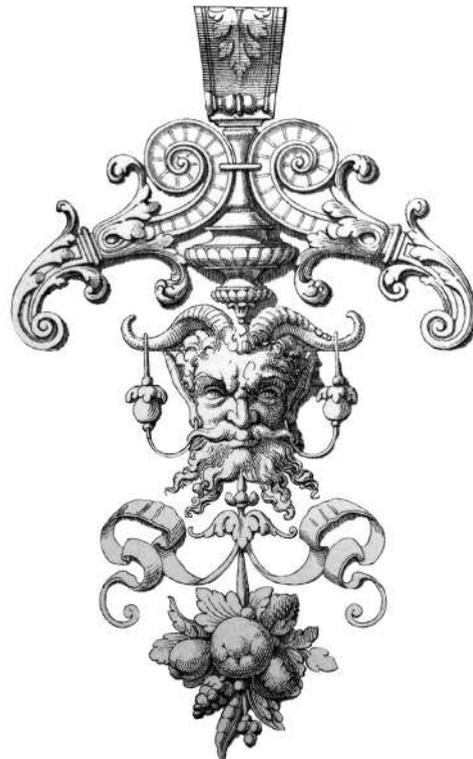


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Back Cover image: *Sir Philip Sidney* (18th century or after, based on a work circa 1576) in the National Portrait Gallery, London. Wikimedia Commons.

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Shakespeare at Palazzo Te

by Sky Gilbert

Shakespeare mentions a contemporary Italian artist by name in only one play. Near the end of *The Winter's Tale*, four courtiers are discussing the fate of the leading characters:

The Princess, hearing of her mother's statue, which is in the keeping of Paulina—a piece many years in doing and now newly performed by that rare Italian master, Julio Romano, who, had he himself eternity and could put breath into his work, would beguile Nature of her custom, so perfectly he is her ape: he so near to Hermoine hath done Hermoine that they say one could speak to her and stand hope of an answer.”
(5.2.101–109)

My Folger edition finds this reference perplexing: “There is no agreement among scholars about why Shakespeare included Romano’s name in a play set in an age when kings turned to the Delphic oracle for answers” (248). Why does Shakespeare—who never mentions another contemporary visual artist by name, do so here? In addition, Romano was known in England at the time only as a painter and architect. So how would Shakespeare have known he was a sculptor? The Folger note neatly explains this away by suggesting Shakespeare must have read Vasari’s *Lives of the Artists*, in Italian: “Jupiter saw sculpted and painted bodies breathe...by the skill of Giulio Romano.”

The inadequacy of this explanation exemplifies the sad excuse for scholarship that so often masquerades as academic rigor, and routinely obscures

Shakespeare's work. The Folger explanation for Shakespeare's mention of Giulio Romano (or lack of one) paralyzes our understanding of *The Winter's Tale*, simply by managing not to think very deeply about it. Not surprisingly, an internet search of "Shakespeare and Giulio Romano" yields almost nothing. There is an article in *The Guardian* ("Are These Shakespeare's Dirty Pictures?" 2010) which suggests that *I Modi* (a series of Romano's engravings of sexual positions published in Italy in the 1520s) was, perhaps, "Shakespeare's erotica." There is also an article by Oxfordian scholar Michael Delahoyde ("Shakespeare's Lucrece and Romano's Sala de Troia," 2010) arguing that the description of the Trojan painting in Shakespeare's *Lucrece* may have been a description of the painting in Romano's Sala de Troia. The Sala de Troia is just one of many rooms in a magnificent castle designed and decorated by Romano called Palazzo Te, located in Mantua.

There is additional Oxfordian research on Mantua. John Hamill offers ample evidence that Shakespeare likely visited there, citing Shakespeare's obvious familiarity with authors Aretino and Castiglione, both Mantuans, as well as the fact that characters in *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Measure for Measure* were likely inspired by Mantuan public figures. Hamill says, "Mantua and the Forest of Mantua are specified settings in two Shakespeare plays: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Act IV, scene 1 and Act V, scene 3), and *Romeo and Juliet* (Act V, scene 1)" (12). Also, both plays are set in Verona, only 29 miles away from Mantua. Hamill, like Delahoyde, also mentions the painting in Sala de Troia of Palazzo Te as the likely subject of the description in *Lucrece*.

While Delahoyde and Hamill are certainly onto something, no scholar has pursued their research. This is because the academic establishment knows that to connect Shakespeare with a highly respected but, even by today's standards, somewhat scandalous, Italian artist, might threaten the very foundation of Shakespeare studies. As Hamill notes: "More than any other artist, Giulio helped propagate the erotic style of art so fashionable during the seventeenth century, and it is mainly through his influence that religious painting in Europe declined after 1600" (13). If scholars were to recognize the implications of Shakespeare's connection with Giulio Romano, it would initiate discussions that, though academically rewarding, could fundamentally alter

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our thoughts and feelings about Shakespeare. The present essay will go one step beyond Hamill and Delahoyde's musings on Palazzo Te, proposing that an exploration of this extraordinary castle in Mantua is absolutely necessary, as it will inevitably facilitate a deeper understanding of Shakespeare's entire sensibility.

There is a second—more glancing, yet transparent—reference, to Palazzo Te, in *The Winter's Tale*. As Paulina leads Leontes through her home, she calls it “my poor house” (5.3.7). Leontes contradicts this: “Your gallery / have we pass'd through, not without much content / in many singularities” (5.3.12–14). Now, most “poor houses” don't have galleries, and “singularities” are sublime and unique works of art. Paulina is undoubtedly leading Leontes through Palazzo Te. The “Man from Stratford” (William Shakspeare) would have had no opportunity to visit the Gonzago palace in Mantua because the English Passport Office does not record granting him a passport for foreign travel. However, Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford, visited Europe for 16 months at the age of 25 and spent a significant amount of that time in Italy. As a representative of one of the oldest and most noble families in England, he would likely have been cordially welcomed at Palazzo Te. Is it not possible that Shakespeare makes *an unprecedented mention* of Giulio Romano because Shakespeare's work was akin to Romano's in both style and purpose, in other words, because he was an ardent admirer?

Palazzo Te is Romano's masterpiece. A close examination must include the structure itself, the paintings and sculptures, and the pervading atmosphere—with special attention to *the obviously intended effects on the viewer*. Such an examination suggests that Romano and Shakespeare held the same aesthetic, philosophical, and metaphysical views. Shakespeare was enchanted with Romano's work because Romano's sensibility precisely mirrored his own.

The construction of Palazzo Te took 10 years, from 1525 to 1534. It is described tactfully on Wikipedia as a “palace of leisure.” But it could perhaps more accurately be described as a sex palace. It was created for and enjoyed by Frederico de Gonzago, Marquess of Mantua, to enjoy with his mistress, Isabella Boschetti, along with other likeminded royal guests. The walls of Palazzo Te are adorned with explicit—some might even call them pornographic—paintings. Noemi Magri says that Romano was hired “to portray the handsome ruler's voluptuous joy in life” (36), whose “wish to be surrounded with pagan beauties was satisfied by Giulio's art, which is the expression of pagan eroticism, sensuousness and voluptuousness. With Giulio Romano, the erotic became the beautiful” (52).

Magri also mentions the description of Romano by the celebrated art historian Ernst Gombrich, who went so far as to call him a “licentious genius... [whose] art celebrates the beauty of the human body in the erotic and heroic nude” (52). Casino della Grotto in Palazzo Te offers a series of adjoining

rooms where guests could bathe amid sensuous waterfalls. The description of these rooms calls to mind the Toronto gay bathhouse The Roman Sauna Baths, as well as another gay bathhouse, Vienna's Kaiserbründl Men's Sauna. Both were decorated with erotic paintings and/or sculptures, to encourage "sensuous bathing."

Palazzo Te is truly singular. Four vast interconnected buildings enclose a courtyard. The walls of these buildings are unlike most Renaissance walls because most of the windows are false (they do not open to the outside) and the space between the pillars is not uniform. There are other irregularities. Some of the pillars and the walls are decorated with plaster, "rusticated" in such a way as to make them appear damaged, and perhaps unstable. The arched brickwork that supports the palace rests in the lake surrounding it in such a way that the water level seems a bit too high. This offers the impression that the palace is in danger of flooding. Some of the pediments were designed to appear as if they are falling apart, as are some of the walls. Romano wishes to inspire a feeling that is the very opposite of what is desired by High Renaissance architects: that is, he does not wish to make the visitors feel comforted but to make them insecure. Why would Romano wish to make visitors to his "palace of leisure" feel insecure? The answer lies in his aesthetic, and his philosophy as a mannerist.

The Mannerist Ethos

Mannerism is the subject of controversy, partially because a plethora of techniques fall under the rubric, making the categorization seem inexact, and because there is some argument over whether the movement itself produced work that was profound or "special effects" that are merely quirky. This is perhaps another reason critics have been reluctant to explore Shakespeare's fondness for Romano. But exploring Shakespeare's plays in the context of the visual art style called mannerism will lead us to the conclusion that Shakespeare not only appreciated mannerist art but was a mannerist writer himself.

The mannerist movement involved painters, sculptors and architects associated with the late Renaissance. Less well-known artists like Agnolo Bronzino (1503–1572) are often cited as exemplary mannerists, but other more famous (and more respected) artists are often called mannerists: Michaelangelo and Raphael, for instance. The definition of mannerism is necessarily expansive, as it refers to all artists who—although fully aware of the classical rules and adept at working within those parameters—wished to challenge them.

Some of the mannerist challenges to the Renaissance orthodoxy revealed themselves in subtle ways; others are more obvious. For example, one can't miss the mannerism of Parmigianino's *Madonna with the Long Neck*. The neck of the title appears elongated in an unnatural—even anatomically incorrect—manner. A more subtle technique employed by the painter Caravaggio

is *tenebroso*: foregrounding dramatic contrasts between light and dark. Mannerism often also includes an image that is easily recognizable but less obvious to us as characteristic of Renaissance painting: the twisted, contorted bodies of its painted subjects.

These techniques have much more in common than merely a challenge to classical painting orthodoxy. They offer a philosophical challenge to the aesthetic objectivity assumed by Greek and Roman art. Classicism takes it for granted that we all understand reality in the same way, whereas mannerism reminds us repeatedly that everyone's viewpoint is different. Richard Arthur Holmes quotes Friedlander:

The whole bent of anti-classical art is basically subjective, since it would construct and individually reconstruct from the inside out, from the subjective outward, freely, according to the rhythmic feeling present in the artist, while classic art, socially oriented, seeks to crystallize the object for eternity by working out from the regular, from what is valid for everyone. (60)

The Renaissance quest for universal visual objectivity reached its zenith with the discovery of the vanishing point. Until then, paintings displayed reality as flat. But as we all live in a three-dimensional world, the vanishing point was an aesthetic seismic shift; painters celebrated seeing the world *for real*, the way the world *actually is*. But the reign of the vanishing point was almost immediately and amazingly challenged by mannerists, sometimes returning to “flat” representations of reality, and in doing so anticipating modern artists, including Picasso.

Renaissance mannerists understood that although the vanishing point was deemed the very height of objectivity by High Renaissance painters, it nevertheless, from its very inception, contained an element of subjectivity, because the contraption Brunelleschi used to demonstrate the technique involved the spectator looking through a tiny hole in a painting, and significantly, the spectator could see their *own eye* reflected back to them in the mirror at the very center of the image. In this manner Brunelleschi's experiment accented the subjectivity of the viewer.

We usually associate perspective with a conical shape, in which the wider end is near the viewer's eye—and as the sightlines in the painting move towards the vanishing point, the cone narrows. Yet, as Martin Jay points out, Alberti confirmed that though the sightlines form a cone that goes from wide to narrow, this cone necessarily assumes its own reversal, in which the wider part of the cone (which is the image) comes back to a narrow point (which is in the eye):

For perspective meant not only an imagined visual cone (Euclid's word) or pyramid (Alberti's) with its apex the receding, centric (or as it was

later called, vanishing) point in the scene on the canvas. It was also the reverse pyramid or cone whose apex was the beholder's eye (or the infinitesimal point that came to replace it in theoretical terms). (54)

As Carabell says: "Just as occurs in Brunelleschi's specular model, Alberti's lines of sight are reflected back to their sender, their conical structure reversed and returned, until the observer himself becomes the object perceived" (95).

This may seem like an abstruse deconstruction of a painterly technique that is, after all, universally accepted today as *the* authoritative invention for imitating reality. So what's the point? This essay intends to prove that, as a mannerist, Romano was aware of the vanishing point's implications for subjectivity, and what he considered to be its false claim of offering a supremely objective representation of reality. This is because Romano's primary concern as an artist, was—like Shakespeare—with unsettling the viewer's confidence in his or her point of view.

One cannot underestimate the importance that mannerism placed on overturning classical notions of objectivity. As Hauser says, "The fundamental mannerist feeling is that there is no firm ground anywhere under one's feet" (30). This attitude is accentuated from the moment one sets foot on the grounds of Palazzo Te. Though some have suggested that Romano's crumbling columns imitate trees (setting up an opposition between art and nature), Romano's odd architectural style is a kind of satire of High Renaissance models. Romano was not alone in utilizing this technique. As Holmes notes, Michelangelo's design for the Laurentian Library in Florence aims for the same effect: "the pillars visually (and physically?) underplay their supporting role by tapering towards the base leading to slender moldings which almost parody the architecturally sound pedestals and capitals of the Renaissance" (16). One can easily imagine a young Shakespeare arriving in front of the castle. He—as a highly educated, young, intellectual poet—with thorough knowledge of classical notions of aesthetic objectivity—would have found it a deep, and perhaps fascinatingly unsettling, experience.

One distinctly mannerist aspect of Shakespeare's work has been duly noted by critics: his fondness for flouting the strict rules of classical playwriting. Aristotle, the supreme arbiter of Greek poetics, divided plays into two discrete categories called tragedy and comedy. Shakespeare, on the other hand, routinely and somewhat randomly mixes genres, and creates new genres of his own—i.e., romances and "problem plays." Similarly, Cicero, the primary Roman source for early modern rhetorical learning, strictly prescribed two distinctly different rhetorical styles for each of the discrete Greek theatrical genres. But Shakespeare, in his tragicomedies, comi-tragedies and romances shifts quickly and unpredictably from elaborate metaphor to colloquial utterance. Finally, Shakespeare invented so many new words that he significantly expanded, some say created, a new English language.

This is not the first essay to suggest Shakespeare was a mannerist. In his book *Shakespeare and the Mannerist Tradition*, Maquerlot proclaims *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *Measure for Measure* mannerist plays. In *Julius Caesar* it is difficult to discriminate the good characters from bad, as “a succession of images, in turn positive and negative, disconcerts the spectator to the extent that he or she can no longer situate the characters on a scale of moral values” (76). And, “like mannerist painters or sculptors he [Shakespeare] repudiates all sense of hierarchy in viewpoints, thus holding up disparity and off-centeredness as the studied principles underlying his treatment of characters” (81).

Maquerlot views Hamlet’s thought process as a kind of anamorphosis. Anamorphosis was a painterly trick utilized by Leonard da Vinci, which informs the mannerist technique *trompe l’oeil*, which was so expertly utilized by Romano in the Sala dei Cavalli, at Palazzo Te. Collins Dictionary defines anamorphosis as “an image or drawing distorted in such a way that it becomes recognizable only when viewed in a specified manner.” Hamlet’s brain seems to operate as a kind of *trompe l’oeil*, because he is constantly changing his mind and—“it is the irresistible emergence of different viewpoints in Hamlet’s consciousness which accounts for his bifurcations of thought and behavior...[which] proceeds from a mode of thought attentive to and critical of its own functioning” (99).

In his analysis of *Measure for Measure*, Maquerlot suggests that the Duke disguised as a friar is a reference to Shakespeare himself. The Duke manipulates the other characters and contrives plots for their lives, as any writer might do when writing a play. Maquerlot says “*All’s Well* and *Measure for Measure* go to unprecedented lengths in unveiling the artificiality of the dramatic machinery” (147). He notes that some find it discombobulating that the characters in Shakespeare’s comedies end up marrying people that they have only just met, and/or who they don’t even seem to know—or perhaps even *like*. Maquerlot believes this is perfectly intentional on the writer’s part: “what I find intriguing and attractive in these half-tone denouements is not so much the image of blissful harmony thus outlined before us, as the lucid, amused look which the playwright casts upon his work” (146–47). This technique is related to mannerism because it points to the artificiality of art:

When mannerist painters elongate their figures regardless of verisimilitude and the Vitruvian canons, when they ride roughshod over Alberti’s perspective, employ rare or consciously unrealistic colors, excessively reduce or enlarge the encompassing space, what are they doing if not calling attention to the contrived nature of the work? (147)

This is the essential contradiction that rests at the heart of mannerism. Some mannerist painters are fond of teasing us with images that are *evidently* unreal. Holmes quotes Hauser: “Mannerism permits—and often actually calls for—occasional interruptions of the illusion of art, and return to it at pleasure” (28). These artists would have us believe and disbelieve at the same time.

The classicist wishes us to immerse ourselves in the fantasy that the illusion is real. It is only after we have stopped viewing the classical painting that we return to reality. But by openly acknowledging the painter's skill and contrivances, the mannerist artist would have us interrupt this immersion. Paradoxically, the mannerist artist wishes to make our experience more profound and involving, not less so; the idea is that we come to believe even more fervently in the reality of what is being presented when we consciously consent to fully deceive ourselves. Thus Maquerlot says: "It seems that Shakespeare...has determined to push realism and artifice to the extreme" (158)

Holmes quotes Shearman: "Mannerist works of art are conceived in the spirit of virtuoso performances" (17). And this display of virtuosity accentuates the all-consuming, godlike power mannerism has given to the artist. The artist does not just imitate reality, or record it, he creates it; and the creation does not just match reality, it surpasses it. As Holmes says "The artist's will is the ultimate force in the creative process, and his idea is 'truer' than what he sees" (8).

The Role of The Courtier

The idea of an artist who creates something more real than reality itself is one that can be found in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, which scholars have long considered to be Shakespeare's textbook of deportment and art (many think it had a significant influence on *Hamlet*). Both Romano and Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, are linked with Castiglione: it was Castiglione who introduced Gonzago to Giulio Romano (one of Raphael's prized pupils), and at the age of 20, Edward de Vere wrote an introduction to the then most recent Latin translation of Castiglione's book.

Castiglione wrote that the courtier should "practice in all things a certain nonchalance (*sprezzatura*) which conceals all artistry and makes whatever one says or does seem uncontrived and effortless" (66). He goes on to say:

I am sure that grace springs especially from this, since everyone knows how difficult it is to accomplish some unusual feat perfectly, and so facility in such things excites the greatest wonder; whereas, in contrast, to labor at what one is doing and, as we say, to make bones over it, shows an extreme lack of grace and causes everything, whatever its worth, to be discounted. So we can truthfully say that true art is what does not seem to be art; and the most important thing is to conceal it, because if it is revealed this discredits a man completely and ruins his reputation. (67)

Castiglione may seem to be saying that the artist (in this case the courtier) should do the very opposite of what mannerists do, that is *hide his contrivance*. But the mannerist artist, in celebrating his own virtuosity, is not "making bones over it," because he would never admit that it was tough work, but only that he is a genius who creates a better reality. This is what Shakespeare

does when, in the mannerist fashion of self-conscious contrivance, he creates artificial comedies with unlikely plots and surprisingly happy endings. As de Vere himself suggests in his Latin introduction to Castiglione's book, the artist/courtier improves on nature: "And so, although nature herself has made nothing perfect in every detail, yet the manners of men exceed in dignity that with which nature has endowed them; and he who surpasses others has here surpassed himself, and has even outdone nature which by no one has ever been surpassed."

Thus, the artist may create something that is not simply real, but "truer than truth." Shakespeare returns to this mannerist idea again and again in his work. This is Shakespeare's intention when he points the audience to the statue that breathes in *The Winter's Tale*, which in turn points to Palazzo Te. Not coincidentally, in *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare describes a real horse, one which seems so real that he can only assume that it is a fake, i.e., that it was the painting of a horse:

Look, when a painter would surpass the life,
 In limning out a well-proportion'd steed,
 His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
 As if the dead the living should exceed;
 So did this horse excel a common one,
 In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone

It is likely that when Shakespeare wrote this passage he was speaking of what he experienced when—after viewing the unconventional architecture of the building—he first entered Palazzo Te. The Hall of the Horses (Sala dei Cavalli), is the first room that visitors to the palace encounter after viewing



the building from the outside (it is the only room that is called a “hall”). Several paintings of horses adorn the walls of the Hall of the Horses. Here Romano manages to create, through the technique of *trompe l’oeil*, the pure distillation of his art—with the skill that is so accurately described in *The Winter’s Tale*. Like the structure of the castle itself, the paintings are beautiful but unsettling. Romano places his paintings of horses high on the walls (the land on which Palazzo Te rests was originally the home of Gonzago’s stables). What’s shocking about these horses is that, looked at from a certain angle, they appear to be alive. The fact that these magnificent, seemingly very alive creatures, are so high up, calls direct and immediate attention to the artist’s *sprezzatura*—his ability to create something absolutely real which is at the same time undeniably false.

While the Sala dei Cavalli of the Palazzo Te speaks to the philosophical implications of Shakespeare’s mannerist aesthetic, the Sala di Amore e Psiche (the Chamber of Cupid and Psyche) speaks to this aesthetic, as well as his, and Romano’s, radical views on sex and sexuality. Several of the rooms at Palazzo Te are inspired by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: the Sala di Amore e Psiche, the Chamber of Ovid, and the Sala dei Giganti, for instance. It goes without saying that Ovid’s poetry brims with eroticism, and most scholars agree that Ovid was Shakespeare’s favorite poet. Jonathan Bate calls Book Ten of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* “a series of narratives concerning destructive passion and female desire ... [it] teems with aggressive female wooers, and homoerotic charm” (83). Ovid’s gods, goddesses and mortals are often deceived by passion, and come to tragic or horrific—but often quite magical—ends, ultimately transformed into animals, trees, or flowers—all the while and experimenting with gender.

Shakespeare’s Erotic Philosophy

What was Shakespeare’s attitude toward sex and sexuality? Scholars often note with some embarrassment the endless array of often seemingly irrelevant “dirty jokes” and double entendres in his plays. In *Measure for Measure* and *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare gives voice (and pride of place) to prostitutes and pimps, and frankly acknowledges venereal disease. But these plays are neither more nor less “filthy” than the plays, poems and prose of Shakespeare’s contemporaries. Shakespeare’s own personal attitudes to issues of sex and sexuality are as difficult to decipher as his attitudes to anything else. Malvolio in *Twelfth Night* is ridiculed by Maria as a “some kind of puritan” (2.3.139), yet Shakespeare lets Thersites (in *Troilus and Cressida*) give eloquent voice to the puritan view: “Lechery, lechery; still, wars and lechery; nothing else holds fashion: a burning devil take them!” (5.2. 297–199)

The clue to Shakespeare’s attitude toward sex can be found in the structure of Shakespeare’s comedies—especially *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like it* and *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream. All Shakespeare's comedies share a carefully modulated array of loving pairs. Each couple represents a different kind of love, leading the audience on a spiritual journey from physical love to "true" love, one step at a time.

In *As You Like It*, Touchstone openly lusts after Audrey. He quips: "Well, praised be the gods for thy foulness! sluttishness may come hereafter" (3.3. 39–40). Silvius, on the other hand, is tortured by a love for Phebe that he *claims* is profound, but that appears to be a parody of Petrarchan clichés: "So holy and so perfect is my love, / And I in such a poverty of grace, / That I shall think it a most plenteous crop / To glean the broken ears after the man / That the main harvest reaps; loose now and then / A scatt'rd smile, and that I'll live upon" (3.5. 106–111). In his own perhaps overly-poetic manner, Silvius takes a small step on the road to true love. But when Rosalind teaches Orlando to woo her, this is the highest rung on the amorous spiritual ladder, for there is no doubt that Rosalind is connected to a higher power: "Believe then, if you please, that I can do strange things. I have, since I was three years old, conversed with a magician, most profound in his art and yet not damnable" (5.3. 62–65).

Shakespeare distinguishes his lovers in this way to illustrate the classic neoplatonic journey that leads to the true spiritual love of profound beauty. Neoplatonism, which found its origins in Italy, was an early Renaissance attempt to reconcile Christianity with paganism. The neoplatonic attitude to sex and sexuality is less sex-negative than the one we usually associate with Christianity; the primary difference is that for neoplatonists, physical beauty can sometimes be an expression of the inner beauty that leads us to true love. (But then again, sometimes not!)

In *Shakespeare and Platonic Beauty* John Vyvyan defines the neoplatonic principle of the recognition of immortal companions: "people are in perfect love in heaven first, but when they get to earth they sometimes don't recognize each other" (12). This explains the characters' perplexing confusion in so many of Shakespeare's comedies, and why "the course of true love never did run smooth" as Lysander observes in *A Midsummer Nights Dream* (1.1.136). Vyvyan says: "individual souls, when immersed in matter, are liable to forget their true nature" (27), and "when the beauty of the body is judged superior to the soul, then the true dignity of love is abused" (48). It is up to the discerning lover to discriminate between mere physical love and the combined spiritual and material beauty of the "immortal companion." This process, it must be noted, is explained explicitly in Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*. As Vyvyan notes, this dilemma is central to many of Shakespeare's comedies. When Sebastian, Viola's twin, first appears, all are confused because he looks exactly like his sister. But he explains: "A spirit I am indeed; / But am in that dimension frossly clad / Which from the womb I did participate" (5.1.248–250).



In the Sala di Amore e Psiche Romano takes us on the neoplatonic journey from material beauty to the beauty of the soul, telling Ovid's story of Cupid and Psyche. It is significant that the many ceiling panels (i.e., paintings) not only require the viewer to look up, but are *not* arranged in the order that follows Ovid's story. Instead, viewers must work to find their own way through the labyrinth, much the same way as ordinary mortals must thread their way through many perilous curves on the path to true spiritual love. As Michailidis says:

This philosophy is mainly captured through the narration, with the path of the labyrinth followed by Psyche, which represents the human soul. While she is in an intermediate state in the world of ideas—represented by the octagons—she falls with Eros and the material body. Only through much effort does she manage to reach the top, in the centre of the ceiling, achieving eternal immortality.

This perplexing arrangement of images that ultimately tells a neoplatonic story is one Shakespearean aspect of the Sala di Amore e Psiche. But the content of the paintings is also distinctly Shakespearean. Romano's *Jupiter Seducing Olympias* is explained in his subtitle: "Olympias is seduced by Jupiter, whose thunderbolt is seized by an eagle who drills the eye of the jealous king of Macedonia." In this painting a virile, fully naked Jupiter (Zeus) looms over Olympias, who is also naked. Jupiter has one hand on her chin, and his penis rests on her thigh. The subtitle refers to the bearded face in the upper right-hand corner of the painting. An arrow, guided by an eagle, pierces the eye of the King of Macedonia—Olympias' husband—who is spying on the couple. Partway down the shaft of the arrow a strange jagged conical shape

Giulio Romano: Jupiter Seducing Olympias.

is attached. That cone opens up onto the eye, whereas its point is closer to the eagle who is holding it.

What is the meaning of this arrow? Most assume that it represents Philip's pain since he is witnessing his wife's infidelity. But Paula Carabell postulates that this arrow in the eye of the voyeur is a critique of the male gaze. This painting was meant for Frederigo Gonzala of Mantua to view for his sexual pleasure. However, Romano's painting is not merely meant as erotic titillation; it clearly implicates the viewer. By placing an erotic spy in the painting Romano has commented on the act of voyeurism himself. As Carabell says:



By making clear the presence of a second male figure, Giulio created a dual target for the Duke's projective drive. In so doing he ruptured a bond that had promised compensatory pleasure and made this an image of insatiable desire. Federigo's inevitable exclusion from the activities of the amorous duo is, of course, a function of Giulio's compositional strategy. Cast in profile, Philip serves as a surrogate for the covetous spectator. (93)

Carabell goes on to say she sees the cone in the painting as a reference to perspective. If it is, this offers an additional reminder of the viewer; as it not only reminds us, in a mannerist way, that the image is not simply real, but also extremely subjective. Not only is beauty in the eye of the beholder, but there are many different ways of viewing the same eroticized object, and there are consequences for doing so.

It's important to note that in Shakespeare's work, as in Romano's painting, the viewer of beauty—particularly the male viewer of female beauty—does not go unimplicated. There are consequences to eroticization of another human being (and not just intercourse, or consequently pregnancy and birth, or venereal disease). Philip's eye in Romano's painting is Shakespeare's eye, and it is true that for Shakespeare the eye is the ultimate symbol of love's inception. As Fineman says of the sonnets: "Cupid shoots his arrows through the lover's eye into the lover's heart. This is a specifically visual desire...it is as something of the eye that the young man's 'fair appearance lies' within the poet's heart... 'thy picture in my sight' indifferently 'Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight'" (60).

But in his analysis of the sonnets, Fineman calls this lover's gaze in Shakespeare's poetry "Shakespeare's perjur'd eye" because Shakespeare's attitude to love and sex is both complex and paradoxical. On the one hand we have Venus' ardor in *Venus and Adonis*, unabashed, poetic, affecting, and yet for all its mellifluous religiosity, frankly filthy: "Graze on my lips, and if those hills be dry, / Stray lower, where the pleasant fountains lie" (233–34). Here, Venus seems to be making love to herself—in order to lure a young, gorgeous and innocent Adonis, who is merely perplexed and repelled. Yet the narrator of the poem does not judge her. In fact, he allows her to romanticize what Adonis interprets as naked lust. Then there is Shakespeare's description of sex in Sonnet 129 as "Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame". We must allow Shakespeare—as is his wont—to hold opposing views about sex, for both our delectation and our somewhat perplexed consideration.

It may very well be that Shakespeare's "affectionate bitterness" about sex anticipates the Rolling Stones' sentiment that "you can't always get what you want." Shakespeare's ambivalent feelings about love and sex are succinctly expressed in an early poem by Edward de Vere titled "The Lively Lark Stretched Forth Her Wing." Here a young man meets desire attired as a beautiful young knight, who informs him that desire loves nothing better than to see a man who is sexually frustrated: "Then of desire I asked again / What thing did please and what did pain? / He smiled, and thus he answered then, / 'Desire can have no greater pain / Than for to see another man / That he desireth to obtain; / Nor greater joy can be than this, / Than to enjoy that others miss.'"

There is no more eloquent symbol of Shakespeare's conflicted attitude to sex and the male gaze than his obsession with the legend of Actaeon. In Ovid's tale, a young hunter is tempted when he accidentally catches sight of the goddess Artemis (the Roman goddess Diana) bathing naked. To punish him, Artemis turns Actaeon into a stag. She also sets his own hounds on him. He is ripped apart by his own dogs. Many, many characters in Shakespeare's work are "hunted by the dogs of their desire."

There are at least five direct references to Actaeon in Shakespeare's work, including *As You Like It*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Twelfth Night*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* wishes she was Diana, so Bassanius' temples "should be planted presently / With horns, as was Actaeon's..." (2.3.62–63). When Orsino speaks of love in *Twelfth Night*, he says, "That instant was I turned into a hart, / And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds, / E'er since pursue me" (1.1.22–24). In *Cymbeline*, Iachimo sneaks into Imogen's bedroom and, like the voyeur Actaeon, observes her naked breasts. Shakespeare, like Philip of Macedonia in Romano's painting, is clearly aware that Cupid's arrow means more than simply true love; it can be implicated by pure evil, or bring disillusionment, or even impossible anguish.



The Genius of Palazzo Te

If we continue along with Shakespeare on his journey through the Palazzo Te, we will come to Romano's climactic work, undoubtedly meant to be the penultimate aesthetic experience for the viewer. This is the Sala dei Giganti, the chamber of the giants. Standing in that room, Shakespeare would no longer merely a spectator, but experiences the wonder of being in the presence of god (or perhaps more accurately, the gods)—and would quite literally sense the ground shifting under his feet. We can be sure that the Sala dei Giganti was on Shakespeare's mind, because, as John Hamill notes, he mentions it in *Loves Labour's Lost*. In one early quarto, Berowne describes: "This Signior Julio's giant dwarf, Don Cupid" (25).

The Sala dei Giganti illustrates a chapter from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which the giants attempt an attack on Jupiter, erecting a structure made of mountains. Predictably they are destroyed when Jupiter returns the favor by

destroying them with thunderbolts. Romano's room does not merely feature painted walls, the room itself *is* a painting, one that covers the entire space from floor to the ceiling. When the viewer enters the room, he or she enters a painting.

The floor was originally constructed of pebbles, and an actual fire roared in a fireplace under the flames in the painting. (Neither of these aspects of Romano's realism have stood the test of time.) At the base of the painting the giants are being crushed by falling arches and columns, fire and floods. Far up—above the clouds—the gods are in frenzied disarray as Jupiter hurls down his revenge. This image of heaven on the ceiling seems to go on forever until it reaches a giant dome of gold and glass at its peak. The perspective is dizzying. In fact, the experience of the room is dizzying. It is a kind of trick, a masterful slice of *sprezzatura* for, although the chamber itself is not that large, the feeling is that a vast universe is crashing down upon the viewer.

Though it is a virtuoso technical feat of perspective, and a flamboyant display of wild color and frantic movement—and though it is incredibly, performatively ambitious—the effect on the viewer is what creates a singular mannerist experience. As Carabell says:

Of particular interest, however, is not his rendition of battling forces, but rather, his [Romano's] treatment of the beholder's share in the drama. In question is the disparity in scale between the protagonists and those who observe them along with the placement and attitude of these tiny figures. Dwarfed by the image that surrounds them, the viewers are incorporated into representational space, entering into a state of non-differentiation that reflects the chamber's unique pictorial structure. It is this sense of merger that gives rise to feelings of fear; it produces a sensation of discomfort that finds its closest parallel in Freud's notion of the uncanny. (95)

Carabell goes on to suggest that the philosophical effect of this aesthetic is to decentralize the viewer—ultimately challenging their objectivity—as he or she is no longer placidly observing a painting, but utterly and completely involved in it:

As Vasari and his successors implicitly realized, the chamber's cycloramic structure was a decentering feature, one that destroyed the preeminence of the viewing subject. By reversing the relationship between seer and seen, the Sala dei Giganti let it be known that identity exists as a relative construct. Even in a pleasure palace like the Palazzo del Te, the integrity of the individual remained always far from secure. (97)

The experience of the Sala dei Giganti at Palazzo Te is the ultimate expression of mannerist *sprezzatura*. One is so seized with real terror that one

cannot help but admire the virtuosity of the artist. Thus, one vacillates between the experience of a truth that is truer than true and the comforting notion that the situation is completely artificial.

Segue to *The Tempest*

Does all this remind you of anything? What happens to the viewers of the Sala dei Giganti at Palazzo Te is exactly what happens to audiences as they watch *The Tempest*, because Shakespeare has done everything in his power as an artist to induce them to feel the terror of imminent death by drowning. He stipulates that cries and sounds come from backstage, to make the passengers' desperation more realistic: "A confused noise within: 'Mercy on us!'—'We split, we split!'—'Farewell, my wife and children!'—'Farewell, brother!'—'We split, we split, we split!'" (1.1.62–65). The cheerful Boatswain announces their upcoming demise in a uniquely but realistically terrifying way; he displays the good cheer of an experienced mariner who has led a good life but must now say goodbye to this one: "Use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long, and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap—Cheerly, good hearts!—Out of our way, I say!" (1.1.24–28).

One need only think of what it might be like to have a similar announcement made by the pilot of an airplane just before a crash. When Miranda accuses Prospero of murdering innocent people with his art he assures her that no one was killed—"there is no soul—/ No not so much perdition as an hair / Betid to any creature on the vessel" (1.2 36–38). But Miranda knows that the shipwreck, has, at the very least, scared many innocent people nearly to death. We know this because we have just been terrified ourselves. Prospero continues in this manner throughout the play, alternately torturing and terrifying his enemies out of what seems partially a personal grudge and partially an earnest attempt to redeem the villains who robbed him of his crown so long ago. Whether he succeeds with their redemption is a moot point, but he *is* successful in teaching the future King of Milan to fall deeply and profoundly in love with his daughter's soul. But is this enough to redeem him?

Our mixed feelings about Prospero are the same as our feelings about Giulio Romano when we enter the Sala dei Giganti. It is the same feeling we have about so many of Shakespeare's characters, but the difference here is that Prospero is not *just* controlling the other characters in the play (as Iago or Richard III does) but manipulating *us*, *the audience*—with his charm, his plot devices, and his heartbreaking rhetoric. Thus we are deeply conflicted and "decentred" (to use Carabell's word) when Prospero threatens to abjure "this rough magic" (5.1.59) and put an end to this particular play, and perhaps all of Shakespeare's plays, forever.

Some critics challenge Prospero's virtue. Lytton Strachey, for instance quipped: "if Prospero is wise, he is also self-opinionated and sour, that his gravity is often another name for pedantic severity, and that there is no character in the play to whom, during some part of it, he is not studiously disagreeable" (68). Indeed, Prospero himself identifies with the basest character in the play, Caliban, saying: "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (5.1.330–331). It matters what Shakespeare thinks of Prospero because Prospero is undoubtedly a mannerist artist, who, like Shakespeare, creates fictions so real that they paralyze us with fear, simultaneously dazzling us with his virtuosity.

In a desperate attempt to sort out his dual nature critics have lately branded Prospero a colonialist. Well, of course Prospero is a colonialist—as is Shakespeare—if one looks at him through a modern lens. But examined through an early modern lens, both men are remarkably sympathetic to the "indigenous" Caliban. When critics defend Prospero, they make it clear he was no Sigfried and Roy—that is, they cite Shakespeare's equation of artist and magician, and the various magicians whose magic was taken quite seriously in the early modern period. Bruno, Pico della Mirandola and John Dee (Elizabeth's personal magician) have all been suggested as possible models for Prospero. These magicians—like Raymond Lull and Cardano—were mystical neoplatonist philosophers, less mischievous troublemakers than earnest holy men, searching for spiritual perfection via the occult. But let's add another possible model for Prospero: Neapolitan magician Giambattista della Porta. He was not only a practical natural magician but a playwright.

Della Porta wrote 17 plays. They were available in England in Shakespeare's day (in Italian), and are often described today as mannerist, mainly because of the artificial quality of della Porta's dialogue and the contrived nature of his stories. Kodera compares Shakespeare's own dramaturgical devices to della Porta's dense plot constructions:

The labyrinthine pattern should appear hopelessly frustrating, until suddenly resolved by a final peripety, a coup de théâtre with unexpected and satisfying dramatic impact, producing order out of chaos and a happy ending all around.... Many of these intricate ruses are echoed in Shakespeare's comedies, such as *Twelfth Night* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. (16)

Della Porta, at the very least, shared Shakespeare's pagan, slightly skeptical worldview, and was dedicated like Shakespeare to faithfully, if somewhat fantastically, recording the arbitrary twists and turns of fate. Like Shakespeare, he often looked on happy endings with irony. As a natural magician (not unlike Prospero, who calls out to nature in his renunciation speech), his revolutionary, real world experiments anticipated modern science. The

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy makes della Porta sound very much like Prospero:

Porta's magus is a decidedly male figure who unites the physical dexterity of the trickster, the experience of the alchemist, the erudition of the humanist, the astrologer's command of mathematics, and the intuitive knowledge of the psychic medium.... The magus must be talented, rich, educated, and hard-working; magic is the most noble part of philosophy for Porta, instead of a priest or metaphysician in quest of the divine—as in Pico della Mirandola or John Dee, Porta's magus is thus depicted as an *artifex* (a craftsman or mastermind) who knows how to manipulate the natural and occult properties of certain bodies.

