detobel, Robert. "Shakespeare's 'Idle Hours' in Historical Context" *The Oxfordian*, Volume 21, 2019, 143–153.

- Duncan-Jones, K. *Sir Philip Sidney: courtier poet*. London, Hamish Hamilton, 1991.
- Dutton, Richard (ed.). *Sir Philip Sidney: Selected Writings*. Manchester, Fyfield, 1987.
- Feldman, A. Bronson. "Othello in Reality." *American Image* V (1954) 147–169.
- Gent, C.L. "Measure for Measure and the Fourth Book of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*." *The Modern Language Review*, 67:2, 1972, 252–56.
- Gilvary, K. "Two Gentlemen of Verona: Italian Literary Traditions and the Authorship Debate." *The Oxfordian* VII (2005) 77–92.
- Greenblatt, Stephen (ed.). *Edmund Spenser's 'The Shepheardes Calender'*. New York, 2006.
- Grosart, A.B. *Miscellanies of the Fuller Worthies' Library*, vol. IV. London, 1872.
- Gurr, Andrew. *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Hardison, O.B. "The Two Voices of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*." *English Literary Renaissance*, 2:1, 1972, 83–99.
- Harvey, Gabriel, *Gratulationum Valdinensium*. London, 1578.
- Hickes, Michael. *The anonymous life of William Cecil, Lord Burghley*. London, 1603. Lewiston, NY 1990, Alan G.R. Smith (ed.).
- Hoby, Thomas. *The Courtier*. London, 1561. London 1928, W.B.D. Henderson (ed.).
- . *The travels and life of Sir Thomas Hoby, Kt of Bissham Abbey, written by himself: 1547–1564*. London, 1899, Camden, Third Series, vol. IV, Edgar Powell (ed.).
- Hurstfield, Joel. *The Queen's Wards*. London, 1958.
- Jiménez, Ramon. *Shakespeare's Apprenticeship: Identifying the Real Playwright's Earliest Works*. McFarland, 2018.
- Jolly, E.M. and P. O'Brien. "Shakespeare's sources continued: Lord Burghley's Library." In *Great Oxford*, R. Malim (ed.), Tunbridge Wells, 2004, 26–30.
- Looney, J. Thomas. "*Shakespeare*" *Identified*. London, 1920.

- Nashe, Thomas. *The Anatomy of Absurditie*. London, 1589. In vol. 1, *The works of Thomas Nashe*, R.B. McKerrow (ed.). London, 1904.
- Nelson, Alan H. *Monstrous Adversary*. Liverpool, 2003.
- Nelson, Jane. "The Tennis Court Affair" in *Great Oxford III*, K. Gilvary (ed.), 2023, 97–118.
- Osborn, James M., *Young Philip Sidney, 1572–1577*, New Haven and London, Yale, 1972.
- Partridge, Mary. "Lord Burghley and *Il Cortegiano*: civil and martial models of courtliness in Elizabethan England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 19 (November 12, 2009): 95–116.
- Payne, Paula H. "Tracing Aristotle's 'Rhetoric' in Sir Philip Sidney's Poetry and Prose." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 20:3, 1990, 241–50.
- Reynolds, Robert C. "Ironic Epithet in *Julius Caesar*." *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 24:3 (1973), 329–33.
- Scott, V.A. "Possible source of Benedick and Beatrice." *PMLA* vol. 16, issue 4 (1901), 475–502.
- Sidney, Philip. *The Defence of Poesy*. London 1595, Katherine Duncan-Jones (ed.). Oxford, 1989.
- Stritmatter, Roger & Bryan H. Wildenthal (eds.). *The Poems of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford...and the Shakespeare Question*, 2019.
- Thaler, A. *Shakespeare and Sir Philip Sidney: The Influence of The Defense of Poesy*. Cambridge, MA, 1947.
- Vincent, Eric Reginald, 'Il Cortegiano in Inghilterra', in *Rinascimento Europeo e Rinascimento Veneziano*, Vittore Branca (ed.). Venice, 1968, 97–107.
- Whittemore, Hank. *100 Reasons Shakespeare was the Earl of Oxford*. Forever Press, 2016.
- Woudhuysen, H.R. "Sir Philip Sidney, (1554–1586), author and courtier" *ODNB*, 2004.
- . (ed.), *Love's Labour's Lost*. Arden, 1998.
- . *Sir Philip Sidney and the circulation of manuscripts, 1558–1640*. Oxford, 1996.