The fact that della Porta may have been one of the models for Prospero is important because it accentuates that Prospero, like any artist, was both a very godlike human and a very human god. When Prospero attempts to obstruct the courtship of Ferdinand and Miranda, he sounds as much like a villain contemplating evil manipulations as a playwright crafting a plot. But he could also be a gentle god, patiently guiding the lives of ordinary people: “They are both in each other's powers. But this / Swift business / I must make uneasy, lest too light winning / Make the prize light” (1.2.542–45). This kind of magic resembles one of della Porta's most famous tricks. As Kodera reminds us, in della Porta's lectures (which were very much performances) he often used magnets to manipulate metal figurines so that they appeared to be moving of their own will:

when the lodestone was laid down, they laid down their spears, if they were ready to fight, and did threaten to kill and slay...and when the stones come near to one the other, they seemed to fight, and run one with the other.... In this natural theater, the magus is pulling the strings from behind the scenes, much to the amazement of the observers. (14–15)

Magnetism was, of course, an early modern neoplatonist metaphor for longing to unite with one's true love.

Perhaps the difficulty we have deciding whether or not Prospero is a good person is related to his godlike qualities. For if Prospero were a Christian god, he would necessarily be flawless, and ultimately have our best interests at heart, never, ever driven by petty emotion or shallow grudge. Pagan gods, on the other hand, were prone to human failings. But more importantly, neoplatonists *defined* gods as artists. For the neoplatonists, god is the ultimate creator of beauty, and it is by perceiving and understanding this beauty that we will reach spiritual awareness. As John Vyvyan tells us:

The qualities they [the planets] bestow on the soul are, of course ultimately God given: In the beginning God contains the potency of these

gifts himself. He then grants them to the seven gods who move the seven planets...[by] imparting to stubborn matter the physical beauties that correspond to their celestial gifts. They work as artists. (44)

Conclusions

In this way, the Sala dei Giganti at Palazzo Te reflects the metaphysical center of Shakespeare's world. For, without a doubt, Prospero in *The Tempest* is Romano the mannerist as much as he is Shakespeare himself. He is also a pagan god, acting sometimes without reason, and Shakespeare knows that it is necessary for us to come to terms with the kind of terror such a god creates. This is the purpose of Shakespeare's art: to induce us to confront the terrifying paradox that is life and death. Palazzo Te exemplifies Shakespeare's vision of the artist as a trauma-inducing hurler of aesthetic thunderbolts. When Shakespeare first experienced the Sala dei Giganti, he understood that *his* job too—as an artist—was to involve the audience deeply, with the goal in mind of implicating and unsettling them with this vision.

Shakespeare mentions Giulio Romano in *The Winter's Tale* because his own worldview is identical with Giulio Romano's and with mannerism in general. That Shakespeare slips Romano's name into his ancient fairy tale—so suddenly, inexplicably, and *so casually*—is not only a reference to the godlike powers of the artist and the artistic powers of the gods, it is a display of his own *sprezzatura*. Shakespeare, like many a mannerist artist, is ultimately just showing off. He is so proud of his creation, and so assured of its ability to arrest our undivided attention under any circumstance, that he thinks nothing of dropping into the play, as he does in many of his works, an utterly, shockingly anachronistic detail, for seemingly no apparent reason.

But there is a reason. Shakespeare mentions only one contemporary visual artist by name in his play, not just because one day he happened to come upon Romano's name in Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*. No. From the moment Shakespeare placed an elegant Italianate shoe down on the grounds of the Palazzo Te, he knew that Romano's soul-stirring, all-involving, mannerist masterpiece would allow him to finally rejoice in a sensibility identical to his own, one that was the incarnation—and the visual corollary—of what his written work would someday be.

Whose interests does it serve to ignore Shakespeare's mannerist aesthetic, his complex attitudes to sex and sexuality, and his skeptical, clearly pagan, neo-platonic metaphysic—especially when the evidence of it is staring us in the face? It is a question I am almost afraid to ask.

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John Lyly and the Marprelate Controversy: Innovation, Inhibition, and the 1589 Hamlet

by Karl Yambert

Rosencrantz: I think their inhibition comes by the means of the
late innovation. *Hamlet* Q2 (2.2.295–296)

This essay argues for a probable date of composition of 1589 for the First Quarto (Q1) *Hamlet*, which inferentially would favor Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, rather than William Shakspeare as the playwright.¹ En route to that determination, the essay demonstrates that neither the historical Essex rebellion (1601) nor the revival of Paul’s Boys and their participation in the War of the Theatres (1599–1601) adequately represents an occurrence of an “innovation” that sparks an “inhibition”—terms that are paired in the Second Quarto (Q2) and First Folio (FF) *Hamlets* to explain why the Tragedians of the City are on tour.

Instead, the Martin Marprelate controversy (1588–90), which began as a war of pamphlets, was precisely the sort of challenge to the established order that Elizabethans called an “innovation.” Indeed, Queen Elizabeth herself called the initial Martinist tracts an “innovation” (Arber 109–110). Furthermore, the Marprelate affair then led to the suppression of acting troupes of both boys and men (Gurr 46). That is, the Marprelate “innovation” resulted in what was clearly an “inhibition” imposed on stage performances, exactly as *Hamlet* has it.

Paul’s Boys were among the inhibited companies. They were dissolved about 1590 because of the involvement of their dramatist, John Lyly, in the Marprelate affair. Lyly played critical roles in both the initiating pamphlet war and ensuing theatrical productions.

Lyly had been a protégé of Oxford, serving as dramatist for Oxford's Boys at Blackfriars, whose lease Oxford had transferred to him. Under the aegis of Oxford, Lyly also directed performances at court. Oxford's personal interest in Lyly led him to allude to the Marprelate controversy in the version of *Hamlet* that he was writing in the late 1580s, a performance of which was alluded to by Thomas Nashe in 1589. Dating as it does to 1589, Q1 is the so-called *Ur-Hamlet*.

Brief History of the Hamlet Story

Toward the end of the 12th century, Danish historian Saxo Grammaticus incorporated medieval Scandinavian legends about Amleth (Amlethus) into his *Gesta Danorum* (*Deeds of the Danes*). Shakespeare may have referred directly to Saxo, but he borrowed more obviously from volume five of François de Belleforest's *Histoires Tragiques* (1572), which loosely translated and substantially embellished Saxo's tale.²

The first known mention of an onstage *Hamlet* appeared in Nashe's preface to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* in 1589. Theatrical impresario Philip Henslowe lists a performance of a *Hamlet* in his diary in 1594. In his *Wits Miserie* (1596), Thomas Lodge speaks of *Hamlet* performed at the Theatre.

Nashe's 1589 mention of *Hamlet* comes very early in any career arc imaginable for William Shakspeare. In 1585, twenty-one-year-old Shakspeare became a father of twins in Stratford. Then he dropped entirely out of sight for seven years, until Robert Greene's cryptic attack on an "upstart crow" in *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* (1592), which many believe refers to William of Stratford. Even if so, we lack documented evidence that William Shakspeare had written any specific work—or even his own signature—by 1592. To claim that he had composed a draft of *Hamlet* yet earlier, by 1589, requires a leap of faith that most orthodox scholars cannot fully manage.

Consequently, the 1589 *Hamlet* is frequently asserted to have been written by someone other than Shakspeare and is referred to by many scholars as the *Ur-Hamlet*, a phantom play now lamentably lost, its author regrettably unknown.³ That tack of argument discreetly allows young Shakspeare a few additional years to fledge as Greene's upstart crow in 1592, perhaps making Henslowe's 1594 *Hamlet* or Lodge's 1596 *Hamlet* more conceivably a creation of the Stratford man.⁴ However, orthodox chronologies usually date William

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Shakespeare's first *Hamlet* (by which they usually mean Q2) to within a couple years either side of 1600, shortly before a *Hamlet* play was entered into the Stationers' Register in 1602.

Q1 was published in 1603. Although the view has been vigorously challenged, Q1 is most frequently characterized by orthodox scholars as a "pirated," "corrupt," and/or "memorially reconstructed" derivative of Q2. That is, although published first, Q1 is conventionally considered to be a defective knockoff of Q2. In that orthodox view, in about 1600 the by-now mature and successful William Shakspeare stooped to adapting (or, frankly, stealing) the old *Ur-Hamlet*, which he revised into the manuscript that would be published as Q2. That new *Hamlet* of his was perhaps still in repertory on stage and therefore had not yet been printed by 1603, which created the opportunity for the presumed piracy, the bootlegged Q1, to jump the publishing queue. Q2 did achieve publication in 1604, with a press run that extended into 1605.

The third primary version of *Hamlet* appeared in FF, the collected plays of "William Shakespeare." FF was printed in 1623, nineteen years after the death of Oxford and seven years after the death of William Shakspeare. Of FF's thirty-six plays, fully half are not known to have been previously published. For example, *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, and *The Tempest* were all first published posthumously in FF, no matter whether the Earl of Oxford or William Shakspeare is their presumed author.

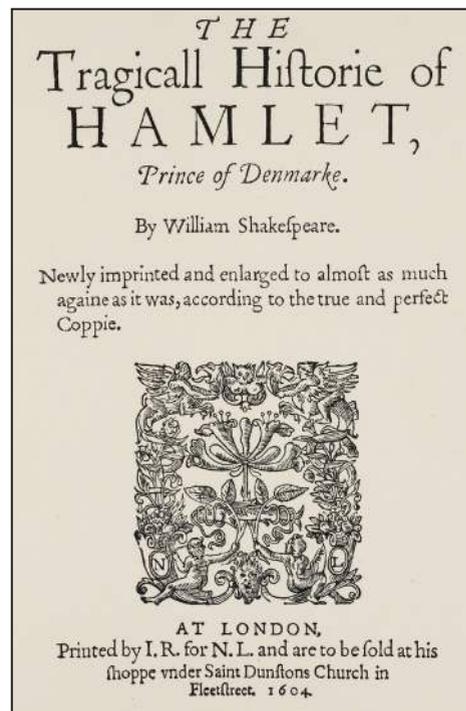
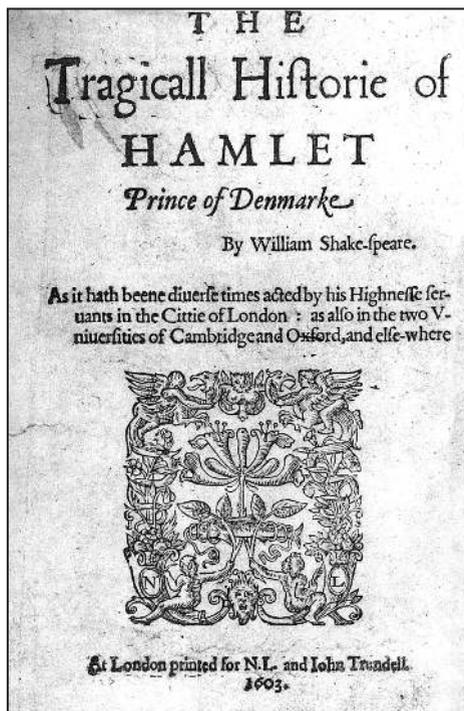


Figure 1: *Hamlet* Q1, published in 1603. Figure 2: *Hamlet* Q2, published in 1604.

Relationships among the Primary *Hamlets*

The interconnections among Q1, Q2, and FF—the primary *Hamlets*—have been endlessly debated by Shakespeare scholars. As a general tenet, I accept as authoritative the carefully reasoned and evidenced demonstration by Margrethe (Eddi) Jolly in her *First Two Quartos of Hamlet* that, on several internal metrics, Q1 can consistently and convincingly be shown to occupy an intermediate position between the Belleforest narrative source for *Hamlet* and Q2. For example, compared to Q2, Q1 employs a higher proportion of older verb forms than does Q2, uses terms that more closely translate Belleforest, and models its major characters more closely on the French source, all of which strongly suggests Q1's transitional status between Belleforest and Q2. In sum, a first-draft-and-revision model best explains the relationship between Q1 and Q2 (Jolly 60–61). I envision many more drafts than two, but the point is that Q1 was early and Q2 was later in a continuum of manuscript revisions.

For reasons explored below, I also concur with Jolly's assessment not only that Q1 represents an early (1589) stage but that it was William Shakespeare's own draft of *Hamlet* (184–93). Q2 was revised at considerable length from Q1, chiefly by Shakespeare, although perhaps incorporating other influences as well. The texts of both Q2 and FF show evidence of at least some adjustment around 1600, notably in FF's possible allusion to the War of the Theatres and the revival of boy-actor troupes.

Despite ample argument to the contrary, the publishing history of *Hamlet* is straightforward. As early as 1920, Frank Hubbard countered the rising theories of an illicit Q1 by emphasizing the regular progression of publication from Q1 to Q2 and then well beyond. The first two quartos of *Hamlet* each bore a title page attributing it to “William Shakespeare.” They were both published by the reputable Nicholas Ling, whose rights to *Hamlet* were transferred legally to John Smethwick in 1607. Smethwick then published quartos of *Hamlet* in 1611 and 1637, plus a third, undated quarto. He also held shares in the First Folio (1623) and the Second Folio (1632). Between them, Ling and Smethwick maintained a continuous, legitimate line of *Hamlet* publications that lasted well over thirty years, beginning with Ling's Q1 in 1603 and lasting through Smethwick's quarto of 1637 (Hubbard 18–19).

Why Do the Tragedians of the City Travel?

Three counterpart versions of a passage appear in the primary *Hamlets*. In all three, Rosencrantz and/or Guildenstern (with the variant spellings of their names in each version) inform the prince of the imminent arrival of a traveling troupe of players at Elsinore. The troupe is identified in all three versions as the Tragedians of the City. The prince then asks why the actors are traveling instead of performing at home.

Q1 (7.266–273)⁵

- Hamlet: How comes it that they travel? Do they grow resty?
- Gilderstone: No, my lord, their reputation holds as it was wont.
- Hamlet: How, then?
- Gilderstone: I'faith, my lord, novelty carries it away. For the principal public audience that came to them, are turned to private plays, and to the humour of children.

Q2 (2.2.293–299)

- Hamlet: How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.
- Rosencrantz: I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.
- Hamlet: Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?
- Rosencrantz: No, indeed are they not.

FF (2.2.328–360)

- Hamlet: How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.
- Rosincrance: I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.
- Hamlet: Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?
- Rosincrance: No, indeed they are not.
- Hamlet: How comes it? Do they grow rusty?
- Rosincrance: Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace. But there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for't. These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.
- Hamlet: What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escotted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards if they should grow themselves to common players—as it is most like if their means are no better—their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?

Rosincrance: Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tar them to controversy. There was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

Hamlet: Is't possible?

Guiltensterne: O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

Hamlet: Do the boys carry it away?

Rosincrance: Ay, that they do, my lord—Hercules and his load too.

Innovation and Inhibition

Hamlet asks in Q1 why the company is traveling. Gilderstone's response concerns the "novelty" of child actors in private theaters that has drawn audiences away from the adult companies in public theaters. The implication is that, because of straitened finances, the adult company must tour to find remoter audiences that have not yet fallen under the faddish spell of the children in the city. Significantly, neither "innovation" nor "inhibition" is mentioned.

In Q2 it is Rosencrantz who answers Hamlet, although his reply is opaque. Hamlet asks about the troupe's travels and Rosencrantz talks instead about the players' "inhibition," which he leaves unexplained except to indicate that it was caused by "the late innovation," which he also does not explain. Hamlet presses for a more direct reply, this time asking whether the company is as popular ("followed") as previously. He learns that their "estimation" is not what it once was (contrary to their "reputation" that still "holds as it was wont" in Q1). Rosencrantz's implicit message, then, is that the troupe has lost popularity in the city and must travel to find new audiences. Q2 does not mention "children."

Rosincrance's answer in FF is also initially unresponsive to Hamlet's question. As in Q2, the courtier again cites an unexplained "inhibition" deriving from an unexplained "innovation." However, Hamlet follows up by asking a question similar to the one he also posed in Q1, about whether the adult players have grown "rusty" ("resty" in Q1).⁶ Rosencrantz then elaborates on the outlandishly enthusiastic reception that the child actors are receiving. He also calls attention to the "controversy" that involves "much throwing about of brains." Again, it is left implicit that the adult players travel because they have lost much of their customary audience in that "controversy" to the boys, who "carry it away."

However, another possible interpretation is that the "controversy" described in FF has brought down on the adult players some form of official displeasure, or "inhibition." Rather than resorting to touring because of direct economic losses that they have suffered from the competition of children's

companies, the adult actors might have had to leave the city and go on tour under a cloud of disapproval from civic authorities. As demonstrated below, official suppression rather than economic displacement is at the heart of what happened in 1589.

Innovation as “Insurrection” and “Novelty”

Commentators on the passages generally strive to identify the alluded-to “innovation” because it is the primary cause of a subsequent “inhibition.” That is, as Rosencrantz has framed it, the inhibition “comes by the means of” the innovation. Commentators regularly note two principal meanings of *innovation* (see Crystal and Crystal, “innovation”):

1. *Innovation* can signify some kind of disturbance or challenge to the established order ranging from, say, commotion to “controversy” (which word is used in FF) to tumult to armed insurrection, rebellion, or revolution.
2. Not surprisingly, *innovation* can mean simply something that is new—that is, a “novelty” (the word used in Q1). More broadly, it can denote a fashion, vogue, fad, craze, or the like.

Based on expectations that a topical allusion in *Hamlet* would refer to an event or situation from about 1600, orthodox scholarship regularly acknowledges either (or both) of two chief candidates for the pertinent “innovation” at that time. The first candidate is the February 1601 rebellion of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who had recently lost the favor of the queen. Essex and his principal supporters engaged William Shakspeare’s company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, to stage *Richard II* for them at the Globe. The performance included the politically sensitive scene of deposing and later murdering God’s own chosen monarch. The conspirators then marched on the palace of Whitehall the next morning but failed to spark the popular protest against the queen that they had counted on. Essex was quickly apprehended and tried. The commissioners who condemned him to death included Oxford. Essex was beheaded before the month was out.

The other leading “innovation” candidate is the novelty of the return to the stage of the Children of St. Paul’s in about 1600, after the troupe had been shut down in about 1590. Paul’s Boys and the Children of the Chapel, together with the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, engaged in a boisterous War of the Theatres (1599–1601). That hubbub consisted of satirical attacks between the playwrights John Marston and Thomas Dekker on one side and Ben Jonson on the other. The tit-for-tat succession of plays on the two sides is often the presumed referent for Guildensterne’s comment in FF that “there’s been much throwing about of brains” and for Rosincrance’s description of the entertainment value of watching the poet and the player go to “cuffs.”

Inhibition: The Essex Rebellion and the Revival of Paul's Boys

The prime candidates for Rosencrantz's "late innovation" are first the Essex rebellion and second the revival of Paul's Boys and their role in the War of the Theatres. Assuming for the sake of argument that either main definition of *innovation*—disturbance or novelty—might be a reasonable postulate, the challenge in either case is then to forge the causal link expressed by Rosencrantz, in which the posited innovation entailed a subsequent inhibition. Given the rebellion of Essex in 1601, what historical inhibition, prohibition, or ban did it engender? Alternatively, given an Elizabethan craze for boy actors around 1600, especially as the boys performed in a satirical war of words between playwrights, what historical inhibition, prohibition, or ban was triggered by that fad?

To take the first candidate first, E. K. Chambers (*Hamlet* 196) considered the conspiracy of Essex to be Rosencrantz's "innovation." He interpreted the subsequent inhibition to be the supposed disgrace of the Globe company at court for having played *Richard II*, deposition and all, for the conspirators. Shunned at court, according to Chambers, the Lord Chamberlain's players perhaps traveled on tour. Thus, the political innovation or conspiracy led to an inhibition—banning the players from court—which circumstance compelled them to travel.

John Dover Wilson (*Hamlet*, 2.2.335–336n) accepted the conclusion that if "innovation" were taken in the sense of a political upheaval in 1601, it "can hardly be other than that of the Earl of Essex," but he observes that neither the Lord Chamberlain's Men nor the Admiral's Men were inhibited because of the abortive uprising. E.A.J. Honigmann (27) states flatly that "the Essex rebellion did not lead to an 'inhibition.'" Harold Jenkins agrees that "there is no evidence that the rebellion in fact led to a closure of the theatres" (2.2.330–331, Long Note), and Susanne Wofford concurs: William Shakspeare's company "were not in fact punished by inhibition" (2.2.324n).

Chambers himself came to agree. As he pointed out in 1923, far from tramping the provinces in exile, Shakspeare's company was in fact acting at court on the virtual eve of the earl's execution. "On the whole," Chambers conceded, "there is no reason to suppose that any serious blame was attached to the Chamberlain's men" for any part they played in the Essex uprising (*Stage*, 2: 204, 206).

A century after he recanted, Chambers's original suggestion nonetheless still lives on in the literature. However, while the dramatized treatment of an event, person, or situation need not adhere faithfully in all particulars to the alluded-to history, any editorial commentary is unsatisfying that explains

the “innovation–inhibition” connection in *Hamlet* by invoking the historical Essex Rebellion but without referring to an identifiable, historical inhibition. We are brought to wonder why Rosencrantz (and William Shakespeare) bothered to bring up an “inhibition” at all. That is particularly the case because the inhibition is not identified by Rosencrantz, which implies that Shakespeare expected the mere mention of a current or “late” inhibition to be so obvious to the patrons in the audience that they would catch the allusion on their own.

Switching to the children’s companies, then, “innovation” might refer to the new theatrical vogue for children around 1600 that is described in some detail in the FF-only passage about an “eyrie of children, little eyases” (Wofford, 2.2.324n). Paul’s Boys had returned to the London theatrical scene by about 1600, after an absence of about a decade. Their reemergence suggests to some the “novelty” of Q1 and/or the cognate “innovation” of Q2 and FF. Paul’s Boys and the Children of the Chapel Royal were then involved with the adult company of the Lord Chamberlain in the War of the Theatres. That circumstance, too, might qualify as an “innovation” in that it was a competition of one-upmanship between playwrights and adult and boy companies, conspicuously carried out on public and private stages with “much to-do.”

What would be the inhibition that was imposed because of the theater war? Although with differing degrees of endorsement, some editors conjecture that the pertinent inhibition might be a Privy Council order of June 22, 1600, which limited the number of London playhouses and performances. For example, Henry Hudson annotates “inhibition” as “referring, no doubt to an order of the Privy Council, issued in June 1600” (110n47). Cyrus Hoy defines the term as a prohibition against performances of plays, “possibly with reference to [the] decree of the Privy Council of 22 June 1600” (2.2.310–311n). Honigmann identifies a connection between the Privy Council decree and the children’s companies. He characterizes the 1600 order as an “inhibition with a vengeance” (28), directed specifically against the innovation that was the renewal of acting by the boy companies. Let us then examine that decree.

The Order of the Privy Council—June 22, 1600

The order that the Privy Council issued on June 22, 1600, was in response to “diverse complaints” made to members of the Council about “the manifold abuses and disorders that have grown and do continue by occasion of many houses erected and employed in and about the City of London for common stage plays” (Chambers, *Stage*, 4: 329–330). According to the decree, the multitude of playhouses, and the “misgovernment” of them, had become the “daily occasion of the idle riotous and dissolute living of great numbers of people” (330).

The Council recognized that it was not the plays and theaters as such that were the central problem, but the ancillary attractions and temptations that drew people away from their honest work and potentially into mischiefs of many kinds. Overall, then, the Council declared that “the use and exercise of such plays, not being evil in itself,” could be tolerated in a well-governed state.

The Privy Council’s solution to the issue of retaining playhouses and their companies, while simultaneously redressing their abuses, was to restrict the number of playhouses within the City of London to two. Furthermore, each house was to perform no more than twice per week, and not ever on the Sabbath. Edward Alleyn of the Lord Admiral’s Men was granted the license for one of the allowed houses. By terms of that grant, Alleyn in 1600 built the Fortune Theater, which supplanted the Curtain, as provided for in the decree. The other allowed house was the Globe, as newly built and occupied by the Lord Chamberlain’s Men in late 1599 (Chambers, *Stage*, 4: 330–331).



Figure 3: The Globe theater location on Wenceslaus Hollar’s 1647 Map of London.

However, the 1600 decree essentially reasserts a 1594 reordering of theatrical affairs, in which plays at London inns had been banned. According to Andrew Gurr, that earlier circumstance appeased the Lord Mayor by removing from his jurisdiction a source of habitual complaints about plague as well as crowds and their various vices. Likewise, the 1600 decree’s restriction of performances to two playhouses in the suburbs had been previously established in 1594, when the Admiral’s Men and the Lord Chamberlain’s Men climbed to preeminence in the London theater scene, forming a government-approved theatrical “duopoly,” as Gurr (57) terms it.

The promotion of those two companies in 1594 “seems to have been a fresh concept set up by two Privy Councilors” (Gurr 55), namely, Charles Howard, the Lord Admiral, and George Carey, the Lord Chamberlain, who became the respective patrons of the two allowed companies.⁷ Further, the Admiral’s Men, under the leadership of Edward Alleyn, were allocated to the Rose, which was owned by Philip Henslowe, Alleyn’s father-in-law. The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, led by Richard Burbage, were allocated to the Theatre, which was owned by Richard’s father, James (55–57).

The 1600 order of the Privy Council assigned allowances to the same two companies that formed the duopoly in the 1594 arrangement. The limitation to two theaters was therefore not a new inhibition: the 1600 order reaffirmed the 1594 ordering of theatrical prerogatives and updated it to acknowledge that each of the two permissioned troupes now occupied a new theater, compared to 1594. The theatrical rearrangements of 1594 antedated the revival of the troupe of Paul’s Boys by some six years and the 1600 order itself nowhere mentions children. It is apparent that the 1600 measure was not launched against an “innovation” of children’s companies in 1600, but instead revisited persistent problems that had plagued London’s lord mayors since even before the theatrical duopoly was established in 1594.

The Marprelate Innovation

Neither the Essex Rebellion nor the revival of boy companies adequately qualifies as Rosencrantz’s innovation that then provoked an inhibition against one or more acting companies.

A clue to a more likely linkage of innovation with inhibition emerges from a different perspective on Paul’s Boys. The children’s troupe that reappeared on London stages about 1600 had been disbanded since about 1590. However, to focus on their reappearance in 1600 as a possible innovation is perhaps to work at things backwards. We might instead first inquire into the cause of the boys’ disappearance a decade earlier. When we do, we find a clear sequence of innovation and subsequent inhibition.

Instead of regarding the *revival* of Paul’s Boys in about 1600 as an *innovation*, we can see the troupe’s *dissolution* in about 1590 as the result of an *inhibition*. That prohibition on acting was mandated by authorities as a direct consequence of a yet earlier commotion, the Marprelate controversy. To state it plainly: the Marprelate controversy of 1588–1590 is the “innovation” behind Rosencrantz’s report to Hamlet. Along with limits imposed on other companies because of the Marprelate innovation, the staying of Paul’s Boys plays in 1589 and the dissolution of Paul’s Boys in about 1590 are elements of Rosencrantz’s “inhibition.”

The Marprelate controversy began as a war of pamphlets that was itself part of a larger, preexisting contention between Puritans and adherents to the established Church of England. The Marprelate aspect of that continuing dissension started in reaction to *A Defense of the Government Established in the Church of England for Ecclesiastical Matters*, by Dr. John Bridges, dean of Salisbury. A tract by “Martin Marprelate,” conveniently referred to by the short title, *Epistle*, appeared in October 1588. With savage sarcasm, the *Epistle* directed a Puritan attack on Bridges’s work while mocking individual bishops and the Anglican episcopacy. Martin’s *Epitome* followed a month later, expounding similar themes.

Because the Martinist pamphlets had been published without allowance, the press that printed them was repeatedly moved to avoid detection by authorities. And for good reason. On February 13, 1589, the queen herself proclaimed her “high displeasure” with certain “schismatical and seditious” books lately published, clearly intending Martin’s *Epistle* and *Epitome*.⁸ She warned that anyone assisting the “contriving, writing, printing, publishing, or dispersing” of such books stood to answer for their actions “at their uttermost peril.” The queen considered the works to be “dangerous and wicked enterprises” that worked against “the Government ecclesiastical established by law...and also against the persons of the bishops, and others placed in authority ecclesiastical under her Highness by her authority” (Arber 109–111).

Orthodox Shakespearean scholarship must identify and justify an event around 1600 that might plausibly be called an innovation. The case is quite different when events of 1589 are examined. Charging that the “schismatical and seditious” Marprelate pamphlets posed threats to church and state, it was Queen Elizabeth herself who explicitly identified the tracts as an “innovation.” The queen declared in her February 1589 proclamation that those books and writings bring to ecclesiastical matters a “monstrous and apparent dangerous *innovation*.” Even more broadly, such attacks threaten “the overthrow of her Highness’ lawful prerogative, allowed by God’s law, and established by the laws of the realm.” All “such *innovations*” amount to the “willful breach” of the laws and statutes of the realm (Arber 109–110, emphases added).

Martin’s illegal tracts were innovations in their advocacy of fundamental ecclesiastical change, but they were also innovations in the revolutionary sense of potentially challenging the queen’s monarchical authority (Black 711). The opening salvos of the Marprelate challenge to church and state in fall 1588 followed closely upon the thwarted invasion of the Spanish Armada earlier that summer, leaving the Martinists open to portrayals as domestic insurgents (716, 719) in either deliberate or fortuitous league with foreign and/or Catholic adversaries of Elizabeth’s reign.

Despite the express “uttermost peril” of continuing their work, Martin or his confederates released five other tracts through 1589, for a total of seven Martinist publications. Meanwhile, the bishops found it expedient to recruit adroit, professional writers in response. The result was a nimble anti-Martinist pamphlet counteroffensive that could reach a public readership by matching the appeal of biting sarcasm on topical matters and the rapid pace of publication that the Martinists already enjoyed. Thomas Nashe is often credited as the author of the anti-Martinist tracts written by “Pasquill Cavaliero,” which were published in summer 1589 through summer 1590. John Lyly is identified as the author of *Pap with an Hatchet*, which appeared in September 1589.

John Lyly’s Association with Oxford

John Lyly had begun his literary career as a writer of prose romances. His two *Euphues* volumes—*Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) and *Euphues and His England* (1580)—are sometimes described as the earliest English novels. A wave of imitations of Lyly’s highly stylized language—called Euphuism—swept through English letters, although by about 1590 its patterned reliance on elaborate antithesis, alliteration, and allusions to classical mythology and fabulous natural history had become parodied as old fashioned.

It was probably through Lord Burghley, the queen’s Lord Treasurer, that Lyly began his association with Burghley’s son-in-law, Edward de Vere. Oxford appears to have rented rooms for Lyly at the Savoy Hospital by 1578. For his part, Lyly dedicated the second volume of his *Euphues* to Oxford and by 1582 was employed by the earl. Modern commentators often refer to Lyly as Oxford’s secretary.

The study of the influence of Lyly and Euphuism on Shakespeare is a staple of Shakespearean scholarship. However, John Dover Wilson, an orthodox scholar, made a case in 1905 for the influence of the Earl of Oxford upon Lyly, for it was not until his association with Oxford that Lyly conceived the idea of writing comedy. The interesting thing about Oxford, says Wilson (*Lyly* 87),

is that he also wrote comedy. Like many members of the nobility in those days he maintained his own company of players; and we find them in 1581 giving performances at Cambridge and Ipswich. His comedies, moreover, though now lost were placed in the same rank as those of [Richard] Edwardes by the Elizabethan critic [George] Puttenham⁹. . . . It was to Oxford’s patronage, therefore, and not to his subsequent connexion with the “children of Powles,” that Lyly owed his first dramatic impulse, and probably also his first dramatic success.¹⁰

Wilson considers the lyrics that Lyly integrated into his plays to be better than any songs of previous dramatists while also being superior to anything else Lyly himself had previously written. The best of Lyly's songs, Wilson says, "are to be ranked with Shakespeare's lyrics, and our greatest dramatist was only following Lyly's example when he introduced lyrics into his plays" (116). Lyly would become the dramatist of Paul's Boys and would have written songs for them. Before achieving that post, however, and while still in Oxford's employ, he had already written songs for his *Campaspe* and *Sapho and Phao*, "a fact which points again to de Vere, himself a lyricist of considerable powers, as Lyly's advisor and master" (116). In fact, the love of music was a bond between Oxford and Lyly that "played an important part in the beginning of our [English] comedy" (87).

Wilson explicitly recognizes Oxford's tutelage of Lyly in composing plays and lyrics. He then considers "Shakespeare"—by whom he means Shakspeare of Stratford—to have been a follower along a path set by Lyly. Thus, for Wilson, Shakespeare in the 1590s draws inspiration from Lyly's earlier dramatic efforts and lyrics in the 1580s, which in turn are indebted to Oxford's tutoring of Lyly. But if we consider Oxford *to be* William Shakespeare, a profound reversal occurs. Instead of influencing Shakespeare, Lyly first begins writing plays and songs under the personal instruction and example of Shakespeare himself, in the 1580s, at a formative juncture of English drama.

Oxford was also instrumental in placing Lyly in the position, not just of writing dramas, but of staging them as well. The earl passed on to Lyly the lease of the Blackfriars playhouse¹¹ and provided his boys' company to perform in it. Further, Oxford's connections made it possible for Lyly and his troupe to perform at court. Lyly brought his *Campaspe* and *Sapho and Phao* before the Queen's Majesty on respective occasions in 1584. Henry Evans, also associated with the theatrical enterprise, took a play called *Agamemnon and Ulysses* to court later that year.¹² The Earl of Oxford was the official patron, or royal impresario, for all three plays. The prologues of the first two plays indicate that they were also performed at the Blackfriars Theater. The records are unclear as to their performers at court, but Chambers (*Stage*, 2: 17) posits that the company drew upon combined members of the Children of the Chapel, Paul's Boys, and Lord Oxford's Boys.

A hiatus in the appearances of Lyly's plays at court occurred between the staging of the 1584 comedies and January 1588, when his *Gallathea* was performed, followed by *Endymion* in February. *Endymion* especially commands our attention for its possible associations with Oxford. It is broadly allegorical: Queen Cynthia is an obvious allusion to Queen Elizabeth. In the play, Tellus allegorizes the treacherous allures of Catholicism. Jealous of Endymion's truer love for Cynthia, she abets an enchanted sleep for him. Only Cynthia's kiss finally rescues him. David Bevington identifies Oxford as Endymion's referent. Lyly's "portrait of Endymion is one of a generically

ideal Elizabethan courtier,” Bevington allows, and “Oxford may be implicitly put forth as a representative of that ideal” (“Catholic Question,” 43n11).

De Vere had stirred Elizabeth’s anger more than once. While estranged from his wife in 1581, for example, he had sired a son by one of the queen’s maids of honor. For that transgression, he served time in the Tower of London and then in confinement at home. But he reconciled with his wife in 1582 and was formally forgiven by Queen Elizabeth, who allowed him to return to court in 1583.

Bevington observes that the reconciliation of queen and earl would have been stale news in February of 1588. A more likely topicality in *Endymion* was Oxford’s Catholicism. The earl had returned from Italy a secret Catholic in 1576 but had since confessed that lapse to Elizabeth and had eventually been restored to her grace. He had even voted to condemn to death Elizabeth’s Catholic rival, Mary, Queen of Scots. However, Mary’s execution in February of 1587 spurred Spanish military mobilization. As the threat of King Philip’s invasion mounted, it was feared that his plans to subdue England relied not just on a mighty navy and a formidable continental army but also on an internal revolt led by a class of old-family English nobles—perhaps including Oxford—who might have been suspected of harboring latent Catholic sympathies.¹³

In this intensely charged and unsettled context, *Endymion* is Lyly’s appeal to Elizabeth for leniency and forgiveness—for his former patron, Oxford, surely, but also for the wider population of Catholic-inclined Englishmen. “By the climactic theatrical gesture of Cynthia’s kiss,” Bevington says, “Lyly implicitly urges Elizabeth to recognize the essential goodness of loyal English Catholics like Oxford and to forgive their indiscreet attachment to the Catholic faith” (34). Unfortunately for Lyly, though, an inhibition against his plays soon followed.

The Inhibition of the Children of Paul’s

While the Marprelate pamphlet war was at its height in 1589, the controversy branched off into another arena, moving from page to stage. Serving as both a polemical pamphleteer and the dramatist for the Boys of Paul’s, John Lyly prominently bridged those two aspects of the innovation, and ultimately was central to the consequent inhibition as well.

A caricature of the character Martin Marprelate was brought onto the stage, as we learn from Nashe’s anti-Martinist tract, *Return of the Renowned Cavaliero Pasquill of England*, published in October 1589. There, Nashe describes having seen an old-style morality play in which Martin was depicted as physically assaulting the personification of Divinity. “It was this performance which occasioned the temporary inhibition of plays in the City,” comments J. Payne

Collier (266). The Privy Council ordered the Lord Mayor of London to stay all plays within the city. On November 6, the Lord Mayor reported to Lord Burghley that he had dutifully met with the players of the lord admiral and Lord Strange and charged them to forbear playing until further notice. The Admiral's Men had complied with the prohibition, but Lord Strange's Men contemptuously defied orders and performed again that same afternoon (Chambers, *Stage*, 4: 305).

In *Pap with an Hatchet*, Lyly alludes to the same staged incident as Nashe. He reveals that similar anti-Martin plays had already been written but had been banned from performance. "Would those comedies might be allowed to be played that are penned," Lyly complains, "and then I am sure he [Martin] would be deciphered, and so, perhaps, discouraged" (Scragg 85).

Lyly muses about a hypothetical play in which the Martin character might be hanged from a tree. A marginal note in his tract observes that, were that scene to be "showed at Paul's, it will cost you fourpence; at the Theatre, twopence" (Scragg 86). Collier emphasizes the significance of that remark:

Here we see named the very theatres at which dramatic productions upon the subject of the dispute between Martinists and the Bishops had been represented—viz., at St. Paul's by the dramatic children, and by the actors at the Theatre in Shoreditch. (267)

The actors at the Theatre at that time were the Queen's Men, whose aid the bishops had sought to combat the Puritans (Collier, 267–268). But the dramatist for the "dramatic children" of St. Paul's was Lyly himself. That is, the anti-Martin plays that were already penned but prohibited from performance were Lyly's own.

What is it that so disturbed the Privy Council about anti-Martinist plays that they directed the Lord Mayor to stop them? That question is answered in letters of the Privy Council on November 12, 1589, pronouncing its displeasure that players were imprudently and ignorantly meddling in affairs of "Divinity and State." Using "inconvenience" to denote "harm" (Crystal and Crystal, "inconvenience"), the Council noted "that there hath grown some inconvenience by common plays and interludes" in that "the players take upon themselves to handle in their plays certain matters of Divinity and of State unfit to be suffered [allowed]" (Chambers, *Stage*, 4: 306).

Although the anti-Martinists with their tracts and plays ostensibly defended the queen, their continued engagement with the Martinists kept the implicit challenges to Elizabeth's authority actively before the public. The queen eventually had an interest in squelching both sides of the matter. Accordingly, "all the playing companies for a time were suppressed," observes Gurr. The adult companies "were considerably dampened" by their part in the

Marprelate affair and “the boy companies did not resurface for several years” (46).

No direct documentation of a closure of the Children of Paul’s is known, but by late 1589 the performances of the boys’ troupe were stayed and at that time, or shortly later, the company was disbanded and some of its plays were released to book publishers. The printer’s address “to the Reader” in Lyly’s *Endymion* explicitly references the situation: “Since the plays in Paul’s were dissolved, there are certain comedies come to my hands by chance which were presented before Her Majesty at several times by the Children of Paul’s” (Bevington, *Endymion*, 74).

Endymion had been entered into the Stationers’ Register in October 1591, and the quarto bearing the printer’s address to the reader appeared the same year. Bevington suggests that “the acquisition of these plays by a publisher may have been occasioned by the closing down of the boys’ acting companies in 1590” (*Endymion* 1). Chambers sums up the affair neatly:

Lyly was one of the literary men employed about 1589 to answer the Martin Marprelate pamphleteers in their own vein, and to this end he availed himself of the Paul’s stage, apparently with the result that when it suited the government to disavow its instruments, that stage was incontinently suppressed. (*Stage*, 2: 18)

In short, the inhibition against Lyly’s Children of St. Paul’s was a direct result of Lyly’s participation in the Martin Marprelate innovation as both pamphleteer and dramatist. It is that series of events surrounding the Marprelate controversy of 1588–1590 that best corresponds to the “novelty” of Q1 *Hamlet* and to the linkage of “innovation” and “inhibition” in Q2 and FF.

Oxford’s Life Reflected in *Hamlet*

It may be difficult to imagine a 1589 *Hamlet* by young Shakspeare of Stratford, but that is not the case for Oxford, who likely wrote and revised *Hamlet* over many years before 1589. He perhaps began writing his *Hamlet* as a teenager, when Saxo’s history of Amleth was close at hand in Burghley’s library, and he thereafter also drew upon his life experiences to flesh out his *Hamlet* drama. As a cursory illustration of Oxford’s long preparations for a 1589 *Hamlet*, here are six selected examples of correspondences between his early life and *Hamlet*:

- In all three primary *Hamlets*, the Danish king calls for lights and abruptly withdraws from the *Mousetrap*. His sweeping departure with torchbearers strikingly evokes Queen Elizabeth’s angry exit from an offending skit at Hinchinbrooke in 1564, when she took all the

attendant torches with her and left everyone else in the dark—as personally witnessed by the fourteen-year-old earl (Whittemore 17–18).

- Hamlet calls the king’s counselor a “fishmonger” in all three *Hamlets*. As minister to Elizabeth, Oxford’s eventual father-in-law, William Cecil (advanced by many scholars as a model for *Hamlet*’s Corambis/Polonius), designated each Wednesday a mandatory fish day (known colloquially as “Cecil’s Fast”) from 1563 to 1584. That policy effectively made him England’s foremost seller of fish, or “fishmonger.”
- In Q1, Ofelia laments the mad disintegration of Hamlet’s fine qualities as “courtier, scholar, soldier,” prompting commentators to editorialize on the traits of the ideal courtier, a literary preoccupation of elite circles throughout 16th-century Europe. The leading exemplar of that genre was Baldassare Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* (*The Courtier*). Bartholomew Clerke’s Latin translation of Castiglione’s book in 1572 was sponsored by the twenty-two-year-old Oxford, who wrote a Latin preface to the volume.
- Hamlet’s “To be or not to be” soliloquy and his attitudes throughout the play draw so closely upon themes in Jerome Cardan’s *De Consolatione* that orthodox scholar Hardin Craig calls Cardan’s volume “Hamlet’s book.” Thomas Bedingfield’s English translation of “Hamlet’s book,” *Cardanus Comforte*, was published in 1573 “by commandment” of Oxford, who provided a commendatory letter for the book.
- Orthodox scholar Geoffrey Bullough proposes the historical murder of Francesco Maria I della Rovere, Duke of Urbino, as a model for *The Murder of Gonzago*, the play-within-the-play in *Hamlet*. The Italian duke and Gonzago (and King Hamlet) died alike from poison administered through an ear. Bullough also suggests that Titian’s portrait of the armored duke inspired the fully armored Ghost in *Hamlet* (Bullough 31–34). Oxford traveled in Italy in 1575–76, where he would have encountered the duke’s story and read it firsthand in “choice Italian.” He settled for some months in Venice, near Titian’s workshop, where he could have seen a model portrait of the duke by Titian himself, instead of the undistinguished engraved copy that Bullough assumes the untraveled William Shakspeare had to rely upon.
- In 1579, Oxford and Philip Sidney notoriously quarrel over tennis. Oxford self-mockingly has Corambis list “tennis” among vices in Q1, while Polonius cites “falling out at tennis” in Q2/FF.

By the time of Nashe’s reference to *Hamlet* in 1589, Oxford’s oft-revised manuscript incorporated many layers of allusion to contemporary societal events and his own experiences and personal connections over the preceding quarter century. Perhaps the chief topical allusion in 1589 was the Marprelate

controversy. Oxford's close connection with Lyly, his former troupe manager, establishes a context for his nod to the Marprelate controversy in *Hamlet*. The matter was probably still ongoing while he was writing the Q1 Tragedians of the City passage.

That Q1 passage refers to the role of child actors in the controversy. However, the mention of children must postdate publication of Martin's *Epistle* and *Epitome* in October and November 1588, respectively, which began the controversy.

Another pertinent date for the Q1 passage can also be deduced. Lyly's *Pap with an Hatchet*, published in September 1589, complained that his comedies were no longer allowed to be played. Simply said, Paul's Boys were inhibited. Q1 does not mention an inhibition, most likely because its composition predates the suppression of Paul's Boys. The Tragedians of the City passage thus probably dates to 1589, or more specifically, between very late 1588, when the public arousal over Martin's two publications began, and September 1589, when Lyly's plays with the Boys of Paul's are known to have been stayed and the word "inhibition" would first have become relevant.

Between those two dates, in February 1589, Queen Elizabeth provided a connection between the historical Marprelate episode and *Hamlet* by labeling the Martinist volumes an "innovation." That term is picked up in Q2 and FF, but the affair involving child actors is called a "novelty" in Q1. The Q1 term suggests that Oxford had written the Q1 passage before February 1589, using the less accusatory "novelty" as regards to the children as the Marprelate controversy was starting to unfold. By September 1589, however, the queen's angry "innovation" was a salient part of the public understanding of the affair and "inhibition" had become newly consequential to both child and adult acting companies. Oxford began linking the two terms as an alliterative pair in his post-1589 revisions of *Hamlet*, versions of which were eventually published as Q2 and FF.

Conclusions

Q1 *Hamlet* is Oxford-as-Shakespeare's precedent effort to his Q2 and FF *Hamlets*. In an apparent topical allusion, Q1 refers to a "novelty" whereas Q2 and FF correspondingly refer to an "innovation" that spawned an "inhibition." Orthodox attempts to identify a plausible historical referent for the "innovation" in about 1600 have failed to identify a corresponding "inhibition."

In contrast, the Martin Marprelate controversy of 1588–1590 provides clear referents for the "innovation" and "inhibition" of *Hamlet*. The Marprelate affair had two aspects: publication of rival Martinist and anti-Martinist tracts, seconded by stage performances by adult and child troupes, specifically Paul's

Boys. Their playwright, John Lyly, participated prominently in both aspects of the affair.

Before his association with Paul's Boys, Lyly had been employed and tutored by Oxford to present performances of Oxford's Boys to the public at Blackfriars and to the queen at court. Oxford himself was a lauded court poet and dramatist. As evidenced by the multiple aspects of Oxford's life as reflected in *Hamlet*, Oxford had been revising a Hamlet play throughout the 1570s and 1580s. It was a natural progression for Oxford to incorporate into his current *Hamlet* script in 1589 an allusion to his former troupe manager's early involvement in the Marprelate controversy.

Four chronological mileposts guide interpretation of *Hamlet's* allusion to the Marprelate controversy:

1. *Late 1588*: The controversy begins with publication of the first two Martin Marprelate tracts.
2. *February 1589*: Queen Elizabeth explicitly denounces the Martinist books as seditious "innovations," authoritatively attaching that term to the controversy.
3. *September 1589*: Lyly complains that his plays for Paul's Boys have been halted, for which the term "inhibition" would apply.
4. *1589–1591*: No precise date for it is known, but the dissolution of Paul's Boys is revealed in Lyly's *Endymion*, published in late 1591. Other boy companies also disappear for several years and even the adult companies are "suppressed" and "considerably dampened" (Gurr 46), which is to say, they were also inhibited.

Hamlet's "innovation" and "inhibition" are clearly connected to the unfolding aspects of the Marprelate controversy. The year 1589 emerges as a pivotal reference point for dating *Hamlet*, particularly because early 1589 is arguably the latest time that Q1's "novelty" would have been pertinent, before the queen's "innovation" supplanted it. Late 1589, in turn, is when Q2/FF's linkage of "innovation" with "inhibition" would first have been appropriate.

Q1 was not printed until 1603. However, the Q1 text was written by Oxford in 1589, even as the Marprelate affair played out. We can date its text—as indicated, for example, by *novelty* rather than *innovation* and *inhibition*—to early 1589. The Q1 script was performed in 1589, perhaps when the Queen's Men visited either the university or the town of Oxford (Cairncross 113). That performance or one like it prompted Nashe to refer to the tragedy by name, also in 1589. In short, Q1 is the 1589 *Ur-Hamlet*. The *Ur-Hamlet* is not lost, and its author is neither Kyd nor Anonymous, but Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Dedication:

This paper is lovingly dedicated to my sister-in-law Sarah Roberts for her interest and encouragement for previous writing endeavors.

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I thank two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions, and I am grateful for thoughtful advice and aid from Gary Goldstein. Remaining faults are mine.

Endnotes

1. I use versions of “William Shakspere [sic] of Stratford” to refer to the Stratford actor and theater shareholder, traditionally held to be the famous poet and playwright. I use “William Shakespeare” as a neutral term to refer to the author of the Shakespeare canon. In contexts focusing on the personal identity of the author, it will be readily apparent that I consider Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, to be “Shakespeare.”
2. Oxford was fluent in both Latin and French, the languages of the narrative sources of the Hamlet play. Furthermore, Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* is known to have been available to the young Oxford both in the library of his tutor Sir Thomas Smith (Hughes 32) and again in the library of William Cecil (Jolly, “Burghley,” 12), in whose household Oxford was raised from the age of twelve until attaining his majority. Belleforest’s volume of *Histoires Tragiques* would have become available for Oxford’s own purchase as a young adult, just as he also bought Plutarch’s works in French in 1570 (Ward 33).
3. Based on perceived similarities between Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* and *Hamlet*, Kyd is commonly suggested—or baldly stated—to have also written the hypothetical *Ur-Hamlet*, which Will Shakspere later imitated or adapted. Although *The Spanish Tragedy* was probably written and published somewhat earlier, the play’s earliest documented performance, registration, and publication all occur in 1592. The conventionally presumed direction of influence is from Kyd to Will Shakspere, building on the assumption that Will Shakspere wrote Q2 *Hamlet* around 1600, which in turn is based on the tacit understanding that Will Shakspere would have been too inexperienced to have written a *Hamlet* of his own by 1589.

I am proposing that playwright Oxford-as-Shakespeare wrote the 1589 *Hamlet*, or *Ur-Hamlet*. That circumstance would deny Kyd the authorship of the *Ur-Hamlet* and possibly make *The Spanish Tragedy* an imitation of Oxford's 1589 *Hamlet* rather than the model for the Q2 *Hamlet*.

4. For example, Frederick Boas (25–26) calls attention to troupes of “little eyases” who occupied Blackfriars from 1577 to 1584. He specifically cites Oxford's Boys under John Lyly in his caution that external references in *Hamlet* might well predate circumstances circa 1601. He suggests that the *Hamlet* mentioned by Henslowe in 1594 and Lodge in 1596 is Will Shakspeare's Q1 but holds that Nashe's *Hamlet* of 1589 was probably by Thomas Kyd.

However, as an exception to my generalization about orthodox dating of *Hamlet*, Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor recognize a “process of production” that is irreducible to a single date because it potentially involves multiple manuscript drafts, performances in different venues, and publication of different texts. Given those considerations, “it becomes possible to admit” that a *Hamlet* by Shakespeare might date to 1589 or even earlier (*Hamlet* [Q2], 59).

5. The line numbers are those of the first and last lines of the corresponding passages, quoted here, in the two volumes (1604 and 1603/1623) of the Arden *Hamlet* edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor.
6. Hamlet in Q1 asks why the actors travel, wondering if perhaps they have grown “resty.” That obsolete word holds two contrary meanings. One might be parsed as “full of rest, or possessed by rest,” thus signifying “lazy,” “indolent,” or “sluggish” (OED “resty,” adj. 2). Editors have glossed the term to that effect, although it is opposite to Hamlet's purpose, which is to question why an established acting troupe is suddenly given to the active travail of touring the countryside instead of remaining comfortably at home in the city. The more pertinent meaning of “resty,” then, is “restive” (OED “resty” adj. 1b). Hamlet is thus asking if the actors have grown restless or unsettled for some reason. Gilderstone interprets this as Hamlet's concern for the actors' professional status and he assures Hamlet that the company has suffered no decline in its reputation. He instead points to the turning of audiences to the novelty of the child performers as the cause of the troupe's travels.

No analog to “resty” appears in Q2 but FF uses “rusty” in association with the FF-only Little Eyases passage. There, Hamlet learns that (contrary to the steady esteem that they hold in Q1) the tragedians in FF are no longer “so followed” as they once were. So, he asks if the actors

have therefore grown “rusty” from lack of performing. The June 1600 order of the Privy Council expresses a similar concern that playhouses be regulated but not entirely banned, in order to keep the actors “in exercise” (Chambers, *Stage*, 4: 330), especially for the benefit of the entertainment-hungry queen. Rosincrance assures Hamlet that the actors still perform as often as before (“their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace”) but their audience size has dwindled because fickle playgoers are thronging instead to the newly fashionable plays of the “little eyases.” Hence, it is implied, the company travels away from the city to find new audiences that are less distracted by urban fads.

7. Roslyn Knutson takes exception to crediting the duopoly entirely to the top-down efforts of Howard and Carey in 1594. Putative disorder and tumult had tormented companies of that year—plague, touring, splitting and amalgamation of companies, hastily cobbled-together repertories—and ostensibly led to their competitive reorganization by the interventions of the Council members. Amid all that noise, however, Knutson sees much continuity with conditions before and after 1594. For the players—the “socks and buskins on the ground”—matters were largely business as usual (Knutson 467).
8. It is conceivable that the queen’s decree was prompted and even written by Lord Burghley. The previous November, on the appearance of Martin’s *Epistle*, Burghley had written John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, to inform him of the queen’s wish that ecclesiastical authorities might search out the authors, accomplices, printers, and “secret dispersers” of the “lewd and seditious” pamphlet to apprehend and punish them (Arber 107–08).
9. Current author’s note: George Puttenham (77) opined in 1589 that Oxford and Richard Edwardes “deserve the highest prize...for Comedy and Enterlude.”
10. Wilson’s sources include R. Warwick Bond, who had expressed a similar opinion: “From the Earl, probably, it was that Lyly first received the dramatic impulse” (Bond, 1: 24).
11. This first Blackfriars Theater occupied part of a former Dominican priory near St. Paul’s Cathedral. The lease of that property, which Oxford had transferred to Lyly, was challenged in court and reverted to the claimant in 1584. Other spaces within the former monastery were purchased by James Burbage in 1596 and remodeled into a private theater as the second Blackfriars Theater.

12. Oxfordian scholars J. Thomas Looney (261–63), Eva Turner Clark (627), and Charlton Ogburn Jr. (680) all speculate that *Agamemnon and Ulysses* was an early drama of Oxford's that he later revised into *Troilus and Cressida*. Their arguments are based on the judgment that the parts of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* that involve Agamemnon and Ulysses are stylistically distinct from the parts involving Troilus and Cressida, which suggests to the commentators a conjoining of earlier and later efforts of the playwright.
13. Bevington's article closely follows the introduction to his Revels edition of *Endymion* (1996). In both of those publications, Bevington credits Josephine Waters Bennett with having identified the allegorical connection between *Endymion* and Oxford. Bevington's own chief contribution is his close examination of *Endymion* and Oxford within the specific context of the Catholic threat from both within and without the English realm in early 1588. Bevington and Bennett's focus is on Oxford in relation to John Lyly, *Endymion*, and Queen Elizabeth, without reference to the Shakespeare authorship question.

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When Were Shakespeare's Plays Written?

Three Major Plays as Test Cases

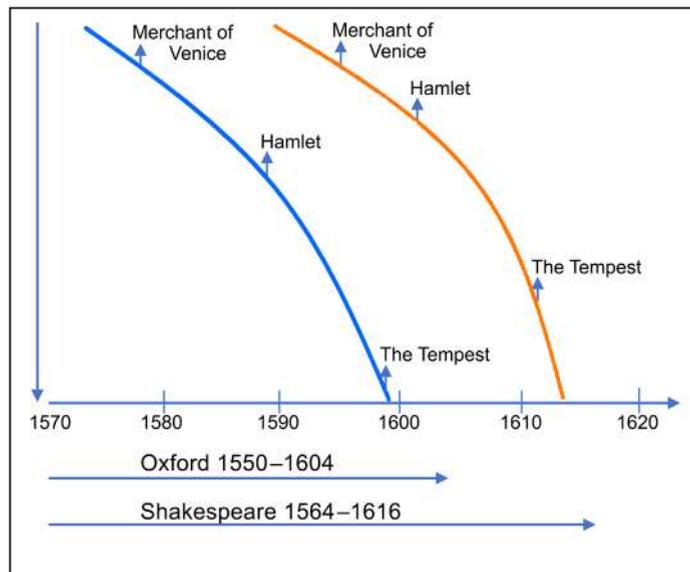
by Matt Hutchinson

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:

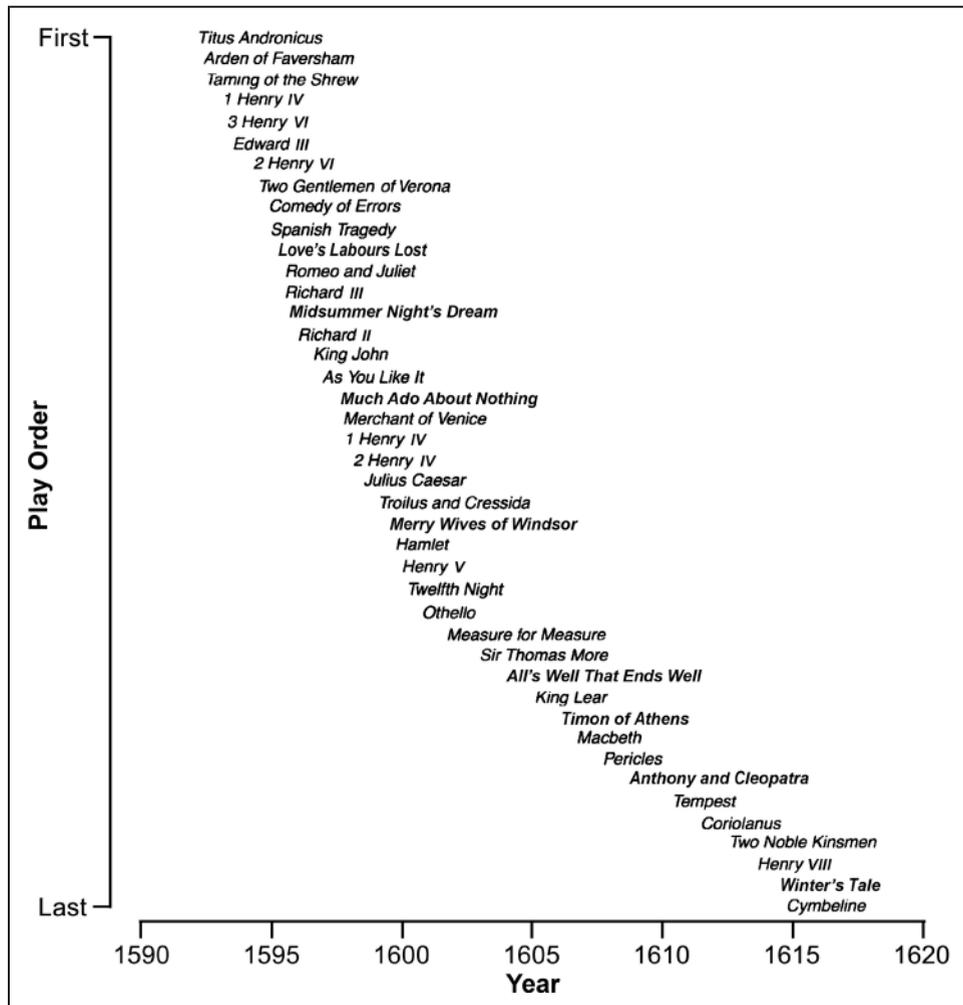
Table: 18 plays published for the first time in the 1623 ‘First Folio’		
<i>Title (in order of conventional date of composition)</i>	<i>Conventional date of composition</i>	<i>Time (years) between alleged composition date & printed date (1623)</i>
The Two Gentlemen of Verona	1589–91	32–34
The Taming 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:

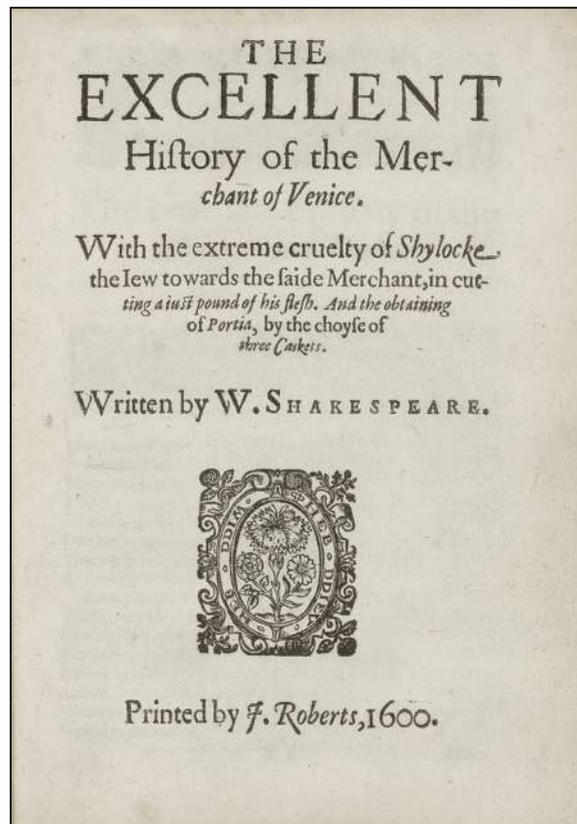
Scholars agree this was certainly the source-drama for *The Merchant of Venice* (which at the time was also known as *The Jew of Venice*) because of the unique combination of the same two peculiar subplots. In *The Merchant of Venice*, we have 1) a Jewish Usurer who wants to exact a rather bloody penalty 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

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 condemnd 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:

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 play-making in the streets during his absence, and to stay away from the windows, his house’s “ears.” (Jiménez 52)

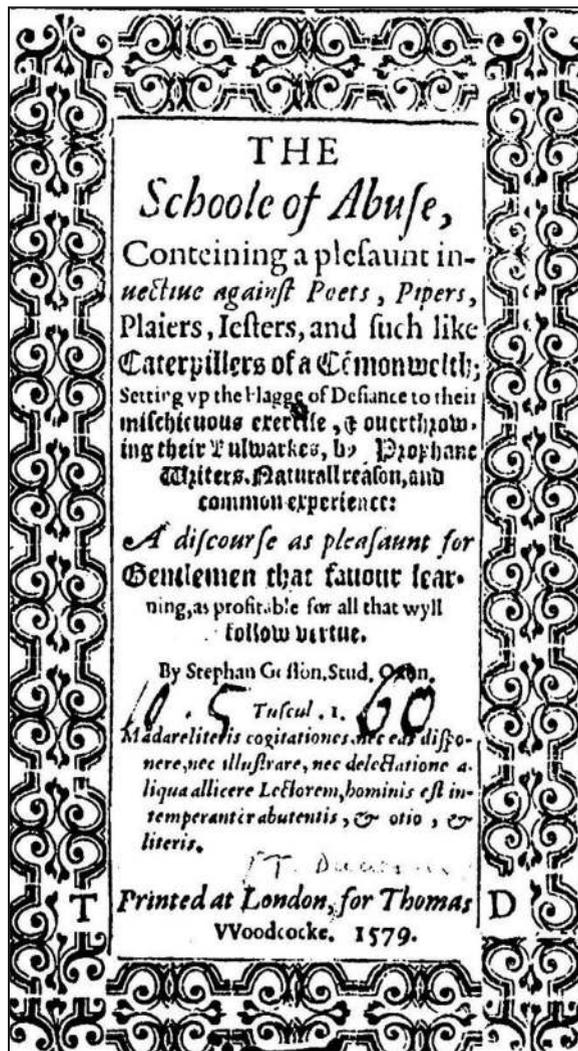


Figure 4: The School of Abuse by Stephen Gosson, 1579.

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 sor-
row 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 play-making. (Jiménez 53).

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

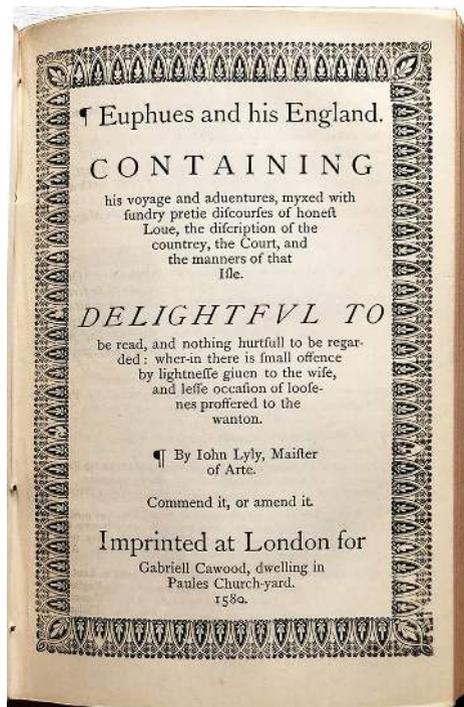


Figure 5a: *Euphues and his England* by John Lyly, 1580.



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).

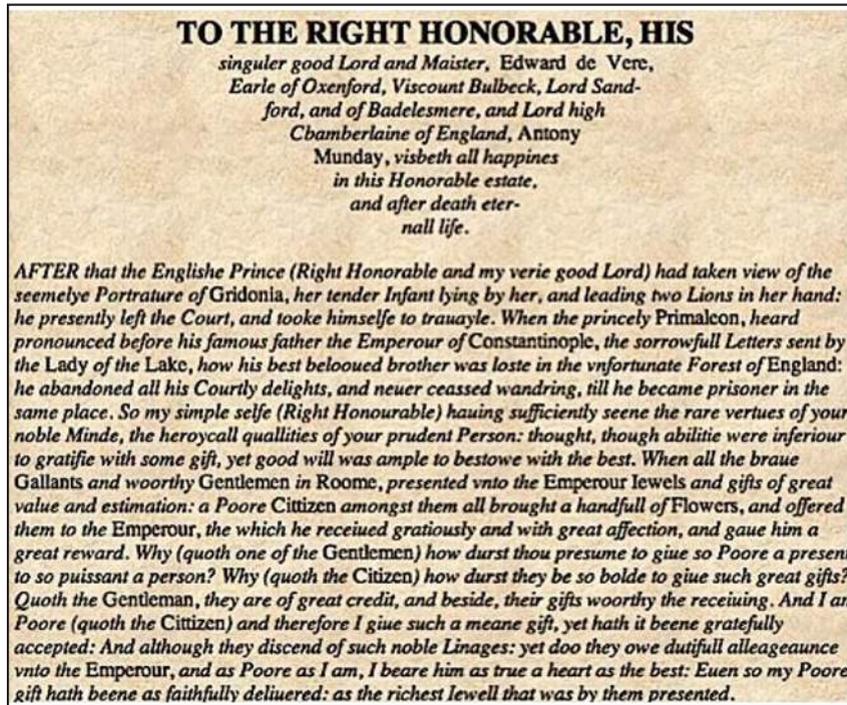


Figure 6: Munday's dedication to Oxford in Zelauto, 1580.

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***

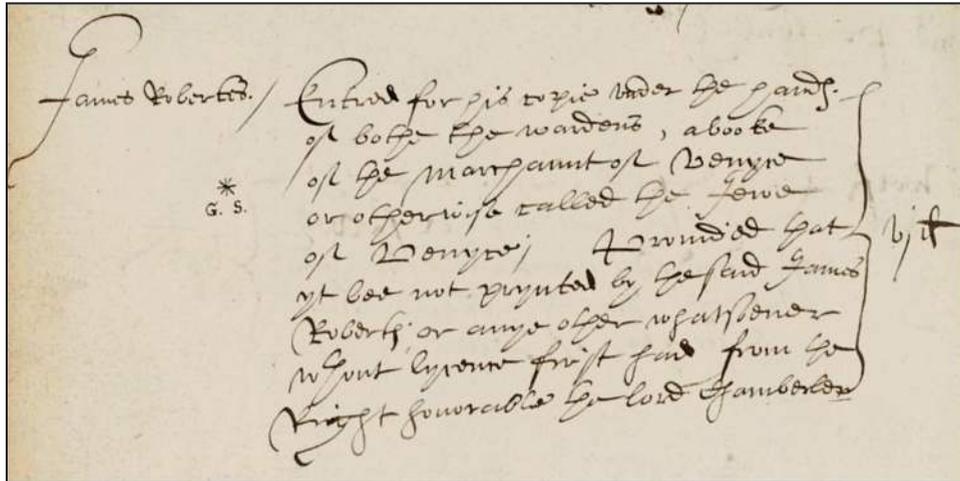


Figure 7: Stationer's register entry for Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, 1598.

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).

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).

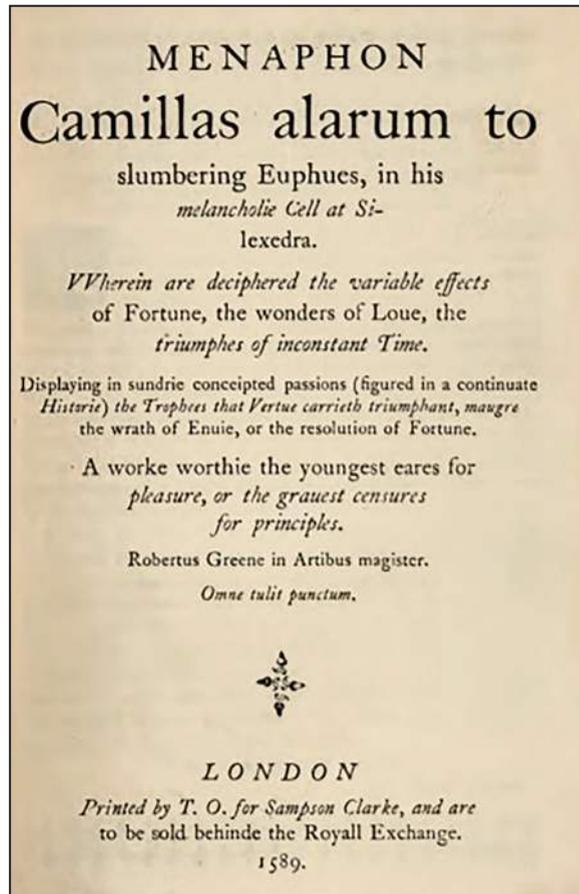


Figure 8: *Menaphon* by Robert Greene, 1589.

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-bear, 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)

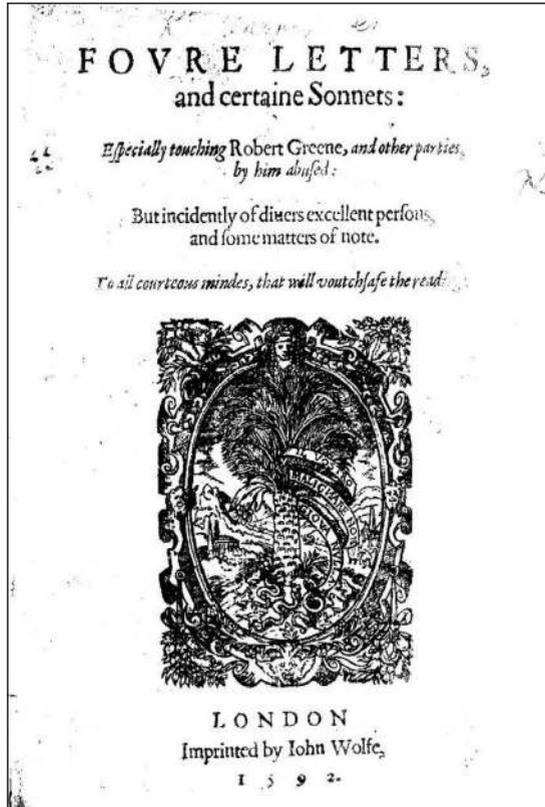


Figure 9: *Four Letters and Certaine Sonnets*, by Gabriel Harvey, 1592–93.

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 never tell you of a graver 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 ruthless Tragedy, solemnly acted, who deeper 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)

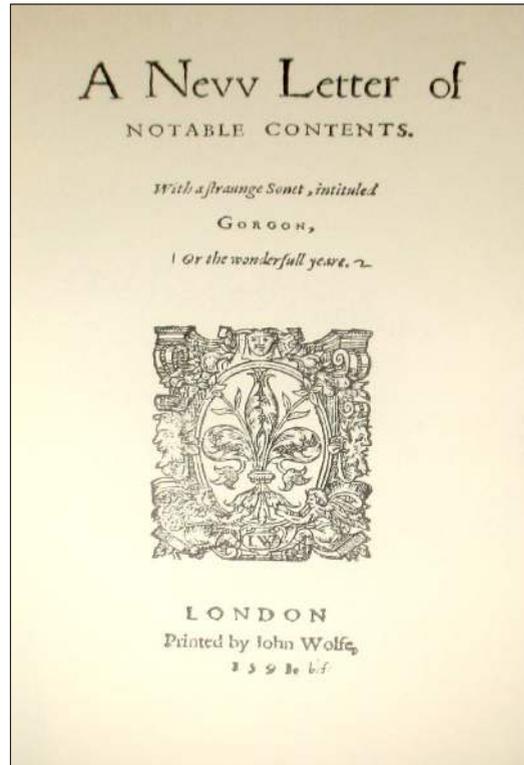


Figure 10: *A New Letter of Notable Contents* by Gabriel Harvey, 1593.

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 Vn**iverse**,
A Fame, to endure for **ever**. (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. **Verily**.
S. Nothing is **verier**...
Co. **Verily**; there's nothing **verier** than that same **verity**. (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 declaratine: 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-bear” to describe the “Earl of Oxford” in *Four Letters and Certain 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 quicksiluer; and the liuely spring [again, ‘Ver’ in Latin], or rather the Vestall fier of that **euer**-stirring **Vertue** 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	xi ^s
The 9 of June 1594 R/ at hamlet	vii ^s
The 10 of June 1594 R/ at the tamyng 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 suffice 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 miserably at the **Theator like an oisterwife, Hamlet, reuenge.** (emphases added)

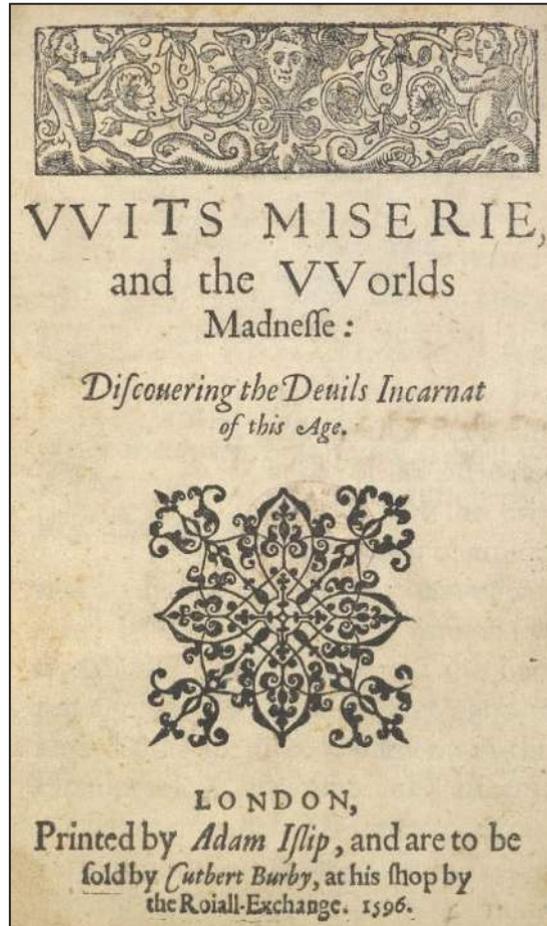


Figure 11: *Wit's Misery* by Thomas Lodge, 1596.

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 Shakspeare:

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 Intraills, 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 Shakspeare, 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.

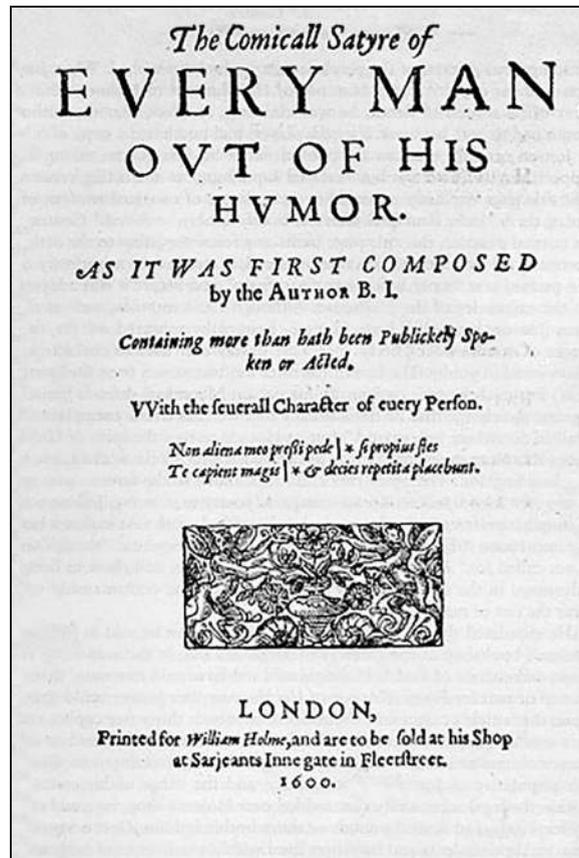


Figure 12: *Every Man Out of His Humour* by Ben Jonson, 1600.

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 appears 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 whatsoever; when hee shall behold such glorious (and almost immortal) 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).

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. Shakspeare would live to 1616.

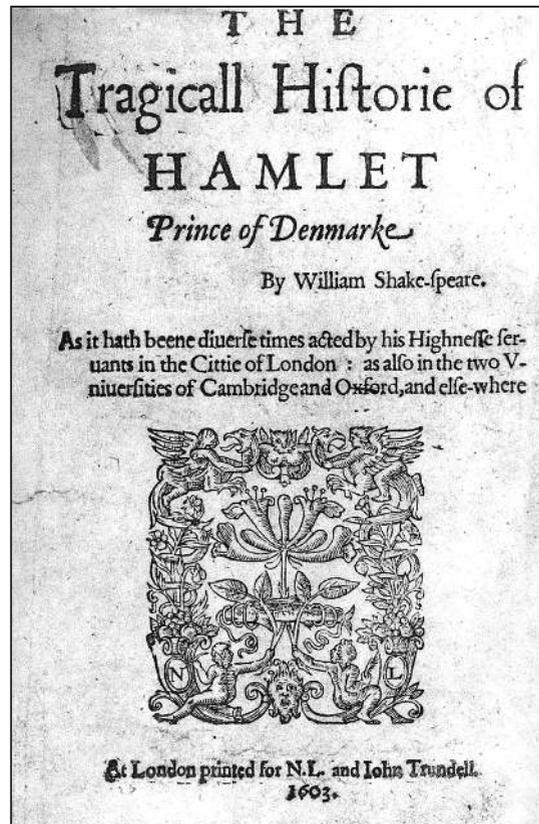


Figure 13: The Tragical History of Hamlet, Q1 printed in 1603.

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.

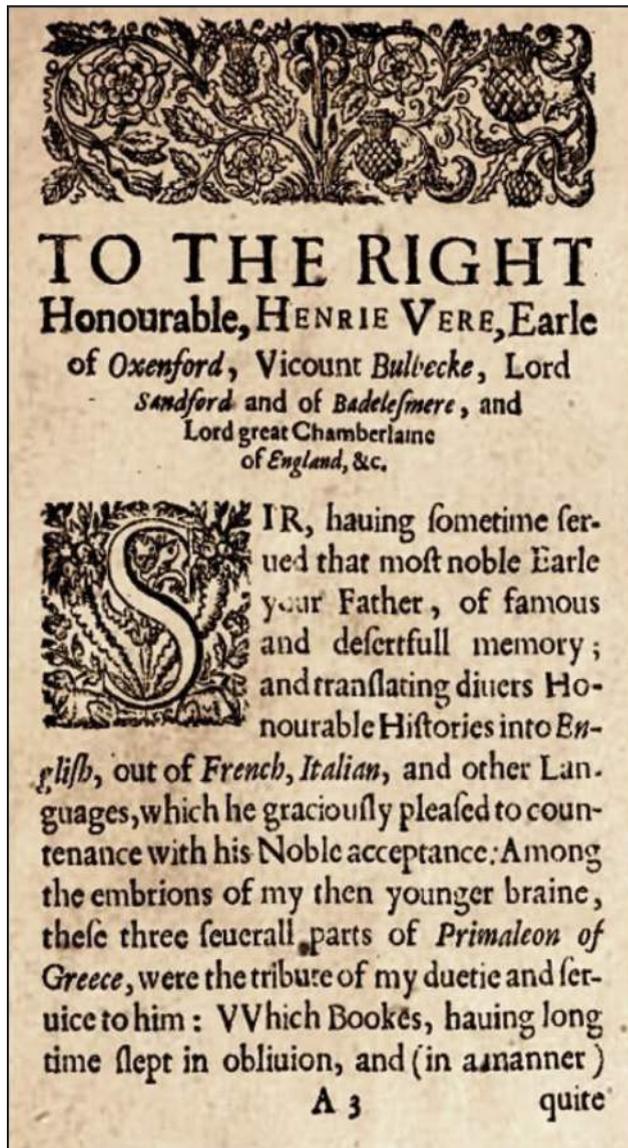


Figure 14: Munday's Dedication of *Primaleon* to Henry de Vere, 18th Earl of Oxford.

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

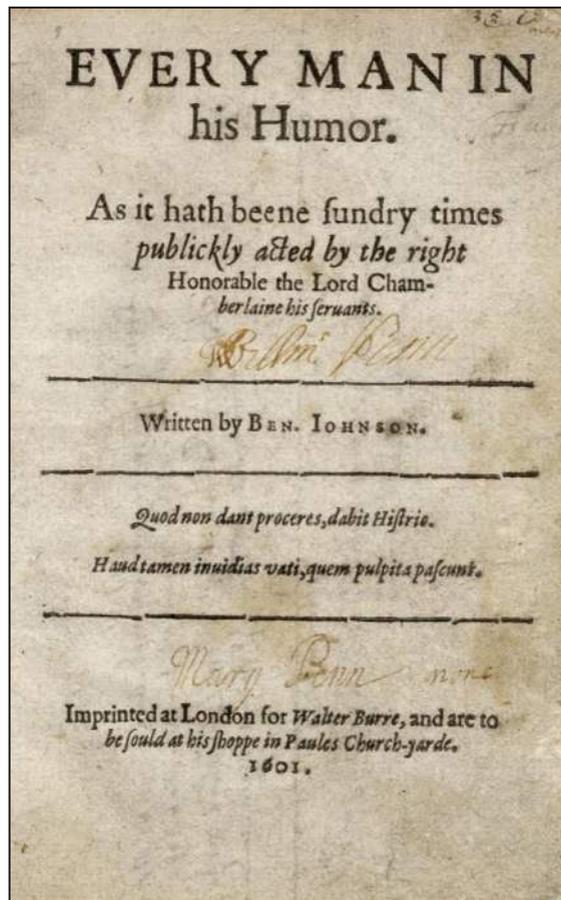


Figure 15: *Every Man In His Humour* by Ben Jonson, 1601, performed in 1598.

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?’ (EMIIHH, 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. Kitley/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. Kitley 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). Kately, 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 varrant you: since there is
no harme done, anger costs a man nothing. . .
Bianca. I but vvhath 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 checkstone 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 stufte 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 pittie '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 Shakspeare'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 “Edward De Vere” 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 “amplest 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 Schönen 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)

The editors of the 1909 *Shakespeare 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

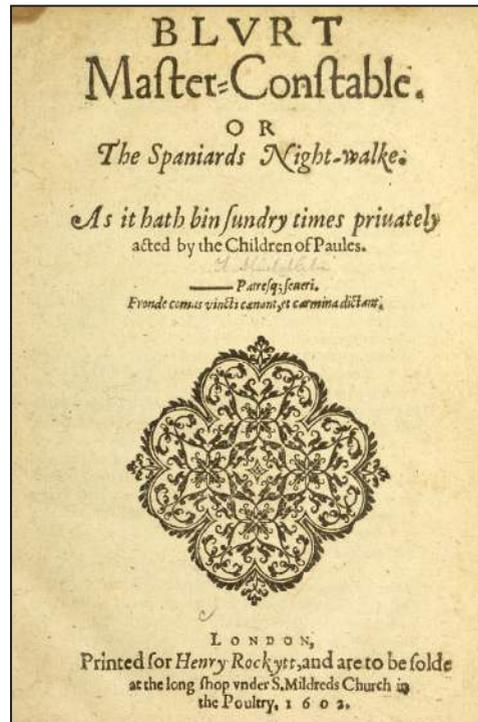


Figure 16: *Blurt Master Constable* by Anonymous, 1602.

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*

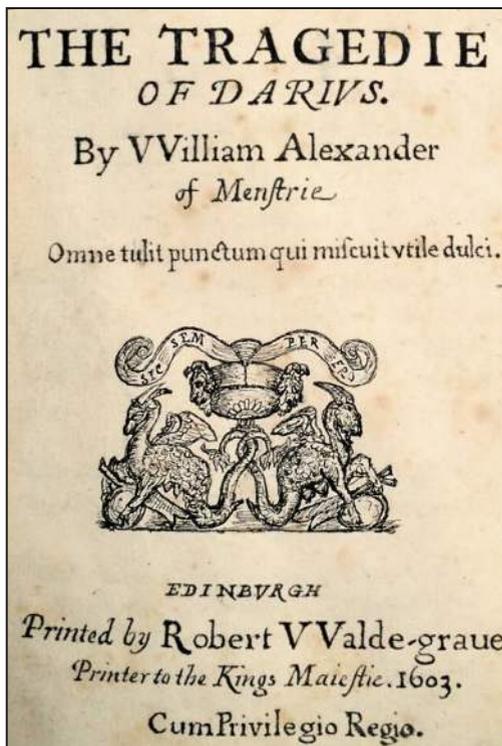
Several scholars have noted that William Alexander, 1st Earl of Sterling’s play *The Tragedie of Darius* (fig. 17), published in 1603, contains yet another allusion to Prospero’s “Revels” speech:

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

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

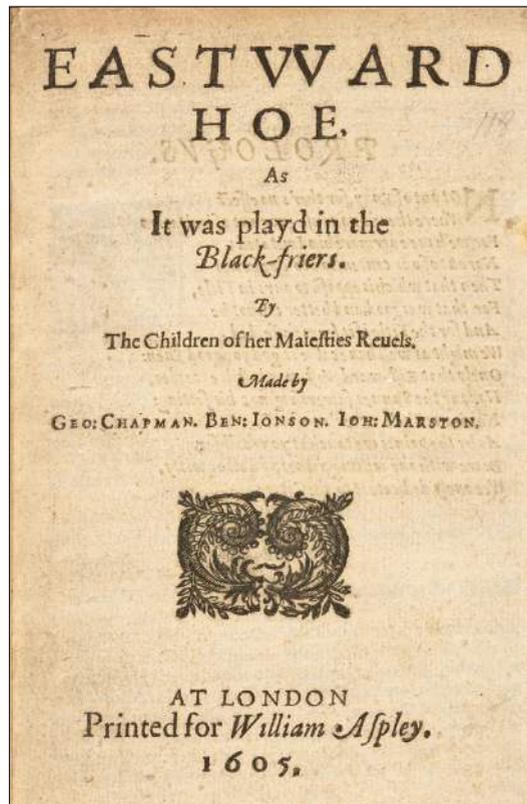


Figure 18: *Eastward Ho!* by George Chapman, Ben Jonson and John Marston, 1605.

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 silvered 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)

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 "silvered 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 "silvered" 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.

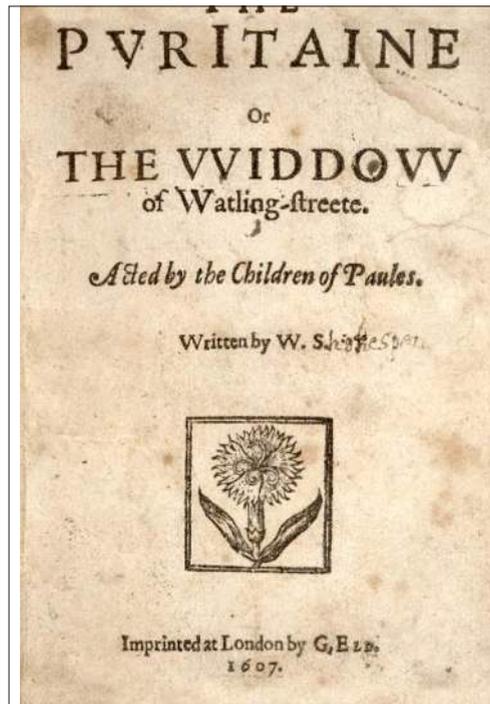


Figure 19: *The Puritan, or the Widow of Watling Street* by W.S. (Anonymous), 1607.

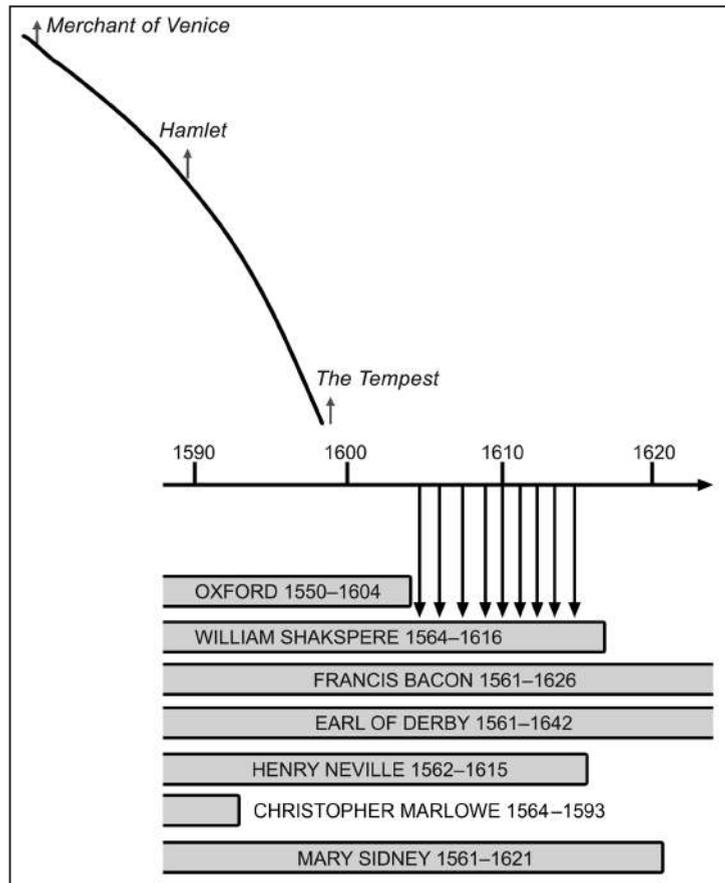
Conclusions

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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Baldassare Castiglione's The Courtier and Shakespeare's Coining of Words

by Jens Münnichow

“The worthless alligator hurried downstairs in the bedroom and ate the lonely puppy dog.”

The above sentence doesn't sound Shakespearean, but then Shakespeare didn't write this rather nonsensical sentence. Nonetheless, it is very Shakespearean, for seven of the eleven words in the sentence were invented by Shakespeare, including the words carrying a semantic meaning, with the exception of “ate.”

According to the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Shakespeare used “more than 20,000 words in his plays and poems, and his works provide the first recorded use of over 1,700 words in the English Language” (SBT website). Other sources provide an even higher number, up to 2,200 words. The discrepancy is explicable given the fact that the term “first recorded use” is debatable for many of the words in question—did Shakespeare truly *invent* the word himself or did he just effectively *popularize* a specific word that existed before him?

All things considered, it is irrelevant whether Shakespeare coined 2,200 words or 1,700 words since both provide compelling evidence of an extraordinary linguistic creativity.

Shakespeare's creative coinage of words followed recurring methods, such as changing the word class of an already existing word, e.g., from the noun and verb “kiss” he created “kissing” as an adjective, first used in *Love's Labour's Lost* (5.2.600) (SBT website). Another way of changing the class of a word was to connect an adjective to a noun to create a compound adjective. He did so in coining the new adjective “cold-blooded” from the already existing

adjective “cold” and the common noun “blood.” It appears first in *King John* (3.1.123–24) (McQuain/Malless 32).

Perhaps the most famous example might be “green-eyed,” which Shakespeare uses twice to describe jealousy. Although its first use is in the earlier play *The Merchant of Venice* (3.2.109–10) its most commonly known usage appears in the later play *Othello*. There, jealousy is described as “green-eyed monster” (3.3.165–67) (McQuain/Malless 85–86).

This compound adjective even transcends the English language. In Germany, one can refer to jealousy as “die grünäugige Eifersucht” (green-eyed jealousy) if someone wants to demonstrate a sophisticated knowledge of literature.

Another way for Shakespeare to create new words was to add prefixes and suffixes, often to Latin words. To the Latin verb “audire” (English “to hear”), he added the negating prefix “in-” and the suffix “-ble” that creates an adjective from a verb, indicating a possibility of action. Thus, he created the adjective “inaudible”—something that isn’t or cannot be heard. This occurs in *All’s Well That Ends Well* (5.3.40-42) (SBT website).

The traditional belief regarding Shakespeare’s creative process is that he did not express his own personality and life experience in the works. Rather, his works represent the direct expression of his genius, his imagination, his inspiration. If we accept this notion, then Shakespeare’s creative process has a magical component to it, because in the final analysis genius and inspiration become detached from rational explanation. But how can a literary technique be magical when it clearly follows a rational method of composition 2,000 times?

Magical inspiration and rational composition are, of course, not in themselves mutually exclusive. Authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien, who invented entirely new languages for the Elves and Orcs in his *Lord of the Rings* novels, have shown that magical inspiration and rational composition can co-exist in literature. Nonetheless, in Shakespeare’s case, it is clearly a “numbers game.” If we are instructed to believe that Shakespeare relied mostly, if not completely, on his creative inspiration, then the almost 2,000 incidents of invented words pose a problem.

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A writing process based on inspiration alone, to which a bit of rational composition is added, might still be plausible within the traditional narrative. In Shakespeare's works, however, it is rather the opposite. The 2,000 words which he coined comprise around 10 percent of his total vocabulary. Thus, every tenth word that he used was invented—a unique achievement in world literature. More so, the words he coined were based on existing words that he had to restructure in order to place into new usage. Therefore, in the Shakespearean corpus, the Bard's rational method of composition seems to be the defining element rather than magical inspiration.

To achieve that, Shakespeare had to possess a vast body of knowledge based on a superb education along with extensive life experience. I hold that these two prerequisites of Shakespeare's creative process sever the traditional authorship candidate from Stratford from the works of the Bard, since there is no documentary evidence that William Shakspeare had any formal education or ever left England. On the other hand, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, possessed both an extensive formal education and a vested interest in carrying out a literary program called Euphuism. As his first modern biographer, B.M. Ward, described it, "Oxford headed the newly arisen Euphuist movement, which aimed at refining and enriching the English language. It was the magic of words and the imagery of sentences that appealed to him and his lieutenants, John Lyly and Antony Munday" (Ward 174).

He came into contact with learned scholars very early on in his life. When he was four years old in 1554, he was moved into the household of Sir Thomas Smith, a renowned scholar and Regius Professor of Civil Law, and stayed there until 1558. In that year, Oxford's formal education began, when he enrolled at St. John's College, Cambridge at the age of eight. While living as a ward in Cecil House from the age of 12, Oxford's daily studies consisted of dancing instruction, French, Latin, cosmography, writing exercises, drawing, and common prayers. During his first year there he was tutored by Laurence Nowell, the antiquarian and Anglo-Saxon scholar. His uncle Arthur Golding served as his Latin tutor and translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into English while living in the same household.

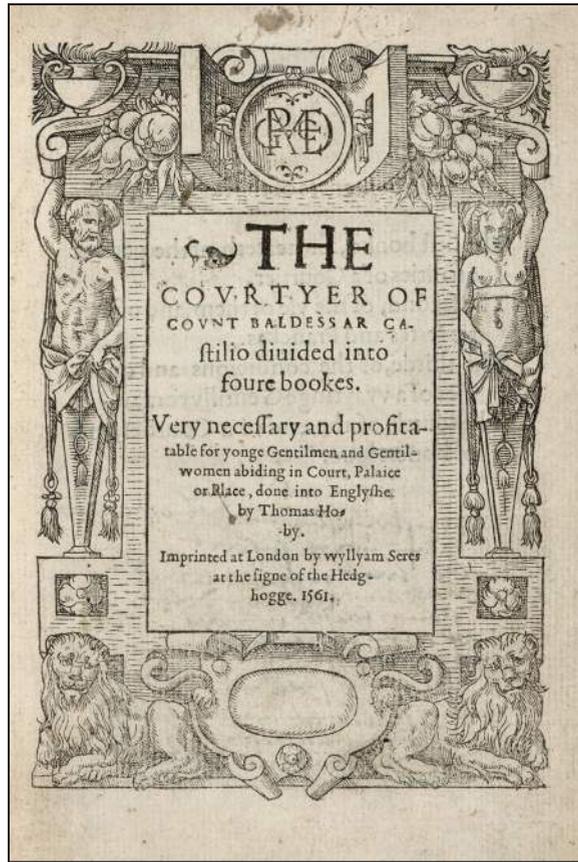
He had an outstanding education in French as a ward of Lord Burghley, receiving two hours of French instruction every day (Anderson 21–22). By the age of 13 he could write fluently in French, as a letter from him addressed to Lord Burghley demonstrates. When he was 19, de Vere also ordered a copy of Plutarch's works in French by Amyot (Anderson 41). Especially relevant is that de Vere traveled to Paris in 1575, when he was 25, and was introduced to King Henry III, Marguerite Valois, and Catherine de Médicis, among others, by the English Ambassador. He then continued through France to Italy (Anderson 74–75) and returned, again through France. His journey to Italy lasted about nine months, where he became

acquainted with the fine arts, theater and literature of the Italian Renaissance.

One of the seminal literary works of the Italian Renaissance was Baldassare Castiglione's *Il libro del Cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*), written between 1513 and 1527 and published in 1528. Using the form of dialogues, it describes the abilities, attitudes and forms of behavior that a model courtier should personify. The book was highly influential in aristocratic circles throughout Europe and was well received in Elizabethan England, following its translation into English by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561.

Sir Thomas Hoby married Elizabeth Cooke, sister of Mildred Cooke, the second wife of Sir William Cecil. Thus, Sir Thomas Hoby became the brother-in-law of the Queen's first minister and closest advisor from the time of her ascension to the throne in 1558 until Cecil's death in 1598 (Jolly 26). In 1562, just one year after Sir Thomas Hoby had translated *The Courtier*, de Vere became a ward of the Queen, following the unexpected death of his father. He was transferred to Sir William Cecil's household, where Cecil continued to provide his ward with a comprehensive education.

In Cecil's household, Edward de Vere had access to an exceptional library. Although there is no legal inventory of Cecil's library, the British Library holds a sale catalogue from 1687, which is called "*Bibliotheca illustris: sive catalogus variorum librorum*" ("Famous library: or catalogue of various books"). The introduction of the catalogue claims that it "comprises the main part of the library of that famous secretary William Cecil, Lord Burleigh." It includes 1,700 books and 249 manuscripts, dated up to 1598, the year of Cecil's death. The scope of Cecil's library is even more impressive when seen within its contemporary context, as the Library at Cambridge University had only 451 books and manuscripts in 1582 (Jolly 26).



Among the books in Cecil's library was Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* in the original Italian (Jolly 29).

The Influence of *The Courtier* on De Vere

Edward de Vere praised the book in a prefatory letter he wrote for the 1572 Latin edition of *The Courtier* by Bartholomew Clerke. Moreover, the Dictionary of National Biography states that Clerke seems to have been a tutor to de Vere (DNB 501). The purpose of Clerke's Latin translation, under de Vere's sponsorship, was to make the book more accessible to a European audience (Anderson 52). In his prefatory letter, de Vere states that "it is no more than its due that praises of every kind should be rendered to this work descriptive of a courtier" (Ward 81).

He goes on to justify his praise with the achievements of Castiglione by asking the rhetorical question, "For what more difficult, more noble, or more magnificent task has anyone ever undertaken than our author Castiglione, who has drawn for us the picture and model of a courtier, a work to which nothing can be added, in which there is no redundant word, a portrait which we shall recognize as that of the highest and most perfect type of man" (Ward 81).

After providing several examples of the courtly qualities described in *The Courtier*, de Vere praised Clerke for his mastery of Latin, stating that Clerke has given back "its features for use in modern courts as a polished language of an excellent temper, fitted out with royal pomp, and possessing admirable dignity.... For he has resuscitated that dormant quality of fluent discourse" (Ward 82).

In praising Clerke's literary qualities, de Vere explicitly commends his linguistic accomplishments. He declares that Clerke "makes use of words that are witty and amusing. When therefore he writes with precise and well-chosen words, with skillfully constructed and crystal-clear sentences...it cannot be but that some noble quality should be felt to proceed from his work" (Ward 82). De Vere concludes his praise of Clerke with a comparison to ancient classical authors, affirming that "To me indeed it seems, when I read this courtly Latin, that I am listening to Crassus, Antonius and Hortensius discoursing on this very theme" (Ward 82).

It is noteworthy that de Vere selects these three authors for his comparison, because Crassus, Antonius and Hortensius were used by Castiglione himself as examples of authors who displayed a talent for inventing new words. Thus, de Vere showcased three authors that, according to Castiglione, had helped to shape classical Latin and compared them to Clerke, whom he praises for reshaping a courtly Renaissance Latin.

Years after his praise of *The Courtier*, Edward de Vere was still affiliated to the work in the public imagination. During a royal progress in 1578 to Cambridge University, professor of rhetoric Gabriel Harvey wrote commendatory verses for de Vere, praising the Earl's Latin and English verses and stating that they were "more polished even than the writings of Castiglione himself" (Anderson 139).

Harvey then praised the international influences on Edward de Vere's literary achievements by recalling the Earl of Oxford's continental Grand Tour of 1575–76. In doing this, Harvey not only compared de Vere to Baldassare Castiglione, but placed him in an even greater European perspective, connecting him to European Renaissance culture in general. Addressing the Earl of Oxford directly, Harvey states that "thou hast drunk deep drafts not only of the muses of France and Italy but hast learned the manners of many men, and the arts of foreign countries.... Neither in France, Italy, nor Germany are any such cultivated men" (Anderson 139).

It is therefore absolutely possible that de Vere's decision to create new words for the English language was inspired by his interest in *The Courtier*.

In the first of the four *Books* of Castiglione's work, in chapter 32, the courtier is taught "how to speak and write well, whether it be in the Tuscan or any other dialect" (Castiglione 43). It is noteworthy that the Italian language had not yet evolved into the unified language it is today. In Castiglione's days, several distinct Italian dialects coexisted and were spoken in different parts of the country. The region of Tuscany with its capital Florence had been a major center of the Italian Renaissance and therefore the Tuscan dialect was held in the highest esteem as the language of literature. It was the language of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. Castiglione, despite being born and raised in Lombardy, used the Tuscan dialect to write *The Courtier* and in it he emphasizes that the Italian "vulgar" language, i.e., the vernacular, the language of the people, was still "tender and new, although it be already long in use." The explanation given states that the original Latin base was "corrupted and spoiled" by contact with those "barbaric nations that ravaged and inhabited Italy." These nations formed different languages from Latin, one of which stayed in Italy and became Italian, while others entered different countries in Europe (Castiglione 43).

Castiglione then laments that the Italian language "had no one to bestow care upon it or write in it or try to give it splendor and grace" and that "among noble men and those versed in courts and arms and letters, there arose some desire to speak and write more elegantly than had been done in that rude and uncultivated age" (Castiglione 43).

In the process of the cultivation of the language "many words were laid aside...and instead of them others were taken up...which has always



Portrait of Baldassare Castiglione, by Raffaello Sanzio, circa 1515.

happened in the case of the other languages also” (Castiglione 44). The act of skipping over words and coining new ones is then connected to the Latin Classics and thus legitimized. He notes that “the orators and poets continued one after another to lay aside many words used by their predecessors: thus Antonius, Crassus, Hortensius and Cicero avoided many of Cato’s words, and Vergil avoided many of Ennius’ words” (Castiglione 44).

Indeed, Castiglione himself conceived new words, one of the most significant being “Sprezzatura.” The term itself is derived from the Italian verb “sprezzare,” which translates into English as “to scorn” or “to despise.”

Thus, in Castiglione's central concept, a cultivated courtier should scorn labor and struggle and maintain a certain nonchalance and effortless in everything he does.

The term *Sprezzatura* has previously been explained in detail by Robert Detobel in his 2019 article "Shakespeare's 'Idle Hours' in Historical Context." He explained the term by stating that a courtier who adheres to the concept should "use a certain kind of nonchalance which conceals art and testifies that what one does apparently comes effortlessly, almost without thinking about it" (Detobel 148).

While Detobel's description of Castiglione's central concept is accurate, I suggest that Detobel's representation of Castiglione's *Courtier* is one-sided in another aspect. In his description of how Castiglione viewed traditional martial prowess in relationship to the literary work of a courtier, Detobel states that "Castiglione had much less to say about arms than about letters, although he still adhered to the opinion that arms mattered more than letters" (Detobel 147). Detobel supports his claim with a quote from *The Courtier*: "So I wish our courtier to be well built, with finely proportioned members, and I would have him demonstrate strength and lightness and suppleness and be good at all the physical exercises befitting a warrior" (Detobel 147).

While it is true that martial prowess was held in high regard by the nobility of the 16th and 17th centuries, it is debatable if Castiglione thought the pursuit of arms mattered more than that of letters.

Unfortunately, Detobel did not quote from chapter 42 of *The Courtier* to place his analysis of Castiglione's work into perspective. Castiglione explicitly criticized the French for recognizing only the "nobility of arms." The relevant passage reads:

"Yet besides goodness, I think that letters are for everyone the true and principal ornament of the mind: although the French recognize only the nobility of arms and esteem all else as naught. Thus they not only fail to prize but they abhor letters, and hold all men of letters most base, and think they speak very basely of any man when they call him a clerk" (Castiglione 56).

Thus, "letters," i.e., literature and science, is placed next to the concept of "goodness," a term derived from theology and therefore ranked first. Moreover, letters are referred to as the "principal ornament of the mind." Further, that only recognizing martial prowess should be regarded as a failure.

Castiglione offers a way to salvation for the French. Referring to their disregard of letters, he states that "this fault has long been prevalent among the French. But if kind fate decrees that Monseigneur d'Angoulême shall succeed to the crown, as is hoped, I think that just as the glory of arms

flourishes and shines in France, so too ought that of letters to flourish in highest state” (Castiglione 56–57).

The “Monseigneur d’Angoulême” is a reference to Francis I, King of France from 1515 to 1547, known as a generous patron of the arts and letters. Prior to his accession to the throne, he had been the Count of Angoulême so that the earldom of Angoulême became a royal domain when Francis was crowned. The earldom of Angoulême ceased to exist from 1515 to 1583. Then the earldom was transformed into a dukedom. Which means there was no other Monseigneur d’Angoulême in 1528, when Castiglione’s *Courtier* was published.

It is noteworthy that Castiglione mentions the king as the sole remedy for regaining a respect for letters in France, evidence that Castiglione valued the study of letters to be important enough for the prince himself to promote. Given this, it is difficult to believe that Castiglione should hold that martial prowess “matters more than letters.”

Unfortunately, a list of Castiglione’s neologisms has never been compiled, nor can one be with real accuracy due to the linguistic complexities of the Italian language. In Castiglione’s day, there were several distinct Italian dialects that varied to such a degree that they were almost unintelligible to speakers of other dialects. They so differed in vocabulary and structure that a word considered antique in one dialect might function as a new word in another, which makes it difficult to judge conclusively which word should be regarded as a neologism.

Suffixes that change the initial form of a base word are frequently used in Italian. For example, the suffix *-issim-* forms the superlative degree of an adjective and further adding *-o* or *-a* creates the correct form to connect it to a noun of male or female grammatical gender. Thus, a “contentissimo uomo” would be a “most content man”, while a “contentissima donna” would be a “most content woman.”

Furthermore, suffixes can be used to alter the quality of a base word by adding adjectives to nouns. For example, a boy is “un ragazzo,” but a boy who has skipped school is instantly called “un ragazzaccio,” the *-accio* suffix meaning “bad.”

Another example of a word whose meaning was changed by amending its root can be found in one of Shakespeare’s most famous characters. The name Othello is derived from the Roman emperor Otho, to which the Italian diminutive form “*-ello*” is added, thus making Othello a “little Otho.” Otho reigned as emperor in the 1st century CE and was praised in an epigram by Martial for having committed suicide, thus sparing the empire further bloodshed in the ongoing civil war (Martial, 6, 32).

Did *The Courtier* Inspire Shakespeare?

I think it is fair to assume that Castiglione's *Courtier* encouraged Shakespeare to coin new words which he incorporated throughout the plays and poems.

The influence of Castiglione's concept of "Sprezzatura" on Shakespeare in creating new words can be shown in the genesis of the English word "easiness" to mean "carelessness" and "indifference." The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides two interesting examples for the early use of the word with that meaning. The *OED* states that "easiness" was first used by Sir Philip Sidney in his *The Defence of Poesie*, written around 1580 though first published posthumously in 1595. The quote in *OED* reads: "They are full of idle easiness" (*OED* "easiness, n."). Further, the *OED* provides evidence that "easiness" was used in this manner in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in Horatio's line: "Custome hath made it in him a propertie of easines" (5.1.75) (*OED* "easiness, n.").

The context of the *Hamlet* quotation is logically connected to the concept of Castiglione's *Sprezzatura* as Hamlet and Horatio observe the gravediggers going about their work, while Hamlet wonders about the gravedigger: "Has this fellow no feeling of his business? 'A sings in grave-making" (5.1.74).

The line about "easiness" follows immediately as Horatio's answer to Hamlet's observation. Although the concept of *Sprezzatura* is not applied to courtiers or a courtly context—Hamlet and Horatio talk about an uneducated, uncultivated person of the working class—the gravedigger is an example of how the concept is transferred into another social context. The gravedigger does his physically and emotionally demanding work in such tranquility that he is even able to sing while working; thus, this effortlessness is the epitome of *Sprezzatura*.

One might say the term *Sprezzatura* is not relevant to a gravedigger because he is not part of the court and, therefore, the courtly attitudes and patterns of behavior of the nobility cannot be applied to an unskilled laborer. That is true, nonetheless, there is contemporary literary evidence to show that courtly themes were indeed expressed without explicitly referring to the court or the courtiers, for example in the form of pastoral literature. Furthermore, Shakespeare himself has provided examples that justify the lexical transfer which I propose.

The Oxfordian scholar and lawyer Tom Regnier asked whether Shakespeare "could think like a lawyer." He believed he did based on several lines of evidence, one of which is that Shakespeare often uses legal terminology and concepts to "create complex allegories on the nature of love or loyalty or duty or old age" (Regnier 217). Regnier provides examples from the *Sonnets*, *Hamlet* and the *Merry Wives of Windsor* in support of his hypothesis (Regnier 217–18).

The question then is when Shakespeare did indeed transfer *one* concept he was very familiar with into different literary forms, why shouldn't he have done that with *other* concepts he was keen on as well?

The two-line dialogue between Hamlet and Horatio regarding a singing gravedigger does not in itself add any additional insight into the main characters, nor does it drive the plot of the play forward. So why did the playwright insert it when he could have easily used other words that already existed?

Perhaps he employed the neologism of “easiness” with the intent of making the concept more obvious to the reader. It would definitely catch the attention of theater audiences who would then be more likely to think about the gravedigger's behavior and, therefore, would be more likely to discover the underlying concept.

It is difficult to determine if it was Sidney or Shakespeare who coined the word given that the composition of *Hamlet* is hard to date with precision. While the *OED* dates it to 1602, the De Vere Society provides a timeframe from 1586 to 1602 based on the topical sources used in the play and its registration in the Stationers' Register (De Vere Society 10). However, three things can be said with certainty.

The word “easiness” in the sense of “carelessness” and “indifference” first appeared in an aristocratic context since the authors of the first two recorded uses of the word were courtiers to Queen Elizabeth I. Two, the construction of the word “easiness” follows the pattern that Shakespeare used frequently when coining new words by adding a suffix to an existing root.

Finally, the texts that present the first two uses of the word differ drastically in the effect they had on the English language. While Sir Philip Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie* is forgotten outside academia, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* remains one of the most influential and best-known plays in recorded literature. So, if the word “easiness” is still used in the sense of “carelessness” and “indifference” by English speakers today, it is more likely due to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* than Sidney's *The Defence of Poesie*.

Another word coined by Shakespeare that can be connected to the concept of Sprezzatura might be “courtship,” meaning “courtly behavior.” It is used in precisely that way in *Love's Labour's Lost*, in Act V, Scene 2 (McQuain/Malless 34). There, the Princess of France uses the word to describe the lords that have approached her disguised as Russians and Muscovites. Even disguised as Russians, the lords made such an impression on the Princess that she calls them “trim gallants, full of courtship and of state” (5.2.363) (McQuain/Malless 34).

Given that the Russian court was not held in the highest regard for its culture and courtly manners in Western Europe during the 16th century, one might

assume that the lords had to invest extra effort to accommodate that shortcoming. As it turns out, even when their disguise is lifted, their "courtliness" is still an integral part of their personalities, regardless of the foreign clothes and disguises—i.e., they still show courtly manners effortlessly, even in dire circumstances, which is *Sprezzatura*.

The role that courtly manners played in the Renaissance was to keep literature and learning in high esteem, especially the Roman and Greek classics. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare coined two words in connection to knowledge that are both based on Greek roots.

In *Love's Labour's Lost* again, in Act I, Scene 1, Ferdinand, King of Navarre, states that "Navarre shall be the wonder of the world, our court shall be a little academe, still and contemplative in living art" (1.1.12–14) (McQuain/Malless 3). By using Shakespeare's neologism "academe" the King connects his court to the Greek philosopher Plato, whose "Akademia" was the grove in Athens where he used to teach (Werth 14).

Andrew Werth has convincingly shown that Shakespeare was indeed familiar with Greek classics such as the *Greek Anthology*, a collection of 1,000 epigrams, and the poet Homer, both in the original Greek (Werth 15, 18).

Given Shakespeare's preference for letters, it is not surprising to find that the word "dialogue" as a verb, to mean "to converse," was coined by Shakespeare. Though often misinterpreted as being formed with the prefix "di-", to mean "two", it indeed consists of the Greek prefix "dia-" to mean "across, through" and the noun "logos," which has a wide variety of denotations, among them "word" and "speech." Therefore, "to dialogue" means to transfer information "by way of speech" (McQuain/Malless 45).

Conclusions

While chapter 32 of *The Courtier* is only two pages long, it can be seen as an "encouragement" to the literary program of Euphuism that Edward de Vere executed throughout his career. Part of this program was to strengthen the English language by diminishing foreign influences, mostly from the French, Greek and Latin. To achieve this, de Vere replaced French, Greek and Latin vocabulary with newly minted expressions that were then incorporated into the English lexicon.

If the courtier Edward de Vere was influenced by Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* in writing the works of Shakespeare, then the creation of 2,000 new words in Shakespeare's canon is perfectly explicable from his personal background, educational attainments and life experiences. As this article has

shown, de Vere was personally connected to *The Courtier* in its Italian original, to its Latin translation and to its translator by contemporary documentary evidence. Further, the philosophical association between Castiglione's core concept of *Sprezzatura* and the plays *Hamlet* and *Love's Labour's Lost* has been demonstrated.

A relevant field for further research would be Edward de Vere's personal correspondence with regard to neologisms. In case he used neologisms coined in similar ways as those used in the Shakespeare canon, that would further strengthen his claim to the Shakespeare authorship.

Advocates for William Shakspeare of Stratford-upon-Avon have not been able to provide a similarly convincing explanation for this extraordinary creativity in the invention of new words that is so deeply rooted in the knowledge of classical languages as well as in the social customs and philosophy of the nobility. Finally, there is no evidence that connects Shakspeare to Baldassare Castiglione's seminal work of Renaissance literature, *The Courtier*.

No one encapsulated the unbridgeable gap between Shakspeare of Stratford and Shakespeare's creative process better than Sir Mark Rylance, the great Shakespearean actor and first artistic director of Shakespeare's Globe in London from 1995 to 2005: "You can be born with genius—but not with book learning and life experience."

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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

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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.

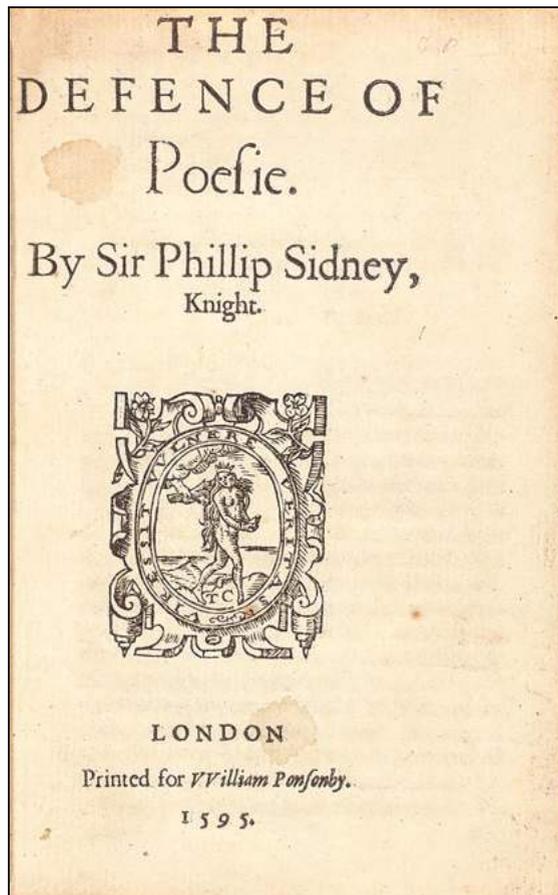
Their rivalry sharpened in their famous quarrel on the tennis court at Greenwich in 1579. Thus the dispute was probably the result of a simmering difference between two parties. There were insults, threats and accusations, with offers and denials, of duels. The Queen intervened and ordered Sidney to 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 thynge 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 difficilium quisq(uam), quid praeclarium, 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

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Syr Philip Sidney's Comeuppance: Newman's Own Astrophel and Stella

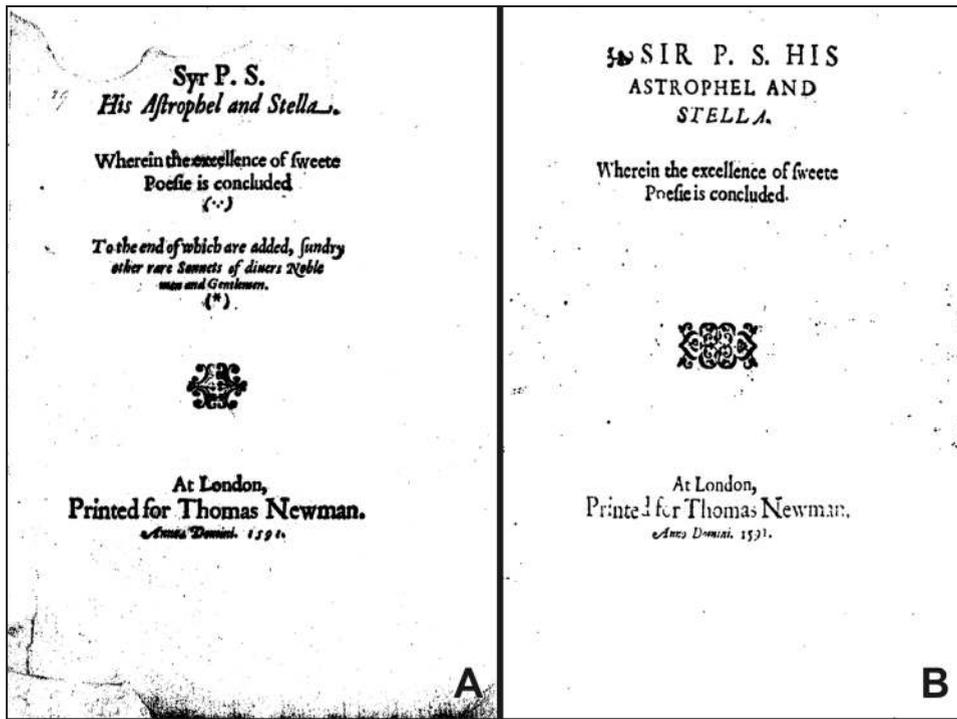
by William S. Niederkorn

*A*strophel and Stella by Philip Sidney was first printed in 1591, a year after publication of his other major literary work, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. Both works were published posthumously, Sidney having been idolized as a national hero and preeminent writer in the wake of his death in 1586 due to a gunshot wound incurred in a battle outside Zutphen, the Netherlands.

Prefacing the 1591 book, titled *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella*, are a dedicatory letter signed Thomas Newman and a letter to the reader signed Thomas Nashe. They are followed by *Astrophel and Stella* in 107 fourteen-line sonnet stanzas. Next there are ten poems by Sidney that extend the *Astrophel and Stella* theme, called “other Sonnets of variable verse,” none of them in standard sonnet form. Following Sidney’s works are an introductory sonnet and 27 more sonnets by Samuel Daniel all in 14-line stanzas, five cantos signed “Content” that have been attributed in part to Thomas Campion, a poem titled *Migliora Spero* generally acknowledged to be by Fulke Greville, and finally a poem with the heading “*Finis E.O.*” Many of the poems in the book are united by a theme of regrets and frustration in personal relationships.

In this paper three texts—the Newman, the Nashe, and the E.O.—will be discussed in reverse order, in which the findings become increasingly complex.

The author of the poem that has the last word in the book has previously been regarded as anonymous or possibly John Dowland, who set it to music



First four printings of *Astrophel and Stella*: A) 1591, edited, with epistles and other poets' texts; B) late 1591, unedited, only Philip Sidney texts.

published in 1600. Textual analysis in this paper offers evidence that the author is Edward Oxenford, or Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. “*Finis E.O.*” is the ending designation and signature for seven of the eight poems by Oxford in the first edition of the poetry collection *The Paradyse of Daynty Devises* (1576). That “*Finis E.O.*” precedes rather than follows the poem is a typesetting anomaly.

In his letter to readers Thomas Nashe shows himself to be a master of seeming to say one thing and meaning another. His works, with their uniquely

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C) circa 1596-97, text of A, with other poets' texts but no epistles; D) in *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* of 1598, mainly text of B.

obfuscatory turns of phrase, are a significant individual contribution to Elizabethan literature. This paper offers evidence that previous Nashe and Sidney scholars have missed, that the letter is a satire on the idolization of Sidney and his sister the Countess of Pembroke, not by attacking them but by extolling them with ridiculously extravagant panegyric.

Thomas Newman is named on title pages as the publisher for whom about 20 books and pamphlets were printed from 1587–1592. Two additional books were printed “for the Widow Newman,” in 1594, the year of Newman’s premature death. Newman’s signature is on dedicatory epistles for three of the books printed for him, counting *Astrophel and Stella*. Textual analysis in this paper provides evidence that Oxford wrote these three letters using the Newman name just as he used the name William Shakespeare for the dedicatory letters to *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*. The three letters span Newman’s career, suggesting a relationship with Oxford throughout it.

The books printed for Thomas Newman and Widow Newman include an assortment of literary and didactic works along with political tracts in support

of Church and State. In light of the evidence presented in this paper, these works potentially provide the most detailed understanding to date of Oxford's clandestine publishing activities and help to elucidate his literary interests and political positions.

Several hundred editorial improvements were made to the text of the first edition of *Astrophel and Stella*, which are drolly alluded to in the dedicatory epistle. This paper's findings suggest that Oxford himself may have edited *Astrophel and Stella*, selected the accompanying poems, employed Thomas Nashe to write the epistle to readers, and had Newman publish the book.

The first printing of the book was quickly followed by a second Newman printing dated the same year, completely re-typeset, with all the prefatory material and other writers' poems stripped out, the editing of *Astrophel and Stella* eliminated and Sidney's original text restored. Two more printings in the 1590s repeated the cycle, both typeset anew, first for Matthew Lownes, who bought licensing rights from Newman's widow. His book includes the editing of *Astrophel and Stella* in the first Newman edition as well as all the additional poems, including E.O.'s last word, but not the dedication or letter to readers. The fourth printing of *Astrophel and Stella*, contained in the Countess of Pembroke's 1598 Sidney catalogue, tracks the second Newman printing with the restored text. Curiously, the spelling of "Astrophel" is the same in all four editions, not "Astrophil" as most modern editions style it. An appendix to this paper presents all the substantial changes across the four 1590s texts for the first fifteen sonnets of *Astrophel and Stella* as an aid in showing the pattern of differences and similarities between them and the nature of the editing.

The Last Word, by E.O.

In the two-stanza poem that ends the book, the poet expresses hopelessness in making up for his "follies past":

If floods of teares could cense my follies past,
And smokes of sighs might sacrifice for sin,
If groaning cries might salve my fault at last,
Or endles mone for error pardon win;
 Then would I crie, weepe, sigh, and ever mone
 Mine error, fault, sins, follies past and gone.

I see my hopes must wither in their bud.
I see my favours are no lasting flowers,
I see that words will breath no better good
Than losse of time, and lightning but at howers:
 Then when I see, then this I say therefore,
 That favours, hopes, and words, can blinde no more.

The poem is written in *sesta rima*, a form that Oxford had used for a three-stanza poem expressing his fury at Sidney in 1579. Oxford would use the same stanza 199 times in *Venus and Adonis*, for which the form has come to be called the *Venus and Adonis* stanza. He used it on other occasions as well, including one of the poems in *The Paradyse of Daynty Devises*.

The literary world in the Elizabethan court comprised a small coterie of participants; everyone knew everyone else personally. In this small world Oxford had an ongoing rivalry with Sidney in terms of politics and aesthetics. Their mutual antagonism overflowed the bounds of decorum in 1579 when Sidney challenged Oxford to a duel over a minor altercation that occurred on a tennis court. Oxford had dismissed him by calling him “puppy,” which may have been more an affectionate epithet than a heinous insult. Sidney tended to display an angry temper, clearly on display in this case, and Queen Elizabeth forbade the duel. Apparently, Oxford compacted his pent-up anger into a poem of six stanzas of *sesta rima*. It begins, “Feyne would I singe but fury makes me frette, / And rage hath sworne to seke revenge of wronge,” and never lets up. The tennis court incident may also be one of the “follies” Oxford regrets in his last-word poem. That frustration was forever frozen when Sidney was killed in Holland in 1586 and then venerated nationally for his life and art.

Oxford clearly had a need for closure. In 1591 the last-word poem can be seen as an attempt to move toward it by acknowledging the futility of trying to reconcile. E.O.’s follies that provoked the situation cannot be redeemed, but he asserts that he will accept that and move on. The last-word poem may also reflect on errors Oxford committed in his marriage to Anne Cecil, who died in 1588. It does no good to weep, sigh and moan; hopes, favors and words are for naught. All he can do is stop and let his vision clear.

Listing to Thomas Nashe

Thomas Nashe was a leading satirist who lived only to the age of 33 or 34, but published a considerable oeuvre of distinctive literary merit. At 20 his first published work, *The Anatomy of Absurdity*, was entered into the Stationers’ Register. In a dedicatory letter to its publication in 1589, three years after Sidney’s death, Nashe demonstrated an uproarious ability to disparage Sidney while seeming to praise him.

Speaking of a gathering of “manie extraordinarie Gentlemen, of most excellent parts” at which opinions on the virtues of courtiers were being aired, he wrote that “every man shotte his bolte, but this was the upshot, that England afforded many mediocrities, but never saw anything more singular then worthy Sir *Phillip Sidney*, of whom it might be truely saide, *Arma virumque cano*” (McKerrow, I:7). Sidney and Nashe scholars have taken this to be high praise

by Nashe for Sidney, but for “them that list” it is quite the opposite, that Sidney singularly stands out among England's many mediocrities. This meaning is obfuscated by the use of “worthy” and the first three words of the *Aeneid*, but “worthy” can refer to any attribute, and here the context is mediocrities, while “I sing of arms and men” only adds a military credit and does not necessarily connote virtue.

It is conceivable that Oxford, who may have been one of the “Gentlemen extraordinairie” and recognized Nashe's satiric talent, employed this gifted young writer to compose the letter to readers for *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella*, where Nashe could fully exercise his demonstrated skill.

Sidney, Edward Dyer and Fulke Greville comprised a literary circle that leaned toward moral and righteous concerns, like Gabriel Harvey, Nashe's nemesis. Nashe and Oxford were in the more open-minded camp, avoiding sanctimonious tendencies. They did not represent a clique, but were open to wider collegial associations in the theatrical realm, the ultimate target of the Puritanical faction.

There has been an inconceivable lag in recognizing Nashe's letter to readers of *Astrophel and Stella* for what it is: a brilliant, artful, excoriating satire in the guise of a laudatory foreword. In his major study of Nashe, G.R. Hibbard says that “the preface is devoted to the praise of Sidney and of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke” and dismisses it: “Much of the preface is quite frankly padding, and it is not surprising that when Newman, probably under pressure from the Countess of Pembroke, brought out a second and much improved edition of *Astrophel and Stella* late in 1591, Nashe's contribution was omitted from it” (Hibbard 50). Hibbard misses Nashe's meaning in the *Anatomy of Absurdity* dedication as well: “Sidney was Nashe's hero. He had already praised him in the dedicatory epistle to the *Anatomy of Absurdity*” (id. at 49).

Nashe's preface is headed:

Somewhat to reade for them
that list.

The phrase “for them that list” implies that this message will require careful attention, because those who do not “list” will not get it, a hint that there will be much to read between the lines.

The letter is in prose. The first sentence is a Latin epigraph and a pejorative comment that heralds the arrival of either the poem *Astrophel and Stella* or Philip Sidney, or both, characterized as “in pompe” or pompous.

Tempus adest plausus aurea pompa venit, so ends the
Sceane of Idiots, and enter *Astrophel* in pompe.

The Latin quotation is from Ovid's *Amores* (3 II 44) and can be translated, "The time has come to applaud the golden parade." The Loeb translation makes this "The time for applause is here—the golden procession is coming." The quotation is from the same Ovid work Oxford used for the epigraph (*Amores* 1 XV 35–36) to *Venus and Adonis*.

In the 84-line elegy from which the *Astrophel and Stella* epigraph derives, Ovid, in the persona of the poem's narrator, is addressing a woman sitting beside him at a horse race at the Circus Maximus whom he is trying to seduce. In Ovid neither the line nor the context ends a "Sceane of Idiots," nor is it followed by an entrance.

The "golden parade" in the context of Sidney's history refers to his dramatic funeral in London in February 1587. With that "Sceane of Idiots" ended, Sidney's contemporaries are left with his presence only in his works, *Astrophel and Stella* being the case in point. In the wake of Sidney's death, his actions in the Netherlands were widely regarded as supremely heroic, but biographies by Katherine Duncan-Jones (1991) and Alan Stewart (2000) offer revisionist assessments. In the events leading up to Sidney's mortal wound at Zutphen, Duncan-Jones says of a scheme of his that utterly failed at Steenberg, "Far from having completed a masterly coup [as he had boasted] 'in the sight of the world', Sidney had accomplished nothing" (Duncan-Jones 287). Citing official reports, Stewart says of another such scheme Sidney instigated at Gravelines, that he "fled 'having left 44 men behind him.' The fate of these men became notorious" (Stewart 305). Stewart notes, "It was left to Greville posthumously to turn the incident into another display of Sidney heroism" (Stewart 306).

The next sentence of Nashe's epistle unfolds in a masterly 125 words:

Gentlemen, that have seene a thousand lines of folly,
drawn forth *ex uno puncto impudentiae*, & two famous
Mountains to goe to the conception of one Mouse, that
have had your eares deafned with the eccho of Fames bra-
sen towres, when only they have been toucht with a leaden
pen, that have seene *Pan* sitting in his bower of delights, &
a number of *Midasses* to admire his miserable hornepipes,
let not your surfeted sight, new come from such puppetplay,
think scorne to turn aside into this Theater of pleasure,

The praise for Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* here is decidedly ironic. First, Nashe describes a number of literary offenses familiar to Gentlemen readers he is addressing who enjoyed them: an impudent pen that writes a thousand lines of foolishness, a mouse who has two mountainous works to his credit, a "leaden pen" that deafens their ears by blaring away about what it regards as famous, and a musician considered to be a god but who plays his

pipes miserably and is surrounded by superrich "Midasses," as in a court performance.

On the one hand they may not be presented as references to Sidney and may seem to salute others equally situated in the literary firmament that have paved the way for him. That is what the Gentlemen have been used to, so they should not scorn the material here being set before them, which has all of that but even more intensely. On the other hand the pejorative remarks can be read as allusions to Sidney. He wrote "two famous Mountains" by "one Mouse"—the *Arcadia*, already in print, and *Astrophel and Stella*, which was widely known, having circulated in manuscript. Further, the Gentlemen have been assailed by the deafening echoes of Sidney's trumpeted fame when in fact his pen is leaden. Thus Nashe is pleading with his listeners not to let the fact that they are "surfeted" with Sidney or his circle hold them back from reading what they will find here.

Nashe puts the best perspective on what he is introducing in his conclusion to this idiosyncratic preamble:

for

here you shal find a paper stage streud with pearle, an artificial heav'n to overshadow the faire frame, & christal wals to encounter your curious eyes, while the tragicommodity of loue is performed by starlight.

That is Nashe's blurb for the book, promoting it in the manner of the day, full of promising allurements, though its stage is paper and its heaven is artificial. It is the passage of Nashe's letter most often quoted as praise of *Astrophel and Stella*. "Tragicommodity" seems to imply something overwrought. It is invariably rendered as "tragicomedy" by Sidney editors. Regardless, Nashe's description develops in ways that modify that appraisal until it is no more than a hollow advertisement.

The chiefe Actor here is
Melpomene, whose dusky robes dipt in the ynke of teares, as
yet seeme to drop when I view them neere.

Melpomene, the muse of tragedy, is named as most characteristic of the chief actor in the forthcoming *Astrophel/Sidney*, whose ink tears fall continuously. *Astrophel and Stella* is a continual account of defeats for *Astrophel*. Duncan-Jones says that *Astrophel and Stella* "plots the speaker's sterile journey into moral and emotional impasse" (Duncan-Jones 239). *Astrophel*, the narrator of the poem, is Sidney entirely. Both Sidney biographers identify the principal characters as Sidney and Penelope Devereux, one of several potential Sidney fiancées, and on that account the poem is "rooted in the years 1582–83" according to Duncan-Jones (230).

The argument
 cruell chastitie, the Prologue hope, the Epilogue dispaire,
videte queso et linguis animisque favete.

Between hope in a Prologue to Sidney or his poem and despair at the Epilogue is *cruell chastity*, which William Cecil noted in Sidney when he was engaged to his daughter Anne; other potential brides' chances evaporated in Sidney's indifference, as his biographers relate. To that statement Nashe appends an allusive remark in Latin, literally "please see and favor tongues and souls," but idiomatically, "look at this and hold your tongue and thoughts out of reverence," an ironic statement drawn from Ovid's *Fasti* I:71, which itself is a conspicuously flattering work.

Nashe's next sentence needs to be sorted out:

And here, peradventure, my witles youth may be taxt with a margent note of presumption for offering to put up any motion of applause in the behalfe of so excellent a Poet, (the least sillable of whose name sounded in the eares of judgement, is able to give the meanest line he writes a dowry of immortality) yet those that observe how jewels oftentimes com to their hands that know not their value, & that the cockcombes of our days, like *Esops* Cock, had rather have a Barly kernell wrapt up in a Ballet, then they wil dig for the welth of wit in any ground that they know not, I hope wil also hold me excused, though I open the gate to his glory, & invite idle eares to the admiration of his melancholy.

Nashe makes excuses for his efforts to extol Sidney. While Nashe postures as if he is delivering a compliment, his praise is dubious: the parenthetical clause describes "so excellent a Poet" (Sidney) as glorified to the point that judges who dictate values will "give the meanest line he writes a dowry of immortality." The glorification of Sidney, it would seem, is quite out of hand. The rest of the sentence is a series of sarcastic allusions to Sidney and his work, disguised as an apology to the "witles youth" to whom the direct address is reserved. "Ballet" here has the heraldic meaning of a ball on a coat of arms. Nashe is saying that value is accorded to people of position and not those of merit. They prefer something of little or no value that they have in hand to making an effort to explore and discover. Yet Nashe says he will persist with the illusion of glorifying Sidney and expose those who have no clue ("idle eares") to the kind of admiration the reputation of Sidney enjoyed for "his melancholy."

Nashe marks a transition in his epistle with a Latin epigram.

Quid petitur sacris nisi tantum fama poetis?

He quotes Ovid (*Ars Amatoria* III 403), "What poet achieves greatness except through his works?" and proceeds to explore this question in regard to Sidney.

Which although it be oftentimes imprisoned in Ladyes
casks, & the president bookes of such as cannot see without
another mans spectacles, yet at length it breakes foorth in
spight of his keepers, and useth some private penne (in
steed of a picklock) to procure his violent enlargement.

Sidney's works were in the private possession of ladies to whom they were confided, the Countess of Pembroke in particular, Penelope Devereux perhaps, and men who were myopic. Yet, someone inevitably takes up a pen like a tool used to pick a lock and extols Sidney in print, like Greville, to violently enlarge him, which Nashe's "private penne" is doing ironically.

The Sunne for a time, may maske his golden head in a
cloud: yet in the end, the thicke vaile doth vanish, and his
embellished blandishment appeares.

Thus begins a paragraph devoted to overpraising Sidney. The Sunne, hidden "in a cloud" then inevitably appearing, is Sidney with "his embellished blandishment," which Nashe has just been excoriating. Nashe here launches a torrent of praise for Sidney. While appearing to praise Sidney and *Astrophel and Stella*, it is actually filled with ironic overstatement.

Long hath *Astro-*
phel (Englands Sunne) withheld the beames of his spirite,
from the common veiw of our darke sence, and night hath
hovered over the gardens of the nine Sisters, while *Ignis*
fatuus, and grosse fatty flames (such as commonly arise out
of Dunghilles) have tooke occasion, in the middest e-
clipse of his shining perfections, to wander a broade with
a wispe of paper at their tailes like Hobgoblins, and leade
men up and downe in a circle of absurditie a whole weeke,
and never know where they are.

Astrophel is Sidney here, not the poem. Since his death Sidney has been unavailable, ensconced in Avalon ("the garden of the nine Sisters"). "The beames of his spirite" and "the middest eclipse of his shining perfections" are ironic overstatement. In the absence of Sidney's light, mirages—*Ignis fatuus* (the will-o'-the-wisp) and worse ("grosse fatty flames")—are all that glow. A parade of scraps of his work or imitations of it by his admirers has resulted in pointless exercises for all concerned.

But now that cloude of
 sorrow is dissolved, which fierie Love exhaled from his
 dewie haire, and affection hath unburthened the labouring
 streames of her wombe, in the lowe cesterne of his graue:
 the night hath resigned her jettie throne unto *Lucifer*, and
 cleere daylight possesseth the skie that was dimmed; wher-
 fore breake of your daunce you Fayries and Elves, and
 from the fieldes with the torne carcasses of your Timbrils,
 for your kingdome is expired.

In elegiac phrasing, Nashe has Sidney's light emerging from a womb in his grave, which he describes as a "lowe cesterne." The party is over for those who have been dancing and playing tambourines all night in celebration.

Put out your rush candles,
 you Poets and Rimers, and bequeath your crazed quater-
 zayns to the Chaunders, for loe, here he cometh that hath
 broek your legs.

Nashe floats the ironic notion that all other "Poets and Rimers" may as well cease their efforts with the return to prominence of Sidney, who made prescriptive pronouncements about literature in *The Defence of Poesy*, a work written in 1579–80, also circulated in manuscript, and still awaiting its first printing in 1591. While conservatively defending poetry approved by Plato and Aristotle, it attacks English plays: "Our tragedies and comedies (not without cause cried out against), observing rules neither of honest civility nor skillful poetry" (Kimbrough 148).

Apollo hath resigned his Ivory Harp vnto
Astrophel, & he, like *Mercury*, must lull you a sleep with his
 musicke.

Even the gods must capitulate when *Astrophel*/Sidney is ascendant.

Sleepe *Argus*, sleep Ignorance, sleep Impudence,
 for *Mercury* hath *Io*, & onely *Io Paan* belongeth to *Astro-
 phel*.

Nashe alludes to *Io* in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a much-tormented nymph. *Astrophel*'s song of thanksgiving will put to sleep his listeners among the ancient Greeks who attacked Troy, along with impudence and ignorance personified.

Deare *Astrophel*, that in the ashes of thy Love livest
 againe like the *Phenix*; o might thy bodie (as thy name)
 live againe likewise, here amongst us: but the earth, the

mother of mortalitie, hath snacht thee too soone into her
chilled colde armes, and will not let thee by any meanes be
drawne from her deadly imbrace; and thy divine Soule,
carried on an Angels wings to heauen, is installed in *Her-*
mes place, sole *prolocutor* to the Gods.

Nashe satirically prays to Astrophel/Sidney, pleading with him to return to life. He depicts to an excessive degree the certainty of Sidney's being no longer "among us," and places him among the gods, in the seat of Mercury. The idea of Sidney as the "sole *prolocutor* to the Gods" may have been consistent with Sidney's expressed opinion of himself, but "them that list" know better.

Therefore mayest
thou never returne from the Elisian fieldes like *Orpheus*,
therefore must we ever mourne for our *Orpheus*.

Sidney emphatically must stay put in the realm of the dead, as Nashe ends the long paragraph extoling Sidney, not stopping at projecting him as a god but identifying him with the supreme mythical poet Orpheus as well.

Fayne would a seconde spring of passion heere spende
it selfe on his sweet remembrance: but Religion that rebu-
keth prophane lamentation, drinks in the rivers of those dis-
paireful teares, which languorous ruth hath outwelled, & bids
me looke back to the house of honor, where from one & the selfe
same roote of renowne, I shal find many goodly branches deri-
ved, & such as with the spreading increase of their vertues, may
somewhat overshadow the grieffe of his los.

Nashe will not re-erupt in his "passion" to laud Sidney any further on religious grounds, characterizing any attempt to do so as "profane lamentation" and "rivers of those dispaireful teares." He curtails the flood of his grief, void of energy ("languorous ruth"), and announces his intention to turn to the "spreading increase" of Sidney's living successors' "vertues" for solace.

The exemplar par excellence is Mary, Countess of Pembroke, who a year earlier had published her brother Philip's revised *Arcadia*, under the same title she would use for the Sidney folio, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*.

Amongst the which
fayre sister of *Phabus*, and eloquent secretary to the Muses, most
rare Countesse of *Pembroke* thou art not to be omitted: whom
Artes doe adore as a second *Minerva*, and our Poets extoll as
the Patronesse of their invention; for in thee, the *Lesbian Sap-*
pho with her lirick Harpe is disgraced, & the Laurel Garlande
which thy Brother so bravely advaunst on his Launce, is still
kept greene in the Temple of *Pallas*.

This satiric overappraisal of Mary Sidney rivals Nashe's efforts for her brother with amusing exaggeration. She is equal to Athena, "Patronesse" of poets, but she disgraces Sappho and outdoes her Lesbian skills in keeping fresh the laurels that Philip "advaunst on his Launce," the assonance of which suggests an absurd sexual allusion.

Thou only sacrificest thy
soule to contemplation, thou only entertainest emptie handed
Homer, & keepest the springs of Castalia from being dryed vp.

The countess is single-mindedly devoted to contemplation, restricting herself to the most revered poet of the ancient world.

Learning, wisdom, beautie, and all other ornaments of Nobilitie whatsoever, seeke to approve themselues in thy sight, and get a further seale of felicity, from the smiles of thy favour:

Every noble virtue "whatsoever" rules out argument. "A further seale of felicity" could mean sealing it off, her smiles thus disbursing an ambiguous distinction.

Nashe inserts a second Latin epigraph, ending the second part of his epistle, another quotation from Ovid, this time from the *Double Heroïdes* (XVI 274).

O Jove digna viro ni Jove nata fores.

Perseus Digital Library at Tufts University translates this: "O worthy of the bed of Jove, but that you sprang from himself!" (online). Theoi Classical Texts Library renders it: "O worthy of Jove to husband were you not the child of Jove" (online). It sums up the preceding satirical praise of Countess Mary, rather than reflecting what follows. The last part of Nashe's epistle begins with an apology for the way he has written so far.

I feare I shall be counted a mercenary flatterer, for mixing my thoughts with such figurative admiration, but generall report that surpasseth my praise, condemneeth my rhetoricke of dulnesse for so colde a commendation.

Nashe hints that he is being paid, though if so it is not to flatter but to satirize. He says that his efforts pale in comparison with the "generall report" the Sidneys have received. His "rhetoricke" can in no way compete with what they are used to.

Indeede to say the truth,
my stile is somewhat heauiue gated, and cannot daunce trip and goe so lively, with oh my love, ah my love, all my loues gone, as other Shepheards that have beene fooles in the Morris time out of minde: nor hath my prose any skill to imitate the Al-

mond leape verse, or sit tabring five yeres together nothing but
to bee, to hee: on a paper drum.

Here is more of Nashe's self-effacement, diverting suspicions of his double-edged pen. But alleging that he has been outdone by makers of faddish verse and drummers marking the same beat *ad infinitum* is a backhanded concession, making his own effort sound preferable.

Onely I can keepe pace with
Gravesend barge, and care not if I have water enough, to lande
my ship of fooles with the Tearme, (the tyde I shoulde say.)

Barges tend to move slowly, but only Nashe can keep up with this one. Gravesend, a port in Kent, has a funeral sound. His introductory effort is carefree.

Now every man is not of that minde, for some to goe the lighter away, will take in their fraught of spangled feathers, golden Peebles, Straw, Reedes, Bulrushes, or anything, and then they beare out their sayles as proudly, as if they were balisted with Bulbief.

Between himself and the rest of the encomium writers who "proudly" parade their inferior literary skills, Nashe draws a line.

Others are so hardly bested for loading, that they are faine to retaile the cinders of *Troy*, and the shivers of broken trunchions, to fill up their boate that else should goe empty: and if they have but a pound weight of good Merchandise, it shall be placed at the poope, or pluckt in a thousande peeces to credit their carriage.

Nashe finds further ways to attack other writers' torrents of praise for Sidney, with the droll delivery of a comedian.

For my part, euery man as he likes, *mens
cuiusque is est quisque.*

Nashe employs Cicero's often quoted expression (*Republic* VI 26)—"every mind is universal"—to back up his shrug—to each his own.

Tis as good to goe in cut-fingerd Pumps
as corke shooes, if one wore Cornish diamonds on his toes.

His amusing embellishments work even when his allusions are elusive.

To
explain it by a more familiar example, an Asse is no great state-
man in the beastes common-wealth, though he weare his eares

upsevant muffe, after the Muscovy fashion, & hange the lip like a Capcase halfe open, or looke as demurely as a sixpenny browne loafe, for he hath some imperfections that do keepe him from the common Council: yet of many, he is deemed a very vertuous member, and one of the honestest sort of men that are; So that our opinion (as *Sextus Empedocus* affirmeth) gives the name of good or ill to every thing.

To whom could this barrage of metaphorical salvos be applied? Sidney, who dressed quite fashionably, was among the gentry, not the nobility, who was generally regarded posthumously as virtuous and honest, but chronically lacked advancement by the Elizabethan court. Seemingly intending to invoke the skeptic philosopher Sextus Empiricus, Nashe spells the name Empedocus. The first three syllables of the name, “Empiri,” acutely observant, become “Empedo,” impeded. Everyone is entitled to contrarian opinions, but Sidney’s letter against the queen’s plan to marry the Duke of Alençon in the 1570s was a *faux pas*.

Out of whose works (latelie translated into English, for the benefit of unlearned writers) a man might collect a whole booke of this argument, which no doubt woulde prove a worthy commonwealth matter, and far better than wits waxe karnell: much good worship have the Author.

Nashe wholeheartedly endorses the skeptic philosopher but expresses trepidation about following him to the point of drawing national attention, as Sidney did.

Such is this golden age wherein we live, and so replenisht with golden Asses of all sortes, that if learning had lost it selfe in a grove of Genealogies, wee neede doe no more but sette an olde goose over halfe a dozen pottle pots, (which are as it were the egges of invention) and wee shall have such a breede of bookes within a little while after, as will fill all the world with the wilde fowle of good wits; I can tell you this is a harder thing then making golde of quicksilver, and will trouble you more then the Morrall of *Aesops* Glow-worme, hath troubled our English Apes, who striving to warme themselues, with the flame of the Philosopher’s stone, have spent all their wealth in buying bellowes to blowe this false fyre.

A grove of Genealogies produced the Sidney line. In a “golden age of Golden Asses,” learning is lost and false gods are popular. To satisfy it, books are bred in a most slovenly manner and writing degenerates. Aesop’s glow-worm at night is nothing. He proves himself a grub in daylight, implying that Sidney has a platform due to his heroic death but fails to deliver when

he is read more clearly. Those who press the case for greatness for him are expending wealth and effort on a worthless idol.

Gentlemen, I feare
I have too much presumed on your idle leysure, and beene too
bold, to stand talking all this while in an other mans doore: but
now I will leave you to survey the pleasures of Paphos, and of-
fer your smiles on the Aulters of Venus.

Yours in all desire to please,
Tho: Nashe.

Having fulfilled his impossible mission, Nashe makes a polite and self-effacing exit, leaving his Gentlemen readers with the allurements of “pleasures” in the realm of the goddess of love.

There is far more satiric content in Nashe's letter than these perceptions from over 400 years' distance can elucidate, but that ending appears to be a sly appropriation from *Venus and Adonis*, which concludes with Venus's retreat to Paphos. It suggests that Nashe was privy to *Venus and Adonis* a year before it was printed.

The Remarkable Thomas Newman

Thomas Newman had a brief career as the recipient or client of printers for 20-odd works on literary, scholarly, and religious subjects between 1587 and 1592. Three works were printed for him in 1587. There is *Amorous Fiammetta* by Boccaccio, translated by B. Giavone, aka Bartholomew Young. Young also translated for other publishers: *The Civile Conversation of M. Stephen Guazzo*, printed in 1586, and most famously *Diana of George of Montemayor*, translated in 1582 and printed in 1598, from which a tale is used for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*.

Also in 1587 comes the first political tract printed for Newman, *A short declaration of the ende of traytors* by Richard Crompton, which justifies the execution of Mary Queen of Scots.

The third 1587 title is *The lamentations of Amyntas for the death of Phillis*. It is a translation by Abraham Fraunce of a poem in Latin by Thomas Watson. Three more works authored by Fraunce were printed for Newman in 1588: *Insignium, armorum, emblematum, hieroglyphicorum, et symbolorum*, an in-depth study written in Latin on the arcane subjects listed in the title; *The Arcadian Rhetorike*, a rhetoric manual, and *The lawiers logike*, a didactic work on logic and “the practise of the common lawe” written in English with numerous quotations in Latin and a smattering of Greek. Fraunce is listed in *Palladis Tamia* by Francis Meres as one of the English masters of pastoral poetry, perhaps because of *Amyntas*.

Also in 1588, Newman had printed for himself *Elizabetha triumphans* by James Aske, a political tract on the Catholic challenges to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, her triumph over the Spanish Armada and her visit to English troops in Essex.

More religious-political tracts were printed for Newman in 1589: *A sermon preached at Paules Crosse* by Thomas White, in celebration of the 32nd year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, printed in 1589, and *The Portraiture of Hypocrisie* by John Bate, advocating religious rectitude. That year also saw the publication for Newman of *A philosophical treatise concerning the quietnes of the mind*, a translation from Plutarch via a French translation by James Amyor rendered into English by John Clapham.

Between 1589 and 1592 Newman published four works by Robert Greene and one more probably by Green about Richard Tarlton. *Tarltons News out of Purgatorie* is dated 1590, two years after Tarlton's death. The works published under Greene's name were *Ciceronis amor: Tullies love* (1589), *Greenes mourning garment giuen him by repentance at the funerals of love* (1590), *Greenes farewell to folly* (1591), and from 1592, the year Greene died, *Greenes vision written at the instant of his death*. In between these works came *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella* (1591).

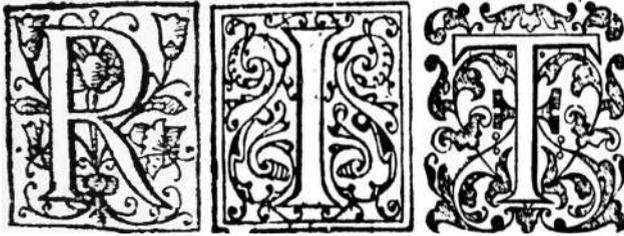
After his death in 1592, Newman's widow, Elyzabeth (Bannte) Newman, whom he left with four children under the age of five, carried on for him and published two works in 1594, *The Patterne of painefull Adventures*, "Gathered into English by Laurence Twine Gentleman" and *The Affectionate Shepheard* by Richard Barnfield, which he dedicated to Penelope (Devereux) Rich, the Stella of *Astrophel and Stella*. *The Patterne of painefull Adventures* was the basis of the Shakespeare play *Pericles*.

The only known writing in Newman's own name besides the dedication for *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella* are two other dedications to books he published. They appear in *Amorous Fiammetta* and *Greenes vision: Written at the instant of his death*. These three dedications, it will be shown, are suffused with aristocratic wit and phrasing reminiscent of the Shakespeare dedications to Henry Wriothesley in *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, linguistic evidence that they were written by Oxford.

On the 1591 *Astrophel and Stella* title page, the line with Newman's name is in the largest type size. The second-largest type is used for the author's name, reduced to "Syr P.S." It is about two points or eight percent smaller than the Newman line, perhaps an unconscious indication of the publisher's priorities. In *The First Publication of Astrophel and Stella: Thomas Newman and the Stationers*, published in 2023 in *Textual Cultures* 16:1, Mark Bland writes, "What is notable about this catalogue is that Newman had never published on his own

account before *Astrophel and Stella*" (online 102). That is, his previous books were all published in partnership with other publishers.

The title page signals that Newman had a special role in the book, one that is curiously described in the dedication. The ornate letter at the beginning of Newman's dedication exhibits traits similar to the ornate letters of the dedications for the two major Shakespeare poems. Below, from left, are the letters from *Venus and Adonis*, *Astrophel and Stella*, and *Lucrece*.



They share typographical characteristics, botanical themes and elaborate filigrees. The ornate letter from *Astrophel and Stella* is boxed just as the *Venus and Adonis* letter, and it is vertically symmetrical like the *Lucrece* letter.

The *Astrophel and Stella* dedicatory epistle begins:

To the worshipfull and his very
good Freende, Ma. *Frauncis Flower* Es-
quire, increase of all content.

Frauncis Flower, according to *The History of Parliament*, "was a dependant of (Sir) Christopher Hatton, who obtained for him a monopoly in the printing of Latin, Greek and Hebrew books though, as the Stationers put it, he was 'not one of our company'" (online). To have been trusted with such a position Flower clearly had to have had considerable interest, knowledge and ability in these classical languages, and as such was a person of consequence. He served four terms in Parliament, for Huntingdon in 1584, 1586 and 1589, and for Corfe Castle in 1593. The *History of Parliament* entry describes a range of responsibilities Flower shouldered over the course of his career: "Flower is recorded as sitting on the committee concerning appeals out of ecclesiastical courts (18 Dec. 1584), and in 1593, the subsidy committee (1 Mar.), and committees concerning procedure (30 Mar.) and the navy (6 Apr.)." The last-word poem states, "I see my favours are no lasting flowers." Flowers are not lasting, but as an allusion to friendship with Frauncis Flower, they can be.

Flower in 1591 is chronologically the recipient of the second of the three dedications signed Thomas Newman. The dedicatee preceding him was William Hatton in 1587, for *Amorous Fiammetta*, who also served terms in Parliament. The third and last dedicatee was Nicholas Sanders of Ewell in

1592, for *Greenes vision: Written at the instant of his death*. He would serve three terms in Parliament, the first beginning in 1593. As dedicatees, these three gentlemen are addressed as close friends. In the case of Sanders, that friendship is specifically mentioned in the dedication.

The Flower dedication begins with an elliptical explanation of how the writer came into possession of the *Astrophel and Stella* manuscript.

It was my fortune (right worshipfull) not many daies since, to light upon the famous device of *Astrophel and Stella*, which carrying the generall commendation of all men of judgement, and being reported to be one of the rarest things that ever any Englishman set abroach, I have thought good to publish it under your name, both for I know the excellencie of your worships conceipt, aboue all other to be such, as is onely fit to discerne of all matters of wit, as also for the credite and countenance your patronage may give to such a worke.

The phrasing “carrying the generall commendation of all men of judgement” is a second-hand compliment, and “being reported to be one of the rarest things that ever any Englishman set abroach” savors of ironic overstatement. The unusual word “abroach” is used in the Shakespeare plays *2 Henry IV*, *Richard III*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

Accept of it I beseech you, as the first fruites of my affection, which desires to approve it selfe in all dutie unto you: and though the Argument perhaps may seeme too light for your grave viewe, yet considering the worthines of the Author, I hope you will entertaine it accordingly.

The phrase “the first fruites of my affection” was rephrased two years later as “the first heire of my invention” in the dedicatory letter to *Venus and Adonis*. The phrase “in all dutie” was employed in the *Venus and Adonis* letter in the complimentary close. Similar forms of address are also employed in the two dedications, “right worshipfull” for *Astrophel and Stella* and “Right Honorable” for *Venus and Adonis*. “The worthiness of the Author” presents the same ambiguity that Nashe employed in reference to “worthy” Sidney in his remarks about England’s many mediocrities in *The Anatomy of Absurdity*.

For my part, I haue beene very carefull in the Printing of it, and where as being spread abroade in written Coppies, it had gathered much corruption by ill Writers: I have used their helpe and advice in correcting & restoring it to his first dignitie, that I knowe were of skill and experience in those matters.

There is the dedication's proud advertisement of the editing *Astrophel and Stella* has received for this printing. Until recently, scholarly opinion of the text of the first 1591 printing of Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* has been negative. The traditional view was eloquently expressed by Mona Wilson in her biography *Sir Philip Sidney* (1932): "Few poets can have been so badly handled on their first appearance. The general aspect of the text suggests that the purveyor of the manuscript was a serving man in the employ of one of Sidney's friends, who had made a scribbled copy, full of constructions and misreadings, from which the printer set up as much as he could decipher, completing the lines with conjectures of his own, and leaving the punctuation to Snug the joiner" (Wilson 168).

The first edition of *Astrophel and Stella* was thwarted for some reason by the authorities. An item was recorded in the Stationers' Register on September 18, 1591, "for carrying of Newman's books to the hall," meaning that they were impounded. A second printing, also dated 1591, quickly superseded the first. Its title page stated that it was "printed for Thomas Newman." From the first printing it contains only the work of Sidney; all the other writers' work was deleted. There is no dedication by Thomas Newman, no letter to the reader by Thomas Nashe, no sonnets by Samuel Daniel or cantos by Thomas Campion (or whoever), no poem by Fulke Greville and definitely no last-word poem by E.O. What's more, the *Astrophel and Stella* text was completely reset and the editing eliminated.

Samuel Daniel, who received his first extensive exposure as a poet in the first Newman edition while he was in Italy, weighed in on the matter when he published *Delia* in 1592 at the age of 30. Of his 28 sonnets printed by Newman, all but a handful of them were included in *Delia*, where he revised them all in varying degrees. In his dedication of the *Delia* pamphlet to "Ladie Mary, Countesse of Pembroke" signed "Samuel Danyell," he complains that he "was betraide by the indiscretion of a greedie Printer, and had some of my secrets bewraide to the world, uncorrected." He could hardly complain against Oxford, for it would have been unseemly or even dangerous for a person of his degree to complain about a noble, but he clearly did not know of the involvement of anyone other than Newman, as he goes on to say, "But this wrong was not onely doone to mee, but to him whose unmatched lines have indured the like misfortune; Ignorance sparing not to commit

sacrilege upon so holy Reliques. Yet *Astrophel*, flying with the wings of his own fame, a higher pitch then the gross-sighted can discern, hath registred his owne name in the Annals of eternitie, and cannot be disgraced, howsoever disguised.”

In his edition of *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney* (1962), William A. Ringler Jr. considered it probable “that some person of influence had lodged a complaint after a few copies had been sold, that a government order was issued for the suppression of the remainder of the edition” (Ringler 543). The matter came to involve Lord Burghley.

In a painstakingly thorough analysis of manuscript and early print versions of *Astrophel and Stella*, Ringler judges the first printing “a ‘bad quarto’, for its publication was unauthorized and its text is extremely corrupt” (Ringler 544). H.R. Woudhuysen concurs in his *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (1996), saying that this “text of Sidney’s work was far from satisfactory” (Woudhuysen 367) and speculating on who was to blame for giving Newman the manuscript of *Astrophel and Stella*.

In 2023, Mark Bland published two papers on *Astrophel and Stella* in *Textual Cultures* 16:1, Indiana University Press (online). In “The First Publication of *Astrophel and Stella*,” he dismisses Ringler’s view that an outcry from an elite faction caused the first 1591 printing to be seized, and argues that the charges were due to licensing issues and protocols of the publishing trade.

In his other paper in *Textual Cultures* 16:1, “Revision in *Astrophel and Stella*: Some Aspects of the Problem,” Bland takes issue with the negative Wilson-Ringler-Woudhuysen view of the first edition text. He praises the editing, saying that “the variants incorporated into the copy total at least six hundred words and occur in every sonnet throughout the text. What is involved is not just a passing few tweaks, but a thorough engagement with everything in *Astrophel and Stella*.” Speculating on who was responsible, he says that “the Italian touches suggest that it was [John] Florio who prepared the copy.”

Oxford was also capable of Italian touches, and as he has the last word in the book, seems more likely than Florio to have been responsible for the editing of Sidney’s poem. He was more than capable, given the poems acknowledged as his during his lifetime, not to mention *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*. If Oxford reworked Sidney’s poem, it would certainly explain the involvement of Lord Burghley, the most likely official to be involved if oversight were required of the activities of his former ward and late daughter Anne’s widower.

Other qualifications Bland attributes to Florio can apply to Oxford: “he had the authority to do so” and “he would have considered himself as someone knowledgeable” of Sidney’s work and was able “to supply the deficiencies therein.” What Bland intuits of the effort that he supposes is Florio’s

resonates brilliantly with the desire for closure that Oxford sought: "What one senses in his work is a conversation with the dead, an awareness of context, an engagement with the text in a very profound manner, and a desire to save the writer from embarrassment—a snip, as it were, in time."

The third 1590s pamphlet of *Astrophel and Stella*, "printed for Matthew Lownes," is undated (Bland dates it 1596–97). It restores the first-edition editing as well as all of the other poets' poems including E.O.'s. It does not, however, include the Newman dedication or Nashe's letter. It was typeset anew, tracking the editing of the first printing with few discrepancies.

The fourth and last 1590s printing was the Sidney catalogue published in 1598 as *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*. Its text of *Astrophel and Stella* is 108 sonnets in length, one more than in the three pamphlets, and it closely tracks the second Newman printing. The additional sonnet is No. 37. It is the sonnet that most identifies Penelope Devereux Rich as Stella, repeatedly playing on her married name.

To show a sampling of the four printings' differences, an appendix to this paper catalogues all of the significant changes in the first fifteen sonnets of *Astrophel and Stella*, clearly showing the high degree to which texts of the first Newman and the Lownes printings correlate; a similar correlation is apparent between the second Newman pamphlet and the Countess of Pembroke's 1598 catalogue.

The Newman dedication continues:

And the rather was I moved to sette
it forth, because I thought it pittie anie thing
proceeding from so rare a man, shoulde bee
obscured, or that his fame should not still be
nourisht in his works, whom the works with
one united grieffe bewailed.

This "pittie" leads the speaker to rescue the work of "so rare a man" (an ambiguous phrase) from what in his own "ill Coppies" of *Astrophel and Stella* was "obscured."

Thus craving
pardon for my bold attempt, & desiring the
continuance of your worshippinges favour unto
mee, I ende.

Yours alwaies to be
commaunded.
Tho : Newman.

The affected apologetic tone (“craving pardon for my bold attempt”) is again seen in the *Venus and Adonis* dedication (“I know not how I shall offend”).

* * *

An earlier Epistle Dedicatorie signed Thomas Newman, the first of his three known signed works, appeared in his production of *Amorous Fiammetta* by Boccaccio, translated by Bartholomew Young and published in 1587. The dedicatee, Sir William Hatton, was born in 1565. His father, John Newport of Huntingdon, Warwickshire, died in 1566. His mother, Dorothy Hatton, whose name he used, was the sister of Christopher Hatton, to whom Francis Flower, the dedicatee of *Syr. P.S. His Astrophel and Stella*, was a dependent. “Flower bequeathed him a diamond worth £50,” according to *The History of Parliament* (online). Sir William had constituencies in Parliament in 1586, the year he was knighted, and 1589 for Corfe Castle, which was owned by his uncle Christopher. He was with Philip Sidney at Zutphen and attended his funeral. The flamboyant dedication accorded to Hatton here suggests that he was well regarded by its writer. The Epistle Dedicatorie of *Amorous Fiammetta* contains the kinds of aristocratic witticisms and cadences of the Shakespeare dedications to Southampton.

To the Right worshipfull and ver-
tuous Gentleman, Sir
William Hatton Knight.

(•••)



He paltring Poet Cherillus, dedicated his *dauncing poemes to that mighty Monarche Alexander, saying, that he knewe assuredly, if that he woulde not accept them in that they were not pithy, yet he wold not vterly reiect*

them in that they had a shew of Poetry. Aemilius thinking to gratify that worthy conquerer Caesar, with some curious peece of workmanship, waded so far in the depth of his arte, as straying curtesie with cunning, he skylpt beyond his skill, not beeing able to make it perfect. Who beeing blamed of his freend, for stryving further then his sleeve would stretch, answered: that although arte & skylle were wanting to beautifie the worke, yet hart and wyll did polish that part, which lacke of cunning had left unperfect. Whose answer, as one guilty of a greater cryme, I clayme for a sufficient excuse of my folly, that durst enterprise to stryve beyonde my strength, knowing my selfe unable, both by nature and arte to bring this or any part thereof by mine owne skill to a wyse ende. For if the Foulter is to bee condemned of folly that

*takes in hand to talke of hunting, then may I wel be dubbed
a dolte, which beeing vnskeilfull, dare take in hande to de-
sipher the substaunce of Love, that am but a foole.*

*But as there is no greater cooling carde to a rash wit, then
want, so there is not a more speedy spurre to a willing mind,
then the force of duetie, which drove me in a double doubt,
either to be counted as bold as blinde Bayard, in presuming
too farre, or to incurre the prejudice of ingratitude, in being
to slowe: But as wishes are of no value, so his will as vaine
that covettes to paie his debtes with counterfait coyne, there
in I finde the fault, and commit the offence. For beeing
greatly indebted to my honourable good Lord by duety, for
the first payment I offer although not mine owne labours, to
you his honours worthy Nephue, this small pamphlet of M.
John Boccace a famous Poet, and translated by M. Bar-
tholmewe Young of the middle temple, a peece of worke
worthy the wearing, in that it sheweth the manner howe to
eschew deceitfull & wicked love: which considered although
wisdome willed me to go (non Ultra crepidan) I thought good
to present this pamphlet under your worships protection: hop-
ping you will deigne to accept the matter although it be but
prose, though something unsavery for want of skil, yet accept
the Authours well meaning for his and my boldnesse, in that
his skill and my good will is not in the wane, whatsoeuer
this worke dooth want. The Emperour Trajan never wan-
ted sutors because so curteously he would heare every mans
complainte. All that courted Atalanta were hunters, where
Maecenas, lodgeth schollers will flocke. And your worshippe
being a worthy fosterer of the learned, hath forced my au-
thour by your vertue and me by duetie, to offer these his
fruites at the shrine of your worships curtesie. Beseeching
the almighty to send you health, wealth and prosperity.*

Your worships to commaund
in all duety Thomas
Newman.

Such a literary performance reveals Newman as a writer of exceptional skill. The elaborate introduction of the first paragraph is spent in protesting his lack of skill as a writer while floridly demonstrating it. Not only the affected apologetic tone but also the brash style reflects the Shakespeare dedications to Southampton. The parallel constructions in the second paragraph are masterly and the rhetoric exhibits familiar Shakespeare devices and classical

erudition. The Atalanta story, although not used in *Venus and Adonis*, is the main feature of the telling of their tale in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the Arthur Golding translation of it. Atalanta is also mentioned in *As You Like It*. Aemilius is a character name in *Titus Andronicus* and Maecenas is in *Julius Caesar*.

The last known signed work of Thomas Newman is his Epistle Dedicatorie to *Greenes vision: Written at the instant of his death*, printed in 1592. The address is to Nicholas Sanders of Ewell. The *History of Parliament* site online spells the surname Saunders, while the *Ewell and Epsom History Explorer* (online) spells it Saunder. The *History of Parliament* website recounts that his father, Nicholas Sanders the elder, “was a friend of Lord Burghley (Sir William Cecil), who ‘brought up’ the young Saunders in his own household, as Saunders himself later recalled.” This relationship assures that Oxford was acquainted with him at his home, in a family context. He was as the dedication says, the dedicator’s “e-speciall good friend” (online). The *Ewell & Epsom History Explorer* website relates him to Lord Burghley, too, to whose “honorable favour, direction and protection” his father did “comend and comitt my said sonne Nicholas” in his will (online).

Nicholas Sanders was born in 1563, his father died in 1587. Both were barristers and longtime members of Parliament for various constituencies. Sanders the younger was knighted in 1603 and “was named to 95 committees in the 1604–10 Parliament, but is known to have made only two or three speeches,” *The History of Parliament* reports. Given his age, Sanders appears to have been part of the Cecil household at the center of the time between when Oxford, who was 13 years his senior, and Southampton, 10 years his junior, were Cecil’s wards. The dedication has all the characteristics of the Shakespeare dedications to Southampton.

To the right worshipfull and his e-
speciall good friend, M. Nicholas San-
ders of Ewell Esquier, T. Newman wish-
eth all felicitie.



ERE I as able as I am willing (Right
Worshipfull) to shewe my selfe
thankful for your manie kindnesses
extended unto me, some more ac-

complisht Dedication then this, should have
offred it selfe to your judiciall view at this instant.
It was one of the last workes of a wel known Au-
thor, therefore I hope it will be more acceptable.
Manie have published repentaunces under his
name, but none more unfeigned then this, being

everie word of his owne: his own phrase, his own method. The experience of many vices brought forth this last vision of vertue. I recommend it intirely to your worships even ballancing censure. None have more insight then you into matters of wit. All men of Art acknowledge you to bee an especiall *Mecenas*, and supporter of learning in these her despised latter daies. I am one that have no interest in knowledge, but the inseperate love that I beare to them that professe it: That attendant love on good letters, strives to honor you in whome Art is honoured. I thinke not this pamphlet any way proportionable in woorth with your worshippes patronage: but it is my desire to yeelde some encrease to your fame in anie thing that I shall imprint. Thus wishing to your worshippe that felicitie and contentment, which your owne best governed thoughtes doe aime at, I most humblie take my leaue.

Your VVorships most bounden

T. Newman.

Written with the same clear intent that the other two Newman dedicatory letters exhibit, and including a mention of one of the ancient Romans named in the letter accompanying Boccaccio's *Amorous Fiammetta* five years earlier, this letter is embellished to be a straightforward, traditional request for patronage. In that manner it has even more in common with the Shakespeare dedications to Southampton than the other two. Again, there is the apologetic posture and some of the same words and terms: pamphlet, bound, worth.

Conclusions

What emerges through this exploration of *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella* is a glimpse of poets, satirists, scholars, courtiers, gentry, and nobles interacting with one another in an intensely controlled and competitive industry. Evidence that Oxford wrote the three dedications signed Thomas Newman spanning the six years of Newman's work as a publisher suggests a sustained relationship between Oxford and Newman, which provokes curiosity about whether Oxford selected other works that Newman published. The evidence presented also suggests a close literary association of Oxford with Thomas Nashe as well as to some degree with Robert Greene and Bartholomew Young, and friendships with the dedicatees Frauncis Flower, William Hatton,

and Nicholas Sander. Cool relations with the Countess of Pembroke and Samuel Daniel are also evidenced.

This paper makes a case for the addition of the last-word poem to the works of Edward de Vere. Evidence tends to show the audacity of Oxford in revising Sidney's work and employing Thomas Nashe to advance the satire against Sidney and Countess Mary as far as he could dare. It also rescues Nashe's letter from the dismissive appraisal it has been accorded.

This paper has only begun to explore the vagaries of the four 1590s printings of *Astrophel and Stella*, and much remains to be examined and evaluated. The textual analyses of the three epistles dedicatory, the Thomas Nashe letter to readers that list, and the last-word poem in the first edition are by no means exhaustive and stand to be improved in light of further research. There is more to be explored in the contributions of Samuel Daniel, the poets grouped under the name "Content," and Fulke Greville's *Megliora spero* as well.

The mapping and classifying of editorial changes begun in the appendix is a good start, but it needs to be completed for a thorough grasp of the textual differences in the four 1590s printings of *Astrophel and Stella* and a fuller understanding of the nature of the editor's concerns.

Appendix

Here, catalogued by stanza and line numbers, are all the significant word changes in the first fifteen sonnets for the four 1590s printings of *Astrophel and Stella*. It can be readily seen how closely the first 1591 Thomas Newman printing (TN1) matches up with the undated Matthew Lownes printing (ML), and how the second 1591 Thomas Newman printing (TN2) mostly aligns with the Countess of Pembroke's 1598 catalogue (CPC). TN1 and ML present the edited version. TN2 and CPC show the restoration of Sidney's original wording.

According to Ringler, three generations of manuscripts are lost, two generations being "a lost transcript (O)" and "Sidney's lost holograph original," the third generation being "one or another of three lost intermediaries (X, Y, or Z)". From these, according to Ringler, the "substantive" surviving manuscripts and prints "descend" (Ringler 447).

This appendix's approach is far simpler but depicts a clear difference between two versions of *Astrophel and Stella*. Juxtaposed here are two versions:

- 1) a judiciously edited poem and
- 2) what is presumably Sidney's original wording.

A further continuation of these juxtapositions, carried through another 15 sonnets, exhibits the same characteristics. A few lines dropped from the first version are restored in the second, including the entire 37th sonnet with its repeated use of "Rich," which gives away the identity of Stella.

Some of the editing shown here substitutes one term for another, such as 1:13, 2:3, 2:7, 4:2, 4:6, 4:10, 6:4, 7:4, 7:8, 7:12, 7:14, 8:5. Other changes are made to smooth out poetic rhythm, such as 3:3-4, 4:4, 8:8, 12:4, 12:6, 12:8, 12:11, 13:1, 15:4, 15:8, and 15:14. At times the editor subtly sharpens the meaning, as in 8:11-12, 9:10, 11:3, and 12:2. Occasionally a more playful or lustful redaction occurs, as in 8:6 and 11:12. In 5:1-8, the first and second quatrains are interchanged to achieve better progression. In 10:5 the editor enhanced the sense to avoid a redundancy.

Countess Mary kept to the task of restoring virtually everything to what Sidney presumably had written, only rarely making her own improvements, as in 12:2, or even making her own word preference, as in 13:14.

- 1:13 — TN1: Byting my tongue and penne, beating my selfe for spite:
— ML: Byting my tongue and penne, beating my selfe for spite:
— TN2: Byting my trewand penne, beating my selfe for spite:
— CPC: Biting my trewand pen, beating my selfe for spite,

- 2:3 — TN1: But knowne, worth did in tract of time proceede,
 — ML: But knowne, worth did in tract of time proceede,
 — TN2: But knowne, worth did in mine of time proceede,
 — CPC: But knowne worth did in mine of time proceed,
- 2:7 — TN1: At length to Loves decrees, I first agreede.
 — ML: At length to Loves decrees, I first agreede.
 — TN2: At length to Loves decrees, I forst agreede.
 — CPC: At length to *Loves* decrees, I forc'd, agreed,
- 3:3-4 — TN1: Or Pinders Apes flaunt in their phrases fine,
 Enameling their pride with flowers of golde.
 — ML: Or Pyndars Apes flaunt in their phrases fine,
 Enameling their pride with flowers of golde.
 — TN2: Or Pinders Apes flaunt they in phrases fine,
 Enameling with pyde flowers their thoughts of golde:
 — CPC: Or Pindares Apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,
 Enam'ling with pied flowers their thoughts of golde:
- 4:2 — TN1: Thou set'st a bate betweene my love and me:
 — ML: Thou set'st a bate betweene my love and me,
 — TN2: Thou set'st a bate betweene my will and wit:
 — CPC: Thou setst a bate betweene my will and wit,
- 4:4 — TN1: Leave what thou lik'st, and deale thou not with it.
 — ML: Leave what thou lik'st, and deale thou not with it.
 — TN2: Leave what thou lik'st not, deale not thou with it.
 — CPC: Leave what thou likest not, deale not thou with it.
- 4:6 — TN1: Churches and Schooles are for thy seat most fit:
 — ML: Churches and Schooles are for thy seat most fit:
 — TN2: Churches or Schooles are for thy seat more fit:
 — CPC: Churches or Schooles are for thy seate more fit:
- 4:10 — TN1: That little reason that is left in mee,
 — ML: That little reason that is left in mee.
 — TN2: The little reason that is left in mee.
 — CPC: The litle reason that is left in me,

5:1-8 — TN1: It is most true, what wee call *Cupids* dart,
An Image is, which for our selves we carve:
And fooles adore, in Temple of our hart,
Till that good God make church and Churh-men starve.
It is most true, that eyes are bound to serve
The inward part: and that the heavenly part
Ought to be King, from whose rules who doth swerve,
Rebels to nature, strive for their owne smart.

— ML: It is most true, what wee call *Cupids* dart,
An Image is, which for our selves we carve:
And fooles adore, in Temple of our hart,
Till that good God make church and Churh-men starve.
It is most true, that eyes are bound to serve
The inward part: and that the heavenly part
Ought to be King, from whose rules who doth swerve,
Rebels to nature, strive for their owne smart.

Interchanged quatrains in TN1 and ML are restored to their original sequence in TN2 and CPC:

— TN2: It is most true, that eyes are found to serve
The inward light: and that the heavenly part
Ought to be King, from whose rules who doth swerve,
Rebels tonature, strive for their owne smart.
It is most true, what wee call *Cupids* dart,
An Image is, which for our selves we carve:
And fooles adore, in Temple of our hart,
Till that good God make church and Church-men starve.

— CPC: It is most true, that eyes are form'd to serve
The inward light: and that the heavenly part
Ought to be king, from whose rules who doth swerve,
Rebels to Nature, strive for their owne smart.
It is most true, what wee call *Cupids* dart,
An image is, which for our selves we carve;
And, fooles, adore, in temple of our hart,
Till that good God make church and Churchman starve.

6:4 — TN1: Of lyving deathes deere woundes, faire stormes and flashing fyres.

— ML: Of lyving deaths deere wounds, faire stormes and flashing fyres.

— TN2: Of lyving deathes, deere woundes, faire, stormes, and friesing fyres.

— CPC: Of living deaths, deare wounds, faire stormes & freesing fires:

- 7:4 — TN1: Frame daintiest lustre mixte with shaddowes light ?
 — ML: Frame daintiest lustre mixte with shaddowes light ?
 — TN2: Frame daintiest lustre mixte of shades & light ?
 — CPC: Frame daintiest lustre, mixte of shades & light ?
- 7:7-8 — TN1: Least if no vaile these brave beames did disguise,
 They Sun-like would more dazell than delight.
 — ML: Least if no vaile these brave beames did disguise,
 They Sun-like would more dazell than delight.
 — TN2: Least if no vaile these brave gleames did disguise,
 They Sun-like should more dazell than delight.
 — CPC: Least if no vaile these brave gleames did disguise,
 They sun-like should more dazle then delight.
- 7:12 — TN1: But so and thus, she minding Love should bee
 — ML: But so and thus, she minding Love should bee
 — TN2: Both so and thus, she minding Love should bee
 — CPC: Both so and thus, she minding *Love* should be
- 7:14 — TN1: To honour all their deathes, who for her bleede.
 — ML: To honour all their deathes, who for her bleede.
 — TN2: To honour all their deathes, which for her bleede.
 — CPC: To honor all their deaths, who for her bleed.
- 8:5-6 — TN1: But finding these colde climes, too coldlie him imbrace,
 Not usde to frozen lippes, he strave to finde some part
 — ML: But finding these cold climes, too coldlie him imbrace,
 Not usde to frozen lippes, he strave to finde some part,
 — TN2: But finding these North climes, too coldlie him imbrace,
 Not usde to frozen clippes, he strave to finde some part
 — CPC: But finding these North clymes do coldly him embrace,
 Not usde to frozen clips, he strave to finde some part
- 8:8 — TN1: At length himselfe he pearch'd in *Stellas* face,
 — ML: At length himselfe he pearch'd in *Stellas* face,
 — TN2: At length he preach'd himselfe in *Stellas* joyfull face,
 — CPC: At length he perch'd himself in *Stellas* joyfull face,
- 8:11-12 — TN1: Effects of livelie heate in nature needes must growe.
 But she most faire, most colde; made him there take his flight
 — ML: Effects of livelie heate in nature needes must growe.
 But she most faire, most colde ; made him there take his flight
 — TN2: Effects of livelie heate must needes in nature growe.
 But shee most faire, most cold, made him thence take his flight
 — CPC: Effects of lively heat, must needs in nature grow.
 But she most faire, most colde; made him thence take his flight

- 9:10 — TN1: Lookes on the world, and can finde nothing such,
— ML: Lookes on the world, and can finde nothing such,
— TN2: Lookes ore the world, and can finde nothing such,
— CPC: Looks over the world, and can find nothing such,
- 10:4-6 — TN1: Or reach the fruite of Natures chiefest tree ;
Or seeke heavens course, or heavens unusde to thee:
Why should'st thou toyle, our thornie grounde to till?
— ML: Or reach the fruite of Natures chiefest tree ;
Or seeke heav'ns course, or heav'ns unusde to thee:
Why should'st thou toyle, our thornie grounde to till?
— TN2: Or reach the fruite of Natures chiefest tree ;
Or seeke heavens course, or heavens inside to see:
Why should'st thou toyle, our thornie soyle to till?
— CPC: Or reach the fruite of Natures choicest tree,
Or seeke heav'ns course, or heav'ns inside to see:
Why should'st thou toyle our thornie soile to till?
- 11:3 — TN1: That when thy heaven to thee his best displaies,
— ML: That when thy heaven to thee his best displaies,
— TN2: That when the heaven to thee his best displaies,
— CPC: That when the heav'n to thee his best displays,
- 11:12 — TN1: And in her brest to peepe, a lowting lyes.
— ML: And in her brest to peepe, a lowting lyes.
— TN2: And in her brest bo-peepe or touching lyes,
— CPC: And in her breast bopeepe or couching lyes,
- 12:2 — TN1: That from her lookes thy dimnesse nowe scapes free:
— ML: That from her lookes thy dimnesse now scapes free:
— TN2: That from her lookes thy day-nets nowe scapes free:
— CPC: That from her lockes, thy daunces none scapes free:
- 12:4 — TN1: That sweet breath maketh oft the flames to rise,
— ML: That sweet breath maketh oft the flames to rise,
— TN2: That her sweet breath makes all thy flames t'arise,
— CPC: That her sweete breath makes oft thy flames to rise,
- 12:6 — TN1: That grace even makes thy gracious wrongs; that she,
— ML: That grace even makes thy gracious wrongs; that she,
— TN2: That her grace gracious makes thy wrongs, that she,
— CPC: That her Grace gracious makes thy wrongs, that she,

- 12:8 — TN1: That her cleere voice, lifteth the Sunne to Skyes.
 — ML: That her cleere voice, lifteth the Sunne to Skyes.
 — TN2: That her cleere voice, lifts thy fame to the skyes.
 — CPC: That her cleere voyce, lifts thy fame to the skies.
- 12:11 — TN1: Cry victory, this happy day is ours:
 — ML: Cry victory, this happy day is ours:
 — TN2: Cry victorie, this faire day all is ours:
 — CPC: Cry, Victorie, this faire day all is ours.
- 13:1 — TN1: *Phoebus* was Judge, twixt Jove and Mars in love,
 — ML: *Phoebus* was Judge, twixt Jove and Mars in love,
 — TN2: *Phoebus* was Judge, betweene Jove, Mars, & love,
 — CPC: *Phoebus* was Judge betweene Jove, Mars, and Love,
- 13:14 — TN1: The first thus macht, were scarcely Gentlemen.
 — ML: The first thus macht, were scarcely Gentlemen.
 — TN2: The first thus macht, were scarcely Gentlemen.
 — CPC: The first, thus matcht, were scantly Gentlemen.
- 14: no substantial changes
- 15:4 — TN1: Neere there about, into your Poems wring.
 — ML: Neere there about, in to your Poems wring.
 — TN2: Neere there about, into your Poesie wring.
 — CPC: Neare thereabouts, into your Poesie wring.
- 15:7–8 — TN1: You that old Petrarchs long deceased woes
 With new borne sighs, and wit disguised sing;
 — ML: You that old Petrarchs long deceased woes
 With new borne sighs, and wit disguised sing;
 — TN2: You that poore Petrarchs long deceased woes
 With new borne sighs, & devised wit do sing;
 — CPC: You that poore Petrarchs long deceased woes
 With new-borne sighes and denisend wit do sing;
- 15:14 — TN1: *Stella* behold and then begin to write.
 — ML: *Stella* behould and then begin to write.
 — TN2: *Stella* behould and then begin t'endite.
 — CPC: *Stella* behold, and then begin to endite.

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Was “Thomas Nashe” a Pen Name of the Earl of Oxford?

by Robert R. Prechter, Jr.

Within this paper, the name *Thomas Nashe* does not refer to a real writer. It denotes a biographical construct purporting to represent a real writer. Using that name as a shortcut keeps terms such as *purported*(ly) and *supposed*(ly) to a minimum.

A variety of scholars have proposed that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, wrote under pseudonyms and allonyms, such as:

- Arthur Brooke: *Romeus and Juliet*, 1562 (Ogburn 449–451; Altrocchi 2007)
- Arthur Golding: *Ovid’s Metamorphoses*, 1565/1567 (Altrocchi 2005; Prechter 2007)
- John Lyly: *Euphues* novels, plays, 1578–1593 (Ogburn 625–629, 660, 706)
- Robert Greene: novels, pamphlets, plays, 1580–1592 (Hughes; Green; Prechter 2015)
- William Shakespeare: poems, plays, 1593–1623 (Looney).

Should Thomas Nashe, whose literary oeuvre comprises seven pamphlets, one novel, one poem, and two plays (one co-authored), all composed during 1589–1600, be added to that list? Evidence suggests that the answer is yes.

Nashe Is Everywhere Yet Nowhere

Biographers have described Thomas Nashe as

the roving eye about London, ubiquitous and inquisitive, hobnobbing with courtiers and captains, Inns of Court benchers and pettifoggers, surgeons, and apothecaries, butchers and brewers, alewives and victual-ers, colliers and hackney-men, box-keepers and pandars, porters and car-men. (Nicholl 100)

At the same time, Nashe escaped detection by all those who sought him out. As discussed below, four entities who tried to meet or apprehend the man—Gabriel Harvey in 1593, Richard Lichfield in 1597, the London city government in 1593 and the English national government in 1597—never located him.

In keeping with Nashe’s physical elusiveness, modern biographers have expressed exasperation over attempts to link Nashe’s writing to an actual life:

“Thomas Nashe is perhaps the most elusive of all the University Wits.”
(Brown)

Despite writing “vividly...in the first person” in book after book, “one feels that the man is too shadowy and unrevealed....” (Grosart vii)

One might propose that an actual writer named Thomas Nashe was uniquely adept at interacting with all strata of Londoners while simultaneously evading everyone determined to find him, and that he was uniquely suited to living an active life while leaving behind the distinct sense that one is dealing with a shadow.

Alternatively, such traits are compatible with the possibility that Nashe was not a real person but a literary persona. It is time someone challenged Nashe’s widely accepted yet highly improbable biography.

Links Among Nashe, Shakespeare and Oxford

Scholars have established that Thomas Nashe is intimately connected to Shakespeare in terms of language, ideas and even the degree of personal emotion attached to shared concerns. Remarkably, they have not identified any crucial way in which the two writers’ minds differ from each other.

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Nashe and Shakespeare Share Linguistic Parallels

Penny McCarthy stated,

[Stylistic parallels are] distributed over almost the whole of Nashe's oeuvre and many of Shakespeare's histories and comedies[, including] *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure* [and] *Merry Wives of Windsor*. (McCarthy 146)

J.J.M. Tobin summarized scholars' discoveries:

Nashe is so much a part of the fabric of Shakespeare's works that it is not too much to say that Shakespeare without Nashe and his works would not be Shakespeare. (Tobin 109)

One cannot assert that only Shakespeare was the borrower because the overlap also works in reverse:

[W]e find in the Epistle [of Nashe's *Have with you*, 1596] no less than three echoes from the first seventeen of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. (McCarthy 146)

So, conversely, Nashe without Shakespeare and his works would not be Nashe. The "borrowing" and "influence" work both ways.

A possible reason for such extensive textual connections might be that two real-life authors were working in close collaboration. Yet there is no historical or documentary evidence for that scenario. Nashe never mentions Shakespeare in his works; Shakespeare never mentions Nashe, and nobody mentions them as a team.

Orthodox scholars are bewildered by the extent of the literary correspondences:

J. Dover Wilson...said in conclusion that he could not account for them....

Tobin [speaks of] Shakespeare's habit of absorbing words and phrases from Nashe and weaving them into the texture and structure of his plays. (McCarthy 146)

It is hard to imagine the process by which scraps of five of Nashe's works keep floating into Shakespeare's head, and eventually forced their way into the diction of [*Hamlet*] with such huge freight of apparently personal emotion.... (McCarthy 149)

An explanation must be beyond "hard to imagine" because no scholar has proposed one.

Was Thomas Nashe a Pen Name of the Earl of Oxford?

Why are the same figures of speech and personal emotions integrated throughout both bodies of work? Independent researcher Nina Green is the only person agreeing with the thesis proposed here. She studied the stylistic reflections of Shakespeare in Nashe's works and concluded, "Internal evidence in the tracts suggests that Thomas Nashe was a pen-name of Oxford's from 1589 to 1600" (Green).

Impossible Borrowing Scenarios

Biographers are certain that Shakespeare borrowed from Nashe, but they cannot make the chronology work. Observations regarding three plays illustrate the problem.

Although *Hamlet* was not published until 1603, Oxfordian scholars have deduced that the play was likely composed in the mid-1580s, before Nashe began his writing career. How could Shakespeare have drawn so deeply and broadly from Nashe's pamphlets, which were not yet composed?

Regarding *The Taming of the Shrew*, Charles Nicholl proposed that Shakespeare had read Nashe in 1589–1590, yet he observed that two of Nashe's *later* books feature the "closest parallels," even though they are "probably too late to be specific influences on *Shrew*..." (Nicholl 206). He stops there, offering no explanation.

Regarding *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare supposedly borrowed from *Strange Newes* (1593) to create Don Armado, but scholars have determined that the parallels within Nashe's body of work extend too far forward in time for the orthodox, much less the Oxfordian dating of the play. Nicholl wrote, "Nashe's whole account of Harvey's 'reveling and domineering' at Audley End [in 1578] appears in *Have with you to Saffron-Walden*, not published until 1596. Shakespeare cannot be 'borrowing' from it as such..." (Nicholl 214). Conversely, Nashe cannot have drawn exclusively from *Love's Labour's Lost* to produce *Have with you* because he offers more details of the event at Audley End than Shakespeare does.

If Nashe and Shakespeare are personas of the Earl of Oxford, the conundrums relating to literary borrowing disappear. It was one man covering the same topic under two guises.

All Three Men Share the Same Enemies and Friends

Nashe and Shakespeare share three enemies: Gabriel Harvey, Hugh Sanford and William Brooke, Lord Cobham. Why would that be?

Scholars have been unable to explain why Nashe and Shakespeare were equally annoyed over Gabriel Harvey's show of pride and disrespect toward the Earl of Oxford at Audley End in 1578. Nashe further charges Harvey with betraying Oxford in his Latin poem, *Tuscanismi*, in 1580. Yet Nashe

and William Shakspeare were between 10 and 16 years old when those slights occurred. Why would either man have cared?

In our context, there is a clear answer: The Earl of Oxford attended the event at Audley End, where Harvey had the impudence to instruct him publicly on a proper course of life, and he was the sole subject of Harvey's disparaging poem of 1580. If Oxford is behind both personas, it explains why "Shakespeare's knowledge of the quarrel is intimate and acute" and in "sympathy with Nashe" (Nicholl 219).

Reasons for animosity toward Hugh Sanford, one of Mary Sidney's assistants, are uncertain, but the fact remains that Nashe and Shakespeare expressed dislike for the same minor clerk.

Lord Cobham suppressed theater activities while serving as Lord Chamberlain from August 1596 to March 6, 1597. His meddling would have annoyed a theater impresario such as Oxford, patron of two acting troupes, but Nashe was never involved with the public theater,¹ so why would he care?

Nashe has the same friends as Shakespeare and Oxford. He has kind words for war hero Sir Roger Williams, widely considered to be the model for Shakespeare's Fluellen in *Henry V* (Wikipedia). Nashe says he met the man at Arundel House on the Strand, which, we discover, "belonged to the Howard family" (Nicholl 223) of Oxford's cousins.

We are also told, "Nashe [knew] two of the Oxonian 'Wits' particularly well: John Lyly and Thomas Watson" (Nicholl 54). No historical record places Nashe with either man, but connections to Oxford are direct: John Lyly was Oxford's personal secretary, and Watson dedicated his only book of English poetry, *The Hekatompathia*, to the Earl of Oxford.

Nashe and Shakespeare depict attraction to the same type of woman. "Diamante, Jack Wilton's Italian lover in *The Unfortunate Traveller*... is a fiction, of course, but drawn with such warmth and buoyancy that we might almost think we have in her a portrait of Nashe's own lover" (Nicholl 93). And who might that be? "Nashe's Diamante is a 'black browd' Italian beauty with a 'licorous rouling eye'; Shakespeare's... famous 'dark lady' of the Sonnets sounds much the same, with her 'raven black' eyes and her hair like 'black wires'" (Nicholl 161–62).

All Three Men Cared About the Earl of Southampton, at the Same Time

Henry Wriothesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, is the dedicatee of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, published in 1593, and *Lucrece*, published in 1594. Southampton is also the dedicatee of Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller*, which was registered in 1593 and published in 1594. No scholar has reported

evidence of a real-life relationship between William Shakspeare and Southampton or between Thomas Nashe and Southampton. If Shakespeare and Nashe are personas of the Earl of Oxford, their shared focus at that time makes perfect sense: Until November 1594, Southampton was the leading candidate for marriage to Oxford's eldest daughter, Elizabeth.

In the dedication of his novel, Nashe says to Southampton, "A new brain, a new wit, a new stile, a new soule will I get mee, to canonize your name to posteritie." This sentence makes no sense from the orthodox perspective. In our context, the meaning becomes clear: after creating Shakespeare to extol Southampton, Oxford has created a new persona, with a new style, to do so again.

Because of that "new style," many readers have considered Nashe to be a distinct individual. But Nashe's final pamphlet reveals the author's purpose: "of all styles[,] I most affect & strive to imitate Aretines," indicating the Italian satirist, Pietro Aretino (1492–1556). I think Oxford, an avid reader of Italian literature, was explaining his literary goal to fans, thereby explaining Nashe's distinctive subject matter and even accounting for the explicit *Choise of Valentines*, which is along the lines of Aretino's "erotically explicit sonnets" (Wikipedia).

***Pierce Penilesse* (1592) Presents an Allegory Pertaining to Oxford and a Beloved Cousin**

Nicholl proposed that the players in Nashe's animal allegory within *Pierce Penilesse* (1592) represent the following real people:

- The Bear is undoubtedly the Earl of Leicester...
- The Lion is the Queen...
- The Fox...is obviously the Puritan Thomas Cartwright...
- The Horse...Thomas Howard, [4th] Duke of Norfolk...
- The Ape [is] Sir Nicholas Throckmorton, Leicester's accomplice in dealings against Norfolk. (Nicholl 112–113)

Nicholl concluded that an interconnected set of clandestine events at the highest levels of Elizabethan society, which had occurred two decades earlier in 1572, "is precisely allegorized by Nashe" (Nicholl 114). Nashe's treatment raises five questions:

1. Why would Nashe know or care about events occurring when he was only four years old?
2. Where did Nashe learn details of events known only to certain members of the aristocracy?
3. Who was Nashe to "have taken the risk of offending so powerful a family" (Hibbard 83) as the Dudleys?
4. What motivation would he have for doing so?
5. How could he have gotten away with it?

If Nashe is Oxford, no such questions arise. Oxford was personally involved in events surrounding the downfall of his first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, in 1572. He remained bitter over the stratagems employed against him, and his elevated social position allowed him to get away with writing about it.

Nashe Is Emotional About Oxford's Relatives

Nashe never relates warm tales about any of his own relatives or ancestors, living or dead. Yet he expresses deep passion for members of the Earl of Oxford's extended family, in fact twice:

Nashe's treatment of the Leicester-Norfolk affair suggests his total sympathy with the betrayed Catholic nobleman.... 'Alas, goodly Creature' [is] a curiously poignant epitaph for a Catholic who had been executed for treason.

...Nor is this Duke, Thomas Howard, the only member of the family Nashe praised: the poet Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey—Thomas's father—is featured prominently and approvingly in *The Unfortunate Traveller*. [Nashe] praises Surrey unstintingly. (Nicholl 117–118, 158)

In the orthodox context, these passionate stances are more than curious; they are inexplicable. Nashe knew nothing of Norfolk as a person, and he had no special reason to lionize Surrey.

If Nashe is Oxford, the motives become apparent. Norfolk was Oxford's first cousin, for whose life he had fought in vain, and Surrey was Oxford's uncle, whose poetic inventions he adopted.

Nashe's "curiously poignant" expression, moreover, shows up in Shakespeare. "Goodly creature" appears in *Pericles* (4.1), and "goodly creatures" appears in *The Tempest* (5.1).

Scholars have interpreted Nashe's praises of Oxford's relatives, both of whom were Catholic, as "Catholic sympathies" (Nicholl 104). The same scholars have informed us that Nashe was raised a Puritan. They have offered no explanation for the contradiction. If Nashe is Oxford, the situation resolves: He is not expressing Catholic sympathies; he is expressing *familial* sympathies.

Summers Last Will and Testament

In 1592, Thomas Nashe composed a short play titled *Summers Last Will and Testament* for performance at the Archbishop of Canterbury's residence at Croydon. Once again, questions arise.

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Why would the Archbishop of Canterbury, one of the most socially elevated personages in England, invite a budding prose satirist, with only two pamphlets to his name, to pen a light comedy skit substantially in verse, containing lute songs, when he had written no play, no songs, and penned but five stanzas of poetry in his life? In the weeks before the performance, moreover, “Nashe was busy with rehearsals, props, costumes, music, dances” (Nicholl 137). Where did a 24-year-old pamphleteer with no theatrical experience acquire those production skills? Scholars have answered none of these questions. They do not even pose the questions.

If Nashe is Oxford, there is no mystery: Whitgift had known Oxford for 30 years since their days at Cambridge when Oxford was a student and Whitgift a Professor of Divinity. Oxford had written and produced plays, comedies and songs since that time; he had been praised for his dancing ability at court; and he would soon be celebrated in print for his musical ability. Oxford’s known associations and talents fit the event, whereas Nashe’s do not.

Ver (Spring) Uses Shakespeare’s Song and Oxford’s Words

Eva Turner Clark stated, “Nashe lifted the ‘Song of Ver’ from Shakespeare[’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*], making little effort to alter it” (Clark 152) in *Summers Last Will*. Under our interpretation, Nashe did not lift anything; Oxford simply wrote the song and used it in two plays.

In a 1601 letter to Robert Cecil, the Earl of Oxford wrote the following words:

yf yt shall pleas her Magestie in regard of
my youthe tyme & fortune spent in her Courte....

Using nearly the same language nine years earlier, Ver in the play admits to having dissipated

all my flowry treasure, and flower of my youth...spent
on good fellows, in these sports you have seene.

Ver’s words, “in these sports you have seene,” reveal how Oxford had spent a goodly portion of his family fortune: on producing plays to entertain members of the highest echelons of society.

Nashe’s Play Is an Allegory of the Cecil Family

A Nashe scholar declared that *Summers Last Will* follows a “basic dramatic structure in which each of the seasons appears in turn, as in a pageant...” (Steane 37). That description is inaccurate. Summer, Autumn and Winter are on stage for nearly the entire play, while other characters enter and exit. What, then, is going on?

Waugh (Waugh 2023) proposed that Shakespeare’s characters often reflect members of the Cecil family. The main characters in Nashe’s

play appear to do so as well. In my view, they represent the following individuals:

Summer: William Cecil, Lord Burghley

Autumn: Burghley's elder son, Thomas Cecil

Winter: Burghley's younger son, Robert Cecil

Ver (Spring): Burghley's son-in-law, Edward de Vere.

The Play Adheres to Cecil Family Allegory and Burghley's Will

Nashe's play repeatedly contradicts the seasonal metaphor. Each time it does so, it adheres instead to the Cecil family allegory. The playwright even seems to have possessed knowledge of provisions in Lord Burghley's will. Consider the following examples:

1. Autumn should be the only heir of Summer. But Summer claims two heirs: Autumn and Winter. Summer says, "These two will share betwixt them what I have." Compatibly, Burghley had two primary heirs: Thomas and Robert.
2. If Autumn and Winter are somehow heirs of Summer, Spring should be as well, but Ver is excluded. Summer even places a curse on Ver: "Lent shall wait on thee." Sentencing the lushest season of the year to austerity makes no sense with respect to the seasonal metaphor. In line with Summer's curse, however, Burghley's will bequeathed nothing to his son-in-law.
3. In the seasonal analog, Spring's wealth should flow to Summer. But Summer demands that Ver explain "How well or ill thou hast imployd *my* wealth," which is backwards. The relationship fits Oxford, who had benefited from Burghley's wardship by way of a well-stocked library and social and political connections.
4. Spring should yield custody of the earth to Summer, but Summer says that Ver is the one "unto whose custody I have committed more then to the rest." How so? He hints at the reason: "And what thou hast, of me thou hast and holdst." "To have and hold" is a legal term meaning to fully possess something, but it is more famously known as a phrase used in wedding vows. Summer (Burghley) is saying to Ver (Oxford), "I gave you more than I gave them; I gave you my daughter."
5. Winter protests Autumn's legacy of a crown and details Autumn's shortcomings as a ruler. These protestations make no sense within the seasonal metaphor. Summer effects a compromise, saying he will "yeeld his throne to Autumne, [but] make Winter his Executour." Accordingly, Burghley's will passes the title of Baron Burghley on to Thomas but names Robert executor over three specific stipulations within it.²

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6. Seasons may well be depicted as having personalities, but the ones in the play are unnatural. Autumn is portrayed as bookish, and Winter as a champion of the state. These attributes fit the personalities of Burghley's sons, and Burghley's will doles out paper treasures to them accordingly. The text reads, "I give all my books in my upper library...in Westminster to my son Sir Thomas Cecil..." and "I give unto my said son Sir Robert Cecil all my writings concerning the Queen's causes...."

It is difficult to imagine how Thomas Nashe of orthodox biography could have known all this information, it is impossible to imagine him displaying secrets of the most powerful family in England in a comedy skit, and it is ridiculous to suppose that Archbishop Whitgift would have invited a commoner to do so. But Oxford was qualified on all counts to produce the entertainment.

The Writer Escapes Punishment

Jonathan Bate protested the idea that the play contains an allegory: "it is absurd to suppose that any Elizabethan play might contain satiric references to any aristocrats of the day. The author of the portrait would have found himself in prison before he could turn round" (Bate 90). Lamb understood that parody was involved but could not fathom how Nashe got away with producing the play, much less publishing it eight years later, "without a flicker of response [and] no record, or even report, of Nashe being formally punished" (Rita Lamb).

If Nashe is Oxford, there is no imperative to deny the play's satirical content and no mystery as to why the author escaped punishment. Oxford was perfectly free to caricature members of his own family, including himself.

What About the Dedication in *Strange Newes*?

Nashe dedicates *Strange Newes* (1593) to the pseudonymous "Apis Lapis." Charles Barrell observed that his description fits the Earl of Oxford (Barrell). Accordingly, Oxfordians have proposed that an actual Thomas Nashe may have served as one of Oxford's secretaries or proteges. That idea has now become suspect. One would have to imagine an independent youngster who could continually sound like Shakespeare while writing in the first person as he repeatedly delves into topics close to Oxford's mind, heart and knowledge, often in contradiction to his own biography. It is more plausible that a gifted writer known to have used at least one pen name simply used another.

Just as knowledge of Oxford elevates one's appreciation of Shakespeare's plays, readers who approach the dedication of *Strange Newes* and the Ver character in *Summers Last Will* with the idea that Oxford is the author will find new levels of humor and meaning.

Independent Writers Reveal That Nashe Is Oxford

Gabriel Harvey's Conflations

Margo Anderson pointed out, “sometimes when Harvey writes of ‘Pierce Penillesse,’ he means Nashe. Yet... ‘Pierce’ was at [other] times a sobriquet for de Vere” (M. Anderson 29). In other words, Pierce is “a conflation of Nashe and Oxford” (Hutchinson 66). I concur, but Harvey was not being sloppy or lazy; he did it by design.

Harvey knew more than just that Oxford was Thomas Nashe. In *A New Letter of Notable Contents* (1593), he conflates four literary personae of the Earl of Oxford:

[They may] wonder how Machiavell can teach a Prince *to be*, and *not to be* religious? [who] within few moneths is won, or charmed, or inchaunted, (or what *Metamorphosis* should I terme it?) [and] whom shall he cunnycatch...?

Here Harvey links Nashe (as Machiavelli), Shakespeare (referencing *Hamlet*), Arthur Golding (referencing *Metamorphoses*) and Robert Greene (whose name is on four pamphlets about “cony-catchers,” or con men). Orthodox scholars are unaware of what is going on here, but our hypothesis clarifies the matter: Harvey is telling Oxford that he knows about four of his pseudonyms and allonyms.

In *Pierces Supererogation* (1593), Harvey, in a state of increasing agitation, drops the pretense that he is talking to a real Thomas Nashe and threatens to tell the world what Oxford has been doing:

I could here dismaske such a rich mummer, &...make this Pamflet the vendiblest [most saleable] booke in London, and the Register [Harvey] one of the famousest Autors in England.

A *mummer* is “one who goes merrymaking in disguise” (*Webster's*). Harvey says he could reveal to the world that Oxford has been masquerading under pen names.

Harvey quickly adds that he will refrain from unmasking his nemesis, for an obvious reason. Thirteen years earlier, he had been forced to hide out in a nobleman's house after disparaging Oxford in *Tuscanismi*. He was not about to risk a worse fate by disclosing Oxford's role as a clandestine author.

Richard Lichfield's Read if thou Canst

In *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe* (1597), Richard Lichfield says something mysterious in the orthodox context. He challenges Nashe as follows: “Now I

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give not every word their litterall sense...to see if by allusions you can picke out the true meaning..." To what hidden meaning might he be referring?

Oxfordian scholars will recognize Lichfield's references to the Earl of Oxford, especially by his repeated use of *true* (Ver) and *ever* (E. Ver):

I say you say **true**, Then what I say of you is **true**, for babes and fooles say **true**. Now I give not **every** word their litterall sense...to see if by allusions you can picke out the **true** meaning...for if you **will** understand any thing aright, you must **ever** apply it to your selfe.
["You must, E. Ver, apply it to yourself."]

Orthodox scholars have no theory as to what this wordplay means. But we can see that Lichfield knows who Thomas Nashe truly is. Like Harvey, he resorts to code words because he is unwilling to risk the repercussions of disclosing a state secret.

A Short List of Additional Biographical Contradictions

A valid biography should be free of contradictions, but Thomas Nashe's is replete with them, as established above. Some additional biographical characteristics problematic to the orthodox account, and my explanations for them, are as follows:

- **A full-time, professional writer with improbably meager output:** In his entire life, Nashe issued, along with some minor items, only one novel, seven pamphlets and two plays (one co-authored). I think it's because Oxford was busy.
- **A landsman with knowledge of sailing dialect:** In the manner of Shakespeare, Nashe "is casually at home with nautical terms" to the extent that "few Elizabethan writers have it in their bones like Nashe" (Nicholl 14). The only open water Nashe traversed was a four-mile ferry ride to and from the Isle of Wight. Oxford crossed the English Channel six times.
- **Knowledge of M.A. ceremonies at Cambridge and Oxford:** In *Lenten Stuffle*, Nashe mentions that M.A. graduates wear miniver, which was true at the University of Oxford. Nashe did not attend Oxford, but the Earl of Oxford participated in the Master of Arts ceremony there in 1566.
- **Knowledge of the estates in Italy:** In *The Unfortunate Traveller*, Nashe's hero claims to have visited the most sumptuous homes and gardens in Italy, one of which he describes in detail. The English Passport Office has no record of Thomas Nashe traveling abroad. Oxford lived in Italy for a year, and an earl would have been welcome at the country's premier residences.

- **Knowledge of Italian, French, Greek and Spanish:** In the second edition of *Christes Teares*, Nashe claims to know these four languages in addition to Latin, but there is no record of where he learned them. Oxford was fluent in all of them.
- **Nashe “invented neologisms on a large scale” (Hibbard 208):** Coining words is an exceptionally rare talent among writers. Shakespeare had the same talent and exercised it at the same time.
- **Knowledge of the law:** “The whole [of *Strange Newes*] is conceived of in terms that recall...those used in a court of law” (Hibbard 201). Nashe did not attend law school. Oxford matriculated at Gray’s Inn when he was 17 years old.

Orthodoxy skates past such anomalies, just as it does with those relating to Shakespeare. If Nashe is Oxford, there are no contradictions.

SCRUTINIZING THE LITERARY AND DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

Biographers who believe in Thomas Nashe’s corporeal existence have based their opinion partially on literary and documentary evidence. Such evidence, however, fails to support the case for a real Nashe, and most of it reinforces the conclusion that Nashe is a literary persona of the Earl of Oxford.

Literary Evidence

Was Nashe Arrested or Imprisoned?

In *The Trimming*, Richard Lichfield presents a fanciful depiction of Nashe in chains (figure 1). Some biographers have him serving time in Fleet prison. Documentary evidence, however, contradicts the literary evidence.

State records on *The Isle of Dogs* affair, in which the producers of a seditious play were hunted down and arrested, clarify the matter. In October 1597, the Privy Council “release[d] Gabriel Spencer, Robert Shaa [Shaw], and Ben Jonson from the Marshalsea” (Knutson). There is no mention of Thomas Nashe having been arrested or released. McKerrow, one of the more



Figure 1: Lichfield’s depiction of Thomas Nashe.

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careful among Nashe’s biographers, firmly declared, “It has generally been stated that Nashe was actually arrested and sent to the Fleet prison, but so far as I can discover there is not the slightest evidence for this” (McKerrow 31).

If Nashe is Oxford, there is no mystery: The police could not apprehend someone who did not exist. If they discovered that an earl was behind the name, they would have dropped the matter.

Did Nashe Have an Illustrious Heritage?

In *Pierce Penilesse*, Nashe berates Gabriel Harvey for being the “sonne of a ropemaker.” At the same time, Nashe claims for himself “pedigrees,” “patrimonies” and illustrious ancestors. Harvey challenges none of it.

The orthodox view admits no basis for Nashe’s claims and no reason why Harvey fails to defend his pedigree. After all, he was the son of a successful businessman who sent all three of his sons to college, far exceeding Nashe’s status as the son of a lowly minister’s assistant in a remote fishing village.

If Oxford is Nashe, the issue is resolved. Oxford possessed pedigrees, patrimonies and noble ancestors. Harvey’s ancestry was mundane by comparison.

Does Nashe Have a Traceable Heritage?

In *Lenten Stuffe*, Nashe briefly tells readers where to look to find his illustrious ancestors, stating, “my father sprang from the Nashes of Herefordshire.” The accompanying map shows that Nashe was inviting investigators to travel 240 miles west of his hometown (figure 2) and explore a 634-square-mile area containing 235 parishes. He offers no other information.

Not surprisingly, biographers have been forced to admit, “Nothing is known of the Herefordshire family” (Nicholl 11). From their use of the word *the*, one can see that biographers have referred to



Figure 2: Lowestoft and Herefordshire.

the Herefordshire family as if it existed, but there is no evidentiary support for that assumption.

If Nashe is a pen name, the ancestral void is no mystery. Oxford merely wrote a brief sentence to misdirect the curious.

Why Didn't Nashe Stay with Relatives When He Traveled Up the Coast?

When people are destitute and in trouble, they tend to seek out family for succor and support. When Nashe traveled to Great Yarmouth in December 1597, purportedly to escape authorities searching for him in London, he passed through his supposed hometown of Lowestoft and stayed in Great Yarmouth, ten miles up the coast. Why didn't he stay with the people who, biographers tell us, were his brother and half-sister, who were living with their families in Lowestoft?

If Nashe is Oxford, the reason is obvious. Oxford had no family in Lowestoft. Verily Anderson noted that Oxford's ancestors had a long history in the area as defenders of the coast, where "invaders could land...at Yarmouth and Cromer" (V. Anderson 99). With that background, it is easy to understand why Nashe "goes on to relate that he was treated with great kindness and hospitality" (Nicholl 235) during his stay. To the locals of Yarmouth, a de Vere would have been a celebrity.

Biographer Alan Nelson criticized Oxford's sparse attendance at Parliament, saying, "of 34 sessions, he attended four..." (Nelson 343), implying that Oxford acted irresponsibly. I think the real reason, at least in this instance, is the opposite: He acted diligently to create the illusion that Thomas Nashe had connections to a family of similar name in Lowestoft. As shown in the Table, the time of Nashe's travels up the coast³ (basis the new calendar) fits neatly into Oxford's known activities and absences.

Table		
Oxford's Activities	Dec. 14, 1597	Attends Parliament for the final time
Nashe's Travels	Dec. 15, 1597– Feb. 8, 1598	Trip to Great Yarmouth (outbound Dec. 15–20, homebound 1 st week of Feb. 1598.
Oxford's Activities	Feb. 9, 1598	Misses closing session of Parliament

Literary evidence establishes why Oxford took this trip. Orthodox biographies of Thomas Nashe assume the following chronology of events: Nashe was born in Lowestoft, he left home for Cambridge and then London, and at age 30 he traveled to Great Yarmouth. That chronology is based on the

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false assumption that the writer was born in Lowestoft. The true chronology is as follows: In October 1597, Richard Lichfield published *The Trimming*, in which he scoffs, “Nashe, borne I know not where.” Two months later, Nashe departs for the coast. After his return, Nashe issues *Lenten Stuffe*, in which he announces, “I was borne [in] Leystofe.”

If Nashe is Oxford, we can deduce what happened: After Lichfield’s public challenge, Oxford traveled up the coast to locate or enhance evidence connecting the name Thomas Nashe to a family in Lowestoft, then directed readers there.

Documentary Evidence

Eleven pieces of documentary evidence suggest that a writer named Thomas Nashe existed. None of them rescue him from non-existence, and most of them better fit the case that he is a persona.

The Depiction of Nashe Is Not Genuine

Nicholl declared that the cartoon of Thomas Nashe published by Lichfield “was undoubtedly cut by someone who knew Nashe by sight” (Nicholl 9). If that assessment were true, it would constitute evidence that Nashe existed. Nicholl’s claim, however, is not only unsupported but also demonstrably false.

In *The Trimming*, Lichfield proposes a mock court to seek “anyie manner of man” who “can bring anie tidings of Tho: Nashe gentleman,” indicating that he did not know the man. Had he commissioned an artist to locate Nashe and draw a true-to-life picture, he would not have put out the call in the same publication in which the cartoon appears because the cartoonist would have brought back with him knowledge of Nashe’s whereabouts. So, the cartoon cannot have been drawn by someone who knew Nashe by sight (figure 3).



Figure 3: Lichfield’s depiction of Thomas Nashe.

Three Entries in Henslowe’s Diary

Scholars initially assumed that three entries in Philip Henslowe’s diary connecting Nashe to *The Isle of Dogs* and Fleet prison proved that Nashe had been incarcerated for co-writing the banned play.

Later scholars determined that all three entries⁴ in Henslowe’s diary are forgeries by John Payne Collier:

These three entries, which incidentally provide the only evidence that

Nashe was ever imprisoned over the [*Isle of Dogs*] affair, appear...in an ink that G.F. Warner (1881) thought “plainly doctored to give it a fictitious appearance of age”, and in a hand that scholars since Warner (e.g., Greg 1904–08, McKerrow 1910, and Chambers, *ES*) unite in condemning as modern. Greg called the third entry “the most clumsy forgery in the volume”.... (Freeman 206)

One may surmise that Collier was frustrated by the dearth of evidence relating to Thomas Nashe, so he decided to manufacture some of his own. His motivation is compatible with the case that Nashe did not exist.

No Records of an Early Life for Thomas Nashe

No record attests to a life, much less to a preparatory education, for Thomas Nashe until the University of Cambridge registered his matriculation on October 13, 1582.

Documents record the pre-university education of real people of the Elizabethan era whose names are printed on the title pages of plays. Historians have established, for instance, the following affiliations:

Christopher Marlowe attended King’s School in Canterbury.

Thomas Lodge attended Merchant Taylors’ School.

William Gager attended Winchester College.

George Peele was educated at Christ’s Church Hospital boarding school.

Ben Jonson attended Westminster School.

Biographers have been mystified as to where Nashe learned enough English, Latin and math to be admitted to Cambridge. There were no grammar schools in or near the two remote villages—Lowestoft and West Harling—where Nashe’s parents resided. As a small-town preacher’s assistant, Nashe’s father would have been too poor to own books, and so were the villages. Even allowing for a bachelor’s degree, one must ask: Where did Nashe learn enough to impress readers with “a parade of classical learning” (McKerrow 1) in his first pamphlet, started when he was only 19 years old? Orthodox scholars have failed to provide an answer.

On the other hand, Oxford began his education at age five with one of the most celebrated scholars of the day, Sir Thomas Smith. He entered the University of Cambridge at age eight. As a teenager, he received honorary degrees from both Cambridge and Oxford. Records and published comments by contemporaries attest to the youngster’s voracious appetite for exactly the kind of learning Nashe displays in his first and subsequent pamphlets.

Did Nashe Attend St. John's?

Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe both emerged from nowhere to matriculate as sizars at the same Cambridge college the Earl of Oxford attended: St. John's. This coincidence may not seem, at first glance, to be problematic. But consider the odds: In 1580, there were 14 colleges at the University of Cambridge and 18 colleges at the University of Oxford. That is a total of 32 colleges (Wikipedia). The probability that two writers suspected of non-existence—Greene and Nashe—entered the same college Oxford did is $1/32^2$, or 1 in 1024, in short, a thousand to one. That both named students have no record of a preparatory education increases the improbability of the coincidence.

It may seem bold to ask whether Oxford might have chosen to domicile his personas at his old college because doing so made it easier for him to fabricate records. Yet the likelihood of that scenario with respect to Thomas Nashe increases, thanks to testimony from Gabriel Harvey.

Gabriel Harvey was active and “prominent at both Oxford and Cambridge” (Ogburn 43). His involvement with Cambridge lasted nearly twenty years, from 1566 to 1585, where he served as Professor of Rhetoric. He would have been aware of renowned students there, and Nashe was purportedly famous for participating in a Show on campus. Records indicate that Nashe matriculated in 1582 and received a B.A. in 1586, overlapping Harvey's time there by a full three years, enough time for Harvey to learn of Nashe's presence and reputation. Harvey was also well acquainted with contemporary men of letters working in and around London. Yet in the preface to his brother's *A Theologicall Discourse of the Lamb of God* (1590), Gabriel Harvey (as Nashe later deduces⁵) firmly declares that Nashe is “one whome I never heard of before.” It is implausible that Thomas Nashe could have spent three years alongside Harvey at Cambridge, been a genuine man of letters, and still be unknown to Gabriel Harvey.

Three years later, Harvey reports in *A New Letter of Notable Contents* that he “earnestly, and instantly craved personal conference” with his rival, yet he is told, “All must be done by the mediation of a third, and a fourth.” Nashe—yet again—makes no physical appearance.

Under my hypothesis, Harvey had never heard of Nashe, and then was disallowed to confer with Nashe, for a good reason: there was no such person.

As the most socially prominent alumnus of St. John's, Oxford would likely have been permitted to arrange for a few records at Cambridge suggesting the existence of a student named Thomas Nashe, who, we should recall, had no evidence of a life prior to the appearance of the records.

Did Thomas Nashe Participate in a Show at College?

In *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe*, Richard Lichfield claims that Nashe participated in a Show called *Terminus & non terminus* and dropped out of college as a result. There is no documentary or supporting literary evidence for that claim.

As McKerrow pointed out, “Harvey, who would certainly have heard of [Nashe’s disgrace] and would have made the most of it, says not a word on the subject” (McKerrow 11). That certainty and Harvey’s silence confirm that the show never took place.

From that basis, one can discern that Lichfield’s report of a Show is not literal but metaphorical. The title refers to two of Oxford’s personae: Robert Greene, whose presence Oxford *terminated* when Harvey threatened to sue over Greene’s libels, and Thomas Nashe, who took over Robert Greene’s fight with Harvey⁶ and was as yet *not terminated*.

An Official Summons Produces Nobody

Thomas Nashe’s pamphlet of 1593 caused him serious trouble. “The aldermen of London took umbrage at the insinuations made...” (Hutson 200) in *Christes Teares* and issued a summons dated November 20, 1593: “Item Thomas Nash generosus et Johannes Snowe generosus [to] personally appeare at the next sessions of...Newgate [prison].” Nobody answered the summons.

Conveniently, we are told, Nashe escaped authorities due to “the timely interference of George Carey, bearing Nashe away with him to the Isle of Wight to spend Christmas” (Hutson 200). Yet Carey, as Captain-General of the Isle of Wight, was an authority of the realm and therefore unlikely to have been disposed toward acting illegally to harbor a fugitive.

There is another compelling reason to question the orthodox account of what happened. Consider similar circumstances involving the following writers:

- When authorities sought out Thomas Kyd, they found him and tortured him so severely he died shortly thereafter.
- When authorities sought out Christopher Marlowe, they found him and killed him.
- When authorities sought out Ben Jonson, they found him and jailed him three times.
- When authorities sought out the three producers of *The Isle of Dogs*, they found and arrested them.
- In April–May 1593, shortly before *Christes Teares* was published, authorities apprehended, tried and executed three men for “seditious words” and “seditious books” (Hutson 200).

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All these people faced prosecution, and five were killed. In short, when authorities set out to locate writers, they found them and dealt with them harshly. But Thomas Nashe is an exception. *He* spent the holidays in a castle.

Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight

That is not the only curiosity involved. Given the rigidly stratified society of Elizabethan England, there is serious social dissonance in the very idea that the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1592–93 and the Captain-General of the Isle of Wight in 1593–94 each opened their doors to entertain a person whom even Nashe’s most admiring biographer



Figure 4: Carisbrooke Castle gatehouse, Isle of Wight, looking in from the east, built in 1464. (Wikimedia)

describes as a “seedy...scrawny...grubby...ragamuffin” (Nicholl 8–10) for weeks on end, in both cases over the Christmas holidays. Moreover, George Carey’s wife, Lady Elizabeth, is known to have been especially haughty. The Isle of Wight covers a sizeable 147 square miles, yet she “regarded but three ladies in the island (Mistresses Ogländer, Meux and Hobson) as worthy of her company” (Nicholl 183). Should we believe that she was nevertheless content to provide hospitality to a young, penniless, troublemaking fugitive for an entire month?

These implausibilities disappear if Nashe is Oxford. Initially the aldermen did not know who Thomas Nashe was; when they discovered his identity, they dropped the inquiry. Oxford departed London with his friend George Carey and spent the holidays in the governor’s mansion. In that context, Lady Carey’s houseguest was an earl of the realm, whose presence would have enhanced, not damaged, her social standing.

Does a Complaint Dated 1593 Prove Nashe’s Existence?

Only two men complained officially of Thomas Nashe, and neither one contacted the censors. Instead, they wrote to Oxford’s father-in-law.

In the first instance, “a Puritan member of the Privy Council, Robert Beale...wrote to Lord Burghley” (Nicholl 116) on March 17, 1593, to complain about a passage denigrating Danes in *Pierce Penilesse* and to request its suppression. Beale names the pamphlet but not its author. He must have presumed that Burghley knew about whom he was complaining. Naturally in our context, “Burghley...ignored it” (Nicholl 116).

Incredibly, Nashe was given access to Beale’s private letter. In *Lenten Stuffe*, “Nashe speaks of an ‘infant squib of the Innes of Court’[, a] ‘statesman’... who peruses one of his pamphlets and [complains in terms] close to Beale’s letter to Burghley” (Nicholl 121). How could it happen?

First, consider the language, by which we find a member of Queen Elizabeth’s Privy Council berated as an “infant squib” and a mere “statesman.” These slights make little sense coming from the lowly pamphleteer of orthodox biography. We can dispense with the anomaly: Oxford’s titles—17th Earl of Oxford and Lord Great Chamberlain—elevated him above members of the Privy Council. From his perspective, Beale was a social inferior.

Second, consider the implication that the Lord Treasurer of England sought out a troublesome commoner and arranged to have a Privy Council member’s letter delivered to him. Is it not more logical that Burghley simply forwarded the letter to his son-in-law?

Third, this is yet another instance in which Thomas Nashe escaped reprisal for acting in a manner upsetting to governmental officials. Again, an earl could get away with such behavior.

Does an Official Reference to Nashe’s Lodging Prove Nashe’s Existence?

In 1597, when authorities investigated *The Isle of Dogs* incident, the Privy Council directed Member of Parliament and spymaster Richard Topcliffe to “peruse soch papers as were fownde in Nash his lodgings, which Ferrys, a Messenger of the Chamber, will deliver” (Nicholl 244). Yet there are no further reports regarding these papers. Why would authorities fail to follow through?

If Nashe is Oxford, we can deduce what happened. The earliest dated official record of *The Isle of Dogs* affair is a letter from Topcliffe to Lord Burghley dated August 10, 1597 (Nicholl 319), giving him *advance notice* of the investigation. Burghley was positioned to send word to his son-in-law, giving him an opportunity to retrieve certain papers and/or make peace with the authorities.

Do Parish Records of a Nayshe Family in Lowestoft Pertain to Thomas Nashe the Writer?

The parish records at Lowestoft attest to the existence one William *Nayshe*, his wife Margaret *Nayshe*, and their children, Mary, Israel and Thomas *Nayshe*. Most biographies of Thomas Nashe do not mention the spelling of the Lowestoft family's name, which was relegated to an appendix to Nicholl's book that quotes the parish record. Other biographers have evaded this fact, just as orthodox scholars have evaded the difference between the spellings of Shakspeare and Shakespeare.

In terms of pronunciation, *Nayshe* relates to *Nashe* as *Shakespeare* relates to *Shakspeare*. Nicholl acknowledged the difference, conceding, "A pun of Richard Lichfield's, however, implies that Nashe rhymes with 'ash'" (Nicholl 277). The common spelling of Nashe's name as *Nash* among writers of the period confirms that pronunciation.

Thus, the *Nayshe* family lived in Lowestoft, whereas Thomas *Nashe* lived in Cambridge and London. No record proves they were related.

A Handwritten Note in a Book

Somebody wrote "Thomas Nashe" and marginal notes about Faustus in a copy of John Leland's *Principum* (1589). I think this is the Earl of Oxford playing a role (as he seems to have done in 1592 at Croydon), but I cannot prove it. There is no proof that an actual Nashe wrote it, either.

Does Margaret's Will Prove that Nashe the Writer Was a Member of the Lowestoft Family?

Nicholl claimed to find "Nothing very unusual..." (Nicholl 80) about the will of Thomas Nashe's supposed mother, Margaret (wherein her name is spelled Nashe). It is unclear why Nicholl used the qualifier *very*, but there are indeed problems with the will, two of which are serious:

1. Margaret's will provides no identifier allowing the local executor to locate her son. If Thomas were living far away in London, she would have mentioned his location in the will.
2. The will bequeaths to Thomas household items, including a featherbed. How would Thomas Nashe of London have been expected to retrieve, or even care to retrieve, a featherbed from 143 miles away?

Those aspects of the will constitute evidence that Margaret's Thomas is *not* the writer. If the will is real—a moot point under this analysis—her Thomas was likely a local fellow whose whereabouts the executor knew and who could have carted away the household goods he inherited.

A Letter from George Carey to His Wife Attesting to Nashe's Actuality

In a private letter to his wife, dated November 13, 1593, George Carey declares that his friend Nashe had been jailed for writing *Christes Teares*, and he must stay in London to bail him out. We have already confirmed, however, that Nashe was never jailed. The aldermen's summons for Nashe, moreover, did not go out until a week later. How could Nashe have been in prison a week before authorities even started searching for him? Something is seriously amiss with Carey's account. Did he mislead his wife?

The work of two independent scholars, both operating under the assumption that Nashe was a real person, clarifies matters.

First, Rita Lamb discerned Carey's motive. She wrote,

he comes up with four good reasons why he can't [return home]. I think that's three excuses too many, and a scurrilous lampoon a few years later...suggests that if Lady Elizabeth worried about her husband's 'business trips' away from her she had good reason.

[Among his excuses,] the Queen learned he'd arrived...and before he knew it he was agreeing to stay for the Accession Day celebrations on November 17.... (R. Lamb)

This event was to be attended by "many...beautiful ladies...men, women and girls" (Ridgeway). So, we have a reason why Carey would have been eager to stay away from home: to attend a magnificent party.

Second, historian Katherine Duncan-Jones discerned something heretofore unappreciated about Carey's letter: a close affinity between its writing and that of Thomas Nashe:

Carey...shows a Nashe-like relish for strongly physical and tactile images—"rubbe my hors heeles"—and for coined compound adjectives—"comody-tragedicall." (Duncan-Jones 167)

She further observed that the letter "may contain [a] literary allusion...to 'Fryer Alphonso'...about whom Nashe tells a funny story in *Pierce Pennilesse*" (Duncan-Jones 167) and that Carey employs verselike constructions, a polyp-ton and a "conceit about his multiple commitments, which 'hath made an university in my brayns', [an] elision of academic and legal disputation..." (Duncan-Jones 167).

In short, George Carey's letter emulates Thomas Nashe in rhetoric, poetic expression, coining boisterous words and crafting sophisticated metaphors. Yet Carey never published a word of creative literature in his life. His corpus

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of writing comprises dry, bureaucratic memoranda. How did he become such a poetic writer, and how did he learn to emulate Thomas Nashe?

Nashe is not the only writer who seems to have influenced the text of Carey's letter. Scholars have overlooked the genesis of some of his most colorful constructions. Consider that "my horse's heels" shows up in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part 1* (1.4), and "comody-tragedicall," shows up in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (2.2) as "tragical-comical."

Equally curious, the letter slips into the third person when speaking of Carey and "*his* delay" and things "not in *his* power," etc. That is an unusual shift.

Finally, Duncan-Jones recorded two impressions of rapid writing: "The final list of 'games in court' has been scribbled very hastily.... The opening phrase...is rather blotted and confused" (Duncan-Jones 167).

What, then, can explain Carey's composing in Nashe's style, borrowing phrases from Shakespeare, shifting to the third person point of view, and writing in haste? Carey, it seems, was taking dictation.

From whom was he taking dictation? The orator seems to have been a combination of Nashe and Shakespeare. In short, Carey was taking dictation from the Earl of Oxford.

By understanding the setting and Carey's motive, we can reconstruct the scene: George and his friend Ned were making plans to attend the Accession Day festivities. Carey complained to Ned that he needed to convince his wife of why he needed to stay another week. Oxford took up the challenge and dictated text for Carey, at times speaking in the third person, a form he also employed when creating titles, *Nashes's Dildo* and *Nashes's Lenten Stuffle*. He spoke swiftly, so Carey was forced to keep up, giving his writing the rushed quality that Duncan-Jones discerned. The final excuse Oxford proposed was that Carey must remain in town to bail Nashe out of prison, a false "fact" that only Oxford reasonably could have invented because the summons, which he must have known was coming, had yet to be issued.

So, a letter that on its face seems to confirm Nashe's existence instead confirms his fictional nature.

A Handwritten Letter to William Cotton from 1596 Implying Nashe's Actuality

A letter addressed to William Cotton was discovered by John Payne Collier. Though once suspected of being a forgery, the letter was authenticated as a genuine artifact from the Elizabethan era (figure 5).

The letter is suspicious because it was found among the papers of Robert Cotton, who, as scholars have carefully established, was not related to any

known William Cotton, including George Carey's servant by that name, whom most scholars have presumed is the addressee. There is no signature on the letter, part of which is (conveniently) torn away where a signature should have been.

Nor is there a single personal comment in the letter. Just as in Nashe's books, talk is plentiful, but nothing personal is revealed. Most of the letter is a rant disparaging popular literature of the time.

The text is designed to imply that Thomas Nashe is the writer. But it reads as manufactured literature because every other line can be traced to text from Nashe's books. Nashe's title, *Pierce Penniless*, echoes in "I have nere a penny in my purse"; Nashe's mention in the preface to Greene's *Menaphon* of "Jhon a Brainfords will" shows up in the letter as a mention of "Gillian a Braynfords will"; and so on.

One aspect of the Cotton letter unquestionably fits Oxford's authorship better than Nashe's. As noted above, Thomas Nashe never attended law school. Yet we find that "the letter makes use of...legal phraseology..." (Mackerness 343), indicating that the law was an integral part of the writer's intellect. In 1949, E.D. Mackerness explained:

The first simile, "as unfortunate as a terme at...St. Albons to poore cuntry clients", is followed by a mention of Jack Cade's dealing with

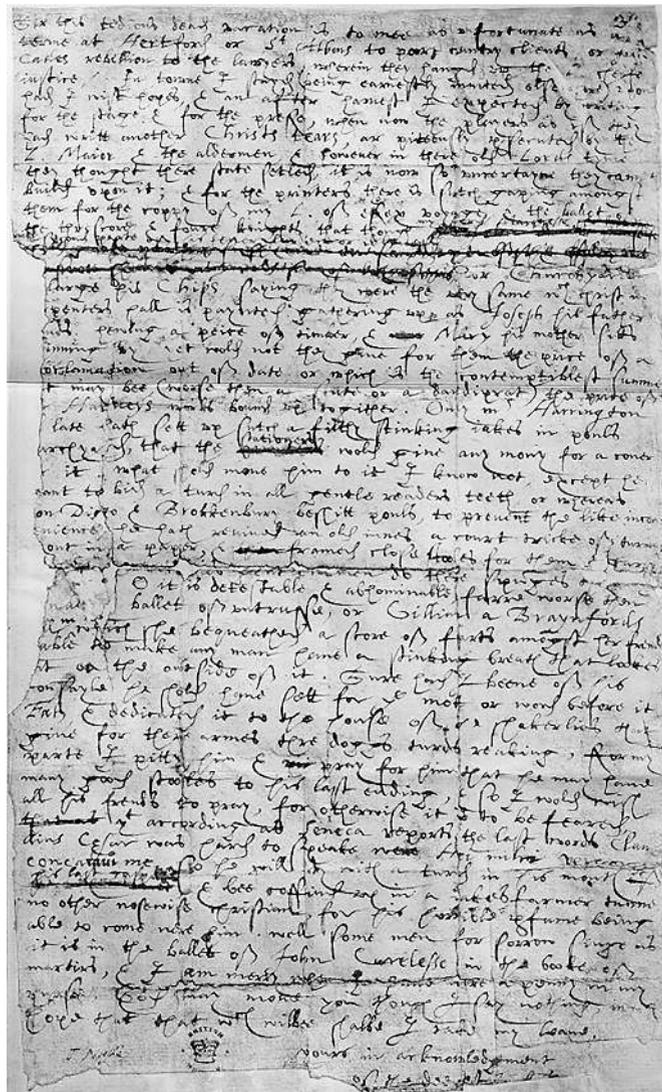


Figure 5: Letter addressed to William Cotton (Illuminarium website.)

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lawyers[, and] he uses other legal terms in speaking of the “proclamation out of date” and the ribald bequest of Gillian of Brentford: “Sure had I beene of his [c]ounsayle he should have sett for the mott or word before it...” And he recalls an old “innes of court trick”. The letter concludes with a legal phrase: “yours in acknowledgement of deepest bond”. (Mackerness 343–34)

Seven legalisms appear in this one-page letter. Scholars have documented a similar density of legal phrases in Shakespeare’s plays and poems. The letter-writer even implies that he was qualified to provide legal counsel, befitting a law-school graduate.

Just as pub chat fails to account for Shakespeare’s knowledge of Italy and the law, nothing in Nashe’s biography—including socializing at the Inns of Court—accounts for the legal terms breezily dispensed in this letter. The impact of Oxford’s formal legal education on Shakespeare’s writing was so profound that historian Ramon Jiménez (Jiménez) was able to date early versions of Shakespeare plays based on their use or non-use of legal terms, which Oxford weaved into his writing only after his education at Gray’s Inn in 1567–68.

The combination of a literary sensibility and legal knowledge was, moreover, a rare occurrence in Elizabethan England. Shakespeare had such an intellect; so did Nashe.

Once again, if Nashe is Oxford, all four oddities attending the Cotton letter evaporate. Nashe was a literary creation, so Oxford used the language of his literary creation in crafting the letter.⁷ There are no personal reminiscences in the letter because Oxford had no personal relationship with the addressee. Legal references flow as naturally from Nashe as from Shakespeare because both writers are literary personas of the Earl of Oxford. Finally, Oxford left the letter in Robert Cotton’s care because Cotton was an antiquary who was developing an extensive library, and if there was anyone whom Oxford could trust to protect and maintain the letter for posterity, it was Cotton.

Oxford’s Motives for Leaving Behind Documentary Evidence

In *Oxford’s Voices*, I proposed that Oxford wrote under various pseudonyms and allonyms to establish the impression that Elizabethan England was as peopled with accomplished men of letters as ancient Greece, ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy. To that end, he employed mostly allonyms, so that real people would receive the literary credit. In a few cases, he simply invented notional characters, including William Shakespeare and Thomas Nashe, each of whom was later linked to a real person or a real family to enhance the deception.

Oxford crafted more documentary evidence for Thomas Nashe than for other invented personas. I can think of three reasons why:

- The Nashe persona caused a scandal twice, sparking curiosity about him among readers.
- Harvey and Lichfield publicly tried to draw Nashe out of hiding.
- Oxford would have wanted posterity to believe that a real, independent writer defended Oxford and Robert Greene against the Harvey brothers and their allies.

All it took to provide a trail of evidence of Nashe’s actuality were four items:

- a few college records
- brief, handwritten notes in a book
- a letter sounding like Nashe
- and a trip up the coast either to locate or to embellish parish records pertaining to the William Nayshe family.

The gambit was so successful that its effect has endured for over four centuries.

A Substantial Absence of Definitive Documentary Evidence

As noted above, Thomas Nashe was the subject of two official complaints. The second one is the only non-literary mention of Nashe as a living person. In 1594, Hugh Broughton wrote (as did the first complainant) to Oxford’s father-in-law, protesting ridicule he had endured at Croydon from someone he calls Whitgift’s “Nash gentleman.” Does Broughton’s note confirm that Thomas Nashe was real? I don’t think so. Broughton does not speak of “Tom Nash” or “that upstart pamphleteer named Nash” but instead uses a cautious construction that Burghley would understand. His language equates to complaining about Samuel Clemens as “that Twain gentleman.” As in the first instance, Burghley did nothing.

Otherwise, no person, court or office left a painting, a letter, a memo, a memoir, a bill, a payment, a lease, a contract, a grammar or prep school record, a legal proceeding, a marriage record, documentation of children or a burial record attesting to the existence of the popular writer, Thomas Nashe. After *Summers Last Will* was published in 1600, Nashe simply disappears.

Contemporary records indicate a real person behind the names Thomas Lodge, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe, Edmund Spenser and many other Elizabethan writers. In *Lamb of God*, Harvey declares that the only Thomas Nashe he ever knew was a man of that name who served as “our

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Butler of Pembroke Hall”⁸ at Cambridge, to whom he refers again in *Four Letters*. Even for *that* humble person, there is documentary evidence of actuality, in the form of a record of his involvement in a college legal proceeding in 1598. But no such definitive record confirms the existence of Thomas Nashe the writer.

Nashe Offers Five Clues of His Non-Existence

Nashe’s pamphlets provide at least five statements compatible with the case that he is merely a fictional persona. Nashe’s first pamphlet, *Anatomie of Absurditie*, explains to fans of the hidden author why he chose to adopt this new persona:

“pensiveness...hath compelled my wit to wander abroad unregarded in this satyricall disguise...”

In *Have with you to Saffron-Walden*, Nashe taunts those who wish to locate him:

“I...shall...steale out of your companie before you bee aware, and hide my selfe in a Closet no bigger than would holde a Church Bible, till the beginning of Candlemas Terme, and then, if you come to Paules Church-yard, you shall meet me.”

In *Lenten Stuffe*, he grouses,

“my enemies [are] busie nibbling [like minnows] about my fame,” yet, “perhappes I may proove a cunninger diver then they are aware.”

Then he gripes of being treated by critics

“as if I were a deade man thrown amongst them to feede upon,”

quickly admitting,

“So I am, I confesse, in the worldes outward appearance.”

In three of his pamphlets, then, Nashe offers five striking confessions:

- His wit is in disguise, so he can wander about unregarded,
- he is as small as a stack of papers slid into a Bible nook,
- he will be found only in bookstalls,
- he cunningly hides from inquisitors,
- and he is as unavailable to the wide world as a dead man lying six feet under.

All this is nonsense if viewed from the orthodox perspective, but it becomes logical and clever when considered under the hypothesis presented here.

Conclusions

I believe a careful investigation of all relevant evidence demonstrates—contrary to virtually all previous commentary—that no writer named Thomas Nashe existed. I think inductive reasoning confirms that Thomas Nashe was a notional character hiding behind a pen name employed by the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Note: The Thomas Nashe chapter within *Oxford's Voices* is ten times the length of this paper. Readers who wish to access more detailed information about any aspect of the case presented here as well as numerous additional points are invited to access that source.

Endnotes

1. A few months later, Nashe wrote Act 1 of *The Isle of Dogs*, but he gave it to another playwright to complete and produce for the public theater.
2. The relevant passages are quoted in the Thomas Nashe chapter of *Oxford's Voices*.
3. The Thomas Nashe chapter of *Oxford's Voices* explains the determination of Nashe's travel dates.
4. Collier's three forged entries are quoted in the Thomas Nashe chapter of *Oxford's Voices*.
5. Nashe's deduction is confirmed by textual parallels in Gabriel's *Four Letters* of 1592. Even if one were to credit the address in *Lamb of God* to Richard, the point remains. Richard would have been unaware of any corporeal Thomas Nashe only if his brother, who was also his brother-in-arms in the Pamphlet War, did not know of him.
6. The Thomas Nashe chapter of *Oxford's Voices* discusses the Pamphlet War between Oxford and the Harveys.
7. Oxford or an assistant could have held the pen.
8. Oxford may well have borrowed the college butler's name, with its homonym of *gnash*, for his satirist persona.

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The Blinde-Worm's Sting in Macbeth

by Connie J. Beane

Adder's fork, and blinde-worm's sting....
Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.
Macbeth 4.1.16, 20–21

The ingredients that go into the infamous witches' cauldron in *Macbeth*—eye of newt, toe of frog, etc.—are familiar to anyone with even a passing acquaintance with English literature, and as far as orthodox scholarship goes, that is all they are: eyes, toes, fingers.

While *Macbeth* ostensibly depicts events that occurred in 11th-century Scotland, Shakespeare scholars assert that there are numerous allusions connecting characters and themes in the play to people and events in late 16th- and early 17th-century England. Up to now, however, there has been no attempt to parse the contents of the cauldron for possible allusions, despite the relentless repetition in the witches' chant of the words “double, double,” which seems to suggest that there are other meanings lurking beneath the surface imagery of this scene.

Most scholars skim over the first 38 lines of this scene, sometimes deigning to explicate the superficial meanings of the various ingredients, but usually dismissing it as mere melodrama, designed to give the audience a cathartic shiver before passing on to more important issues. However, let us consider the proposition that, like other elements in *Macbeth*, the contents of the cauldron were meant to be understood by a contemporary audience as allusions to things that were more than merely eyes, toes, and fingers.

If we consider the Oxfordian theory of the Shakespeare authorship, one particular item—the *blinde-worme*¹ (4.1.16)—catches the eye and suggests a

possible allusion to William Cecil, Lord Burghley—the Queen's Secretary of State and later her Lord Treasurer.²

While this may seem at first glance to be a case of confirmation bias,³ what if there do exist contemporary documents which link Burghley to the words *blind* and *worm*? If such documents exist, might they not only explicate a hitherto unsuspected Shakespeare allusion, but also open up the possibility that the other ingredients in the witches' cauldron have "double" meanings?

To determine that, we will review and examine five ideas suggested by the words comprising this half-line in the fourth act: (1) the reptile known as the *blindworm*, along with its constituent words (2) *blind* and (3) *worm*; the word (4) *slow*, a constituent of "slow-worm," which was then interchangeable with blindworm; and finally (5) the word *sting*. First, we will seek to ascertain if, taken together, they have a meaning or meanings beyond the one that appears on the surface, and second, if there is indeed a demonstrable connection to Elizabeth's Lord Treasurer.

The blind-worm/Slow-worm

Orthodox scholarship assumes that by *blinde-worme* Shakespeare meant the small legless lizard (*Anguis fragilis*⁴) commonly called the blindworm or slow-worm in England; the two terms were often used interchangeably during the 16th-century. The first recorded use of "blind-worm" goes back to the mid-15th-century; "slow-worm" dates back to the first millennium, with at least four documented uses in the last half of the 16th-century.⁵

Shakespeare used the term "blindworm" twice in the canon. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it is plural and printed as one word in the 1600 quarto and as two words in the First Folio; in *Macbeth* it is singular and hyphenated.

Despite the name and the suggestion in *Macbeth*, the creature is not blind and its bite (or sting) is negligible. Neither is its bite poisonous, despite what William Harrison has to say in the "Description of England" in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577):

...Nevertheless we have a blindworm, to be found under logs, in woods and timber that hath lain long in a place, which some also do call (and upon better ground) by the name of slow-worms, and they

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are known easily by their more or less variety of striped colours, drawn long-ways from their heads, their whole bodies little exceeding a foot in length, *and yet is their venom deadly...*” (Harrison) (emphasis added).

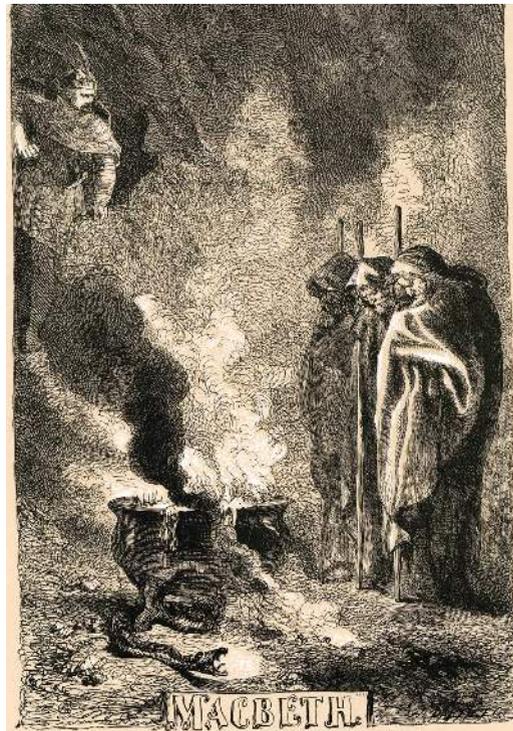
Edward Topsell in his *Historie of Serpents* (1608) echoes Harrison’s errors as to both eyesight and toxicity:

This Serpent [which he calls the slow-worme] was called in auncient time among the Graecians *Tythlops* and *Typhlines*, and *Cophia*, because of the dimnes of the sight thereof,...and from hence the Latines haue taken their word, *Caecilia quasi caecus serpens*, a blind serpent...

...It is harmelesse except being prouoked, yet many times when an Oxe or a Cow downe in the pasture, if it chaunce to lye vppon one of these Slow-wormes, it byteth the beast, & if remedy be not had, there followeth mortalitie or death, for *the poyson thereof is very strong...* (Topsell 240) (emphasis added)

Orthodox commentators seem to feel that these more-or-less contemporary beliefs regarding the toxic quality of the blindworm’s bite constitute sufficient explanation for the reptile’s inclusion in the witches’ noxious brew, and this is where they stop searching for its meaning.

Although Elizabethans believed, however mistakenly, that the reptile was *blind*, and might have therefore associated it with the Latin word for “blind,” this, in and of itself, does not provide sufficient evidence for us to argue that, as used in *Macbeth*, it constitutes an allusion to William Cecil. We must look elsewhere.



“Blind” and William Cecil

In John Baret’s *Alvearie* of 1573⁶ (Baret) under the major heading “Worm, *Vermis*,” he cites the phrase “a slowe worme being blinde” and gives the Latin equivalent of “slow-worm” as *Caecilia* (Baret “W ante O,” line 367), just as Topsell did more than 30 years later. Under “blind” he gives the Latin equivalent *caecus* (Baret “B ante L,” line 749).

Baret's dictionary thus appears to provide a link between Cecil's surname and the Latin word for the "blind" slow-worm, but there are two problems in using it as the foundation for the allusion in *Macbeth*. First, although the written forms are similar,⁷ the Elizabethan pronunciation of the two words was very different, "Cecil" being *sess-sill* and the Latin "Caecilia" being *kay-cheel-ya*. Second, William Cecil did not always spell his name "Cecil."

Orthography in England in the 14th through 16th centuries was fluid. Records show that Cecil's grandfather David used the form "Syssel" and his father Richard the form "Cysssel." William presumably used the later form, at least in his youth.

William entered Cambridge in 1535 at the age of 14—the first of his family to attend university—and in the 16th-century it was common in academic and court circles to Latinize one's name. The Lambeth Palace Library holds a volume of pedigrees, designated MS 302, compiled by Cecil; some of the material appears to date from his student years at Cambridge, 1535–1540. Two inscriptions in the front of the volume give his name variously as William Cycell and Guilielmus Cicellus and suggest that it was at that time that he began to Latinize the spelling of his surname, morphing the *s*'s to *c*'s but retaining the *ess*-sound in the pronunciation.

Whatever drove his youthful decision to change the spelling of his surname, it came back to vex him later in life. As his oldest son Thomas wrote to his uncle Hugh Allington on November 13, 1605:

...My Lord my father's altering the writing of his name maketh many that are not well affected to our house to doubt whether we rightly descended of the house of Wales because they write their name Sitselt and our name is written Cecyll, my grandfather wrote it Syssel and so in autographs all ye thir names differ, whereof I marvel what moved my L. my father to alter it... (Owen 131) (spelling modernized)

In a recent study of the Cecil pedigree (Cissel), David C. Cissel suggests that William Cecil began researching his ancestry around age 30, about the time he was sworn in as one of the two Secretaries of State to Edward VI in 1550. Cecil had apparently received little or no information about the family's origins from his grandfather (who died in 1540) or his father (who died in 1553). His research identified a number of families bearing the surname of "Cecil" scattered around England (Cissel 54–58), but he was unable to document a definitive link between his earliest known relative—his father's father David—and any of these families.

At some point,⁸ however, he discovered the Sitsilt or Sitsylt family of Allt-Yr-Ynys in Wales. The Sitsylts were neither more aristocratic nor wealthier than other Cecil families of the period, but for William's purposes they had three

important advantages: they were Welsh like the Queen's Tudor forebears, they occasionally spelled their surname as he did,⁹ and they had a familial connection to Blanche Parry, Queen Elizabeth's longtime attendant and a distant relative of her cofferer, Sir William Parry (Cissel 38). William Cecil subsequently discovered a pedigree for the Sitsilts that reached back to the Norman conquest, and then identified a link between those Sitsilts and his grandfather David.¹⁰

While this matter may appear to be of interest only to genealogists, William Cecil's alleged Sitsylt ancestry is very much to the point because it provides a contemporary and highly publicized connection between the words "blind" and "Cecil."

Cecil and the Roman *Cecelia*

In 1592 there was a flurry of publications by both Protestants and Catholics, engendered by the issuance in 1591 of Queen Elizabeth's proclamation against seminary priests.¹¹ Among these publications was an anonymous work¹² entitled *An aduertisement written to a secretarie of my L. Treasurers of England, by an Inglishe intelligencer as he passed throughe Germanie towards Italie Concerninge an other booke newly written in Latin, and published in diuerse languages and countreyes, against her Maiesties late proclamation, for searche and apprehension of seminary priestes, and their receauers, also of a letter vwritten by the L. Treasurer in defence of his gentrie, and nobility, intercepted, published, and answered by the papistes* (hereinafter cited as *Advertisement*) and dated August 1, 1592.

The first part of *Advertisement* was a summary in English of a much longer Latin publication which came to be known as *Philopater*, which the author calls "the moste sharpe, bitter, and odious thing that euer I thinck was written by the papistes..." (Philopater 7). It scourged Elizabeth's advisors for their role in oppressing and maltreating English Catholics; Burghley was subjected to particular abuse.

The second part was also translated from *Philopater* and gave what purported to be the text of a letter from Lord Burghley to one Michael Moody, his agent in Antwerp, in which Burghley supposedly laid out a "defence of his gentrie, and nobility." In this letter he is alleged to claim that

...the Cecills of Stamford, doe come of the auncient howse of the Sit siltes [*sic*] of wales, and are descended from the reigne of the conquerour, & haue matched, & come of many noble howses both of England and wales, yea of the Princes of wales (for these are my L. owne wordes in his fore said letter)....

The “Inglishie intelligencer” continues:

Secondly he [Philopater] taketh vpon himself to shew that at this flourish, or at leaste wise the more part thereof, is but an ambitious fiction of M. Cecill himself, and very ridiculous to all Inglish of the discreeter sort: for that he saith, that many yet remēber when M. Cecil for diuers yeares after his comming to credit, went about to deriue his name of Cecil, frō Cecilius the Romaine name, whereof their vvere diuers, but especially that famous rich man named Caecilius Claudius vvho as Plinius writeth, after greate losses receaued in the ciuil warres, lefte notwithstanding in his testament. . . infinite quantitie of ready mony, vnto whome this awnswerer upposeth that our M. Cecil at that tyme, desired to be like as well in vvealth as in name, and for that he imagined that the proge-nye of those Cecils had remayned in Ingland, euen from the Romaines tyme, and that his howse vvvas descended of the same: He write himself (as he doeth now also in this his letter) Cecil, with two c. c. and after the first of them an E, which is far different in antographie frō Sitsilt vvvhich himself writeth with tvvo s. s. twoo T. T. and tvvo I. I. (Philopater)

The Sitsylt family's ancient lineage was alleged to date back to the reign of Edward III, beginning with their ancestor Sir John Sitsylt. The first public mention of this lineage was in Gerard Legh's *Accedence of Armory* (1562).¹³ Ten years later the same story appeared in an expanded form in John Bossewell's *Workes of Armorie* (1572)—much of which was cribbed from *Accedence*—dedicated to William Cecil, newly elevated to the peerage as Lord Burghley. Bossewell included a plate depicting that famous knight “James Sitsilt, Lord of Beauport” with his arms on a shield and banner (Bossewell fo. 80), followed by transcripts, in French, of documents supporting the legend; the said “writings” having been supplied by “the ryte honorable the Lorde of Burghley, to whome in blood the same belongeth, whose name being written at thys daye *Cecill* is neuertheless in Wales, both in speche and common writing vsed to be vttered *Sitsilt* or *Sitsild*. . .” (Bossewell fo. 80v–81). Several pages later Bossewell provides a full-page plate of Cecil's arms, with elaborate mantling, crest, supporters, the Garter, and motto, followed by a long and fulsome blazon of the whole (Bossewell fo. 106–108). It is far and away the most elaborate treatment of any coat of arms in the volume, not excepting that of the Queen.

Advertisement's “Inglishie intelligencer” or “Philopater” himself was apparently familiar with Bossewell's *Workes*.

Although the allegedly “purloined letter” was extensively quoted in Latin in Person's *Responsio ad Edictum* and in English in *Advertisement* (Loomis 202 f8), the letter itself is no longer extant—if it ever existed—so we cannot be certain if its contents were accurately reported, or if some or all of it was invented to embarrass Cecil. As Loomis points out, “[Cecil's] letter was



William Cecil, 1st Baron Burghley, Riding A Grey Mule, The Cecil Coat Of Arms Suspended, by the English School.

hardly a discreet one to send overseas” (202)—and Cecil was not known to be imprudent or given to ill-considered actions.

Whatever the veracity of the supposed stolen letter and its accusation regarding Cecil’s alleged claim that his surname derived from the Roman *Caecilia*, the accusation was published in 1592, and given that *Advertisement* was widely circulated in England, Cecil would have become associated in the public mind with the *Caecili*, supposed descendents of Caecus, the god Vulcan’s “little *blind* boy.” The link between Cecil, the *Caecili*, and “blind” is firm, and its origin can be traced to a very specific time frame: 1592.

“Worm” and William Cecil

Among Oxfordian scholars it is almost an article of faith that Lord Burghley drew a parallel between the year of his birth and the Diet of *Worms*.¹⁴ I have been unable to find any mention of this tale that predates the early 20th-century, and no documentation in contemporary records which would support the allegation that he ever spoke of the matter.¹⁵ However, whether he was born in 1520 or 1521, his birth would have occurred roughly six months before or six months after the Diet (January–May 1521), so he could have legitimately made a connection between the timing of the two events by saying he was born “within” a year of the Diet.

In the absence of definitive confirmation of such a claim by Cecil, we sought elsewhere for documentation of a possible parallel between “worm” and Cecil.

In the *OED*, the earliest definition that appears under “worm” is found in *Beowulf*, and refers to a serpent, snake, or dragon. This definition agrees with the physical appearance of *Anguis fragilis*, the blindworm, which although taxonomically a lizard, has no legs and appears quite snakelike.¹⁶ Later definitions of “worm” in the *OED* have distinctly pejorative connotations—a destructive pest, maggots such as eat dead bodies, one of the pains of Hell (figuratively), a human being likened to a worm or reptile as an object of contempt or scorn, one who preys on society, etc.—a general term of contempt which could have been applied to anyone, not just Cecil, by enemies or detractors.

Cecil was explicitly associated with both worms and serpents in the same *Advertisement written to a Secretarie of the Lord Treasurer's of England* (1592) mentioned above, wherein he was characterized as “a malignant and wrangling worme” (Persons 43) and “this old ambitious serpent” (Persons 67). The same conditions of timing and widespread distribution would therefore be applicable to the English public being aware of a link between “worm” and “Cecil.”

“Slow” and William Cecil

We have shown that “blind” and “worm” can be linked to Burghley, but what of the attribute “slow” in the related term *slow-worm*?

The *OED*, under the noun form of “slow,” lists it as being in use in the mid-15th-century as a term for a slow, or slow-going person, a sluggard. This doesn't quite fit the connotations of the cauldron scene in *Macbeth*, but as an adjective, “slow” has a long and varied history. It has been used since the first millenium for persons who are not quick, either mentally or physically.

While William Cecil does not appear to have been known for witty repartee, his intellect was formidable, even in his old age, so he would probably never

have been described as mentally “slow.” But having been born in 1520, Cecil was 72 years old and physically failing by 1592, and may have required the use of a cane or staff to aid his mobility, thereby justifying associating the term “slow” as well as “blind” to his *worm*-ness.

However, it happens that William Cecil was prominently associated with a staff in another, more important context than age-related debility, which fortuitously brings us to the final element in the *blinde-worme* allusion: its “sting.”

The blind-worm’s “sting”

Scientists now know that, while it looks like a snake, *Anguis fragilis* is a harmless lizard incapable of inflicting a serious bite, much less a venomous one. However, “sting” has a wide range of meanings, including: the act of stinging, the effect of being stung, the organ used to inflict a wound, or figuratively, the pain or wound inflicted (*OED* “sting,” n. 2). It is particularly interesting to find that in the *OED* the earliest example of the noun is found in the Scottish and northern dialects of English, and signifies “a pole, staff.”

Cecil as Lord Treasurer was one of several court officials who bore a white staff of office. It is a prominent feature in a number of his portraits and mention of a staff would have been sufficient to suggest his identity even to persons who had never seen him and would not have recognized him by sight.

There is also the possibility that the *blinde-worme*’s “sting” refers to something which inflicted a wound on the worm itself.

The same *Advertisement written to a Secretary of the Lord Treasurer’s of England* referred to above is eminently fit to be termed a “sting.” *Advertisement* was a summary, a preliminary taste of the *Responsio ad Edictum*, commonly known as *Philopater*, published the same year, 1592, but months later. *Philopater* was composed in Latin, probably by Robert Persons, and addressed to the influential politicians on the world stage, and as such would have had a strictly limited audience in England. *Advertisement*, on the other hand, was in English and certainly aimed at the widest possible distribution in England. Manuscript as well as printed copies circulated widely (Houliston 54).

Advertisement’s satirical remarks about Cecil’s name and genealogical pretensions and its characterization of him as a “worm” and a “serpent” were unpleasant enough, but its summary of *Philopater* was, as the fictitious author of *Advertisement* himself asserted, “the moste sharpe, bitter, and odious thing that euer I thinck was written by the papistes” (Persons 7). Walsingham, Leicester, and the other advisers and counselors of Queen Elizabeth, all dead by this time, came in for their share of abuse, but it was Cecil who was

the main target. He was accused of numerous misdeeds such as urging his patron, the Duke of Somerset, to execute his own brother, and then working with the Earl of Warwick to betray the Duke. He supposedly conspired with Dudley to set aside both Mary and Elizabeth to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. He and his cronies allegedly worked to keep Queen Elizabeth unmarried so as to profit by the uncertainties of the succession.

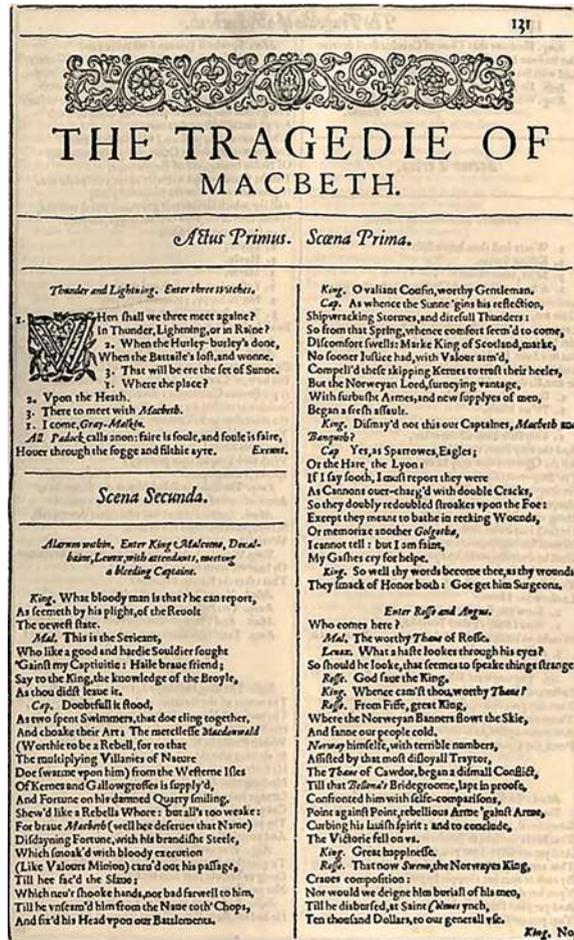
The “blinde-worme” and the date of *Macbeth*

We have shown that the *blinde-worme's sting* can be linked to William Cecil through the Latin meaning of his name (blind), through pejoratives (serpent and worm) applied to him by contemporaries, and to the Scottish term for the staff he carried as an official of Elizabeth's court). Moreover, the blind/worm linkage can be traced to a single publication—*An Advertisement*—which would have been conspicuous in the public mind in 1592.

In literature an allusion is defined as

[a]n indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place, or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader's familiarity with what is thus mentioned. The technique of allusion is an economical means of calling upon the history or the literary tradition that author and reader are assumed to share.... Topical allusion is especially important in satire.... (Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms)

Because of these characteristics, allusions tend to be ephemeral by nature; even a short lapse of time can serve to blur the connection between the words and the source of their inspiration.



We assume that an allusion to William Cecil couched in terms of the content and associations of *An Advertisement* would have become stale or unintelligible by about 1596. If the cauldron scene as printed in the First Folio was written as a whole, within a few weeks or months, at least this portion of the play containing the *blinde-worme* allusion was probably written between 1592 and 1597.

Redating the play to the period 1592–97 serves to refute the contention that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, could not have been the author, since it places the composition of the play firmly within his lifetime. The orthodox chronology, as proposed by E.K. Chambers in 1930, places *Macbeth's* composition in 1606, two years after de Vere's death in 1604.

The importance of decoding the *blinde-worm* allusion

The evidence presented strongly suggests that the author of *Macbeth* intended his audience to take the “blinde-worm” as a reference to William Cecil, Lord Burghley. More important, it suggests the possibility—if not the probability—that other items in the list of cauldron ingredients were also intended to be taken as allusions to contemporary personalities and events.

Aside from the implications it has for the authorship question, this possibility suits the theme of the play far better than the conventional dating of c. 1606. The witches notwithstanding, the overarching focus of the play is on *succession*—an issue which would have been crucial and timely during the last decade of Elizabeth's reign, but which was rendered moot with the accession of James in 1603.

If there are indeed contemporary allusions hidden under the cauldron ingredients, this raises the importance of the entire scene to the play. Seen from this new perspective, it functions as a bridge, the means by which the audience is able to perceive the connection between the “historic” tale of ancient Scotland and contemporary Elizabethan politics.

Endnotes

1. Printed in the First Folio as hyphenated: blinde-worme.
2. The allusion, as understood by Oxfordian scholars, references the presumed similarity of pronunciation between the surname and the Latin word for “blind,” and Cecil’s birth “during the Diet of *Worms*.” In *Hamlet* there is some byplay with this latter pun: Hamlet: “Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are e’en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet.” (4.3)
3. “Confirmation bias,” people’s tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting information that is consistent with their existing beliefs. *Encyclopedia Britannica* (<https://www.britannica.com/science/confirmation-bias>, acc. February 5, 2024).
4. *A. fragilis* is native to Eurasia, and is found all over Europe, as far east as the Urals and the Caspian Sea. It is common in England, but not Ireland. *Apropos* to its appearance in *Macbeth*, it is also common in Scotland.
5. *Hall’s Vnion: Henry IV* (1548) f. xxiiii, “Auoidyng the slowe worme and deadely Dormouse called Idlenes;” W. Ward tr. G. Ruscelli, *Secretes Alexis of Piemount* (1558) f. 30v, “A certayne litle Serpent called a Slowe worme;” R. Greene, *Menaphon* (1589) sig. K3v, “Thine eyes are like the slow wormes in the night;” and T. Nashe, *Haue with you to Saffron-Walden* (1596) sig. G3, “Was euer. Ledgerdemaine a slow-worme, Viuacitie a lazy bones?” It should be noted that two of these uses—Hall and Nashe—were metaphorical. The other two were general references to the reptile or its physical characteristics (eyes).
6. Baret’s dictionary was dedicated to Sir William Cecil.
7. This may suggest that the playwright wrote his plays with as much an eye to their being *read* as to their being *performed*.
8. Possibly not long before the publication of Gerard Legh’s *Accedens of Armorie* (1563).
9. In Wales and in England members of the extended family spelled their surname variously as Sitsilt, Sicelt, Seycil, Seisel, Cycele, Cycyl, Cicil, and even Seyseld (Nares 9), and occasionally Cyssell or Cicell.

10. Although the families of Cecil's two sons still hold to the proposition that their ancestral pedigree is precisely as it was "documented" by their illustrious founder, most genealogical experts have pronounced the Sitsilt pedigree a complete fabrication unsupported by evidence, and suspect that the link between the Sitsilt family and David Cecil is based on documents which are speculative, if not outright forgeries.
11. *A declaration of great troubles pretended against the realme by a number of seminarie priests and Jesuits* (London, Oct. 18. 1591), in *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin (eds.). 3 vols. New Haven, 1964–69, vol. 3, 86–95.
12. The authorship of this document has been variously ascribed to Robert Persons (or Parsons), Richard Verstegan, and Robert Creswell.
13. Sir William Cecil is not specifically mentioned in *Accedens*, but the arms he adopted carry the "coat" of Sir John Sitsylt in the 1st and 6th quarters: barry of ten, argent and azure, with six sable escutcheons bearing silver lions (*Accedens* Fo. 49).
14. Nina Green's "Oxmyths" debunks this statement by asserting categorically that since Cecil was born on September 13, 1520, while the Diet of Worms took place January 27–May 25, 1521, he could not have spoken of having been born "during" the Diet. However, contemporary sources give two different years for Cecil's birth, 1520 and 1521, and Cecil himself switched between the dates, although he used the earlier date in his will in 1598.
In Martin A.S. Hume's *The Great Lord Burghley: A Study in Elizabethan Statecraft* (1898), 6–7, we find an extended explanation for the confusion in dates. However, it is evident that for at least part of his life—and possibly the greater part of it—Cecil himself *thought* he was born in 1521.
15. It should be noted that Hume's biography, published in 1898, does not mention the "Diet of Worms" story.
16. The blindworm was classified as a serpent by Topsall in 1608.

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A New Interpretation of Francis Beaumont's Verse Letter to Ben Jonson

by Heidi Jannsch

Sometimes titled “Neither to follow fashion...” the verse letter from Francis Beaumont to Ben Jonson mentioning Shakespeare was first published in its entirety in 1930 by E.K. Chambers, but the focus of attention has continued to be on the lines:

...heere I would let slippe
(If I had any in mee) schollershippe,
And from all Learning keepe these lines as <cl>eere
as Shakespeares best are, which our heires shall heare.
Preachers apte to their auditors to showe
how farr sometimes a mortall man may goe
by the dimme light of Nature... (224)

In *The Mysterious William Shakespeare*, Charlton Ogburn provides the orthodox interpretation of these lines; that the letter from Beaumont to Jonson is an exchange where “one of them tells the other of the profound admiration he has for Shakespeare...” Ogburn attempted to correct this misinterpretation by explaining “it is not that Shakespeare shows how far a man without learning can go by the dim light of nature,” instead, the writer “was saying that is something that posterity will hear from preachers” (109). Diana Price also clarifies the intended meaning, summarizing:

...future generations are going to *bear* how much a man may accomplish using only untrained, God-given talent. *Or so F.B. intends to say.* This statement appears to be a deliberate crossing of wires in the Shakespearean commentary, a first allusion to a rumor-mill about the “natural” playwright. (218)

A closer look at these familiar lines and an examination of the poem as a whole reveal several indications that the poem may be a lament about, and attempt to document, this “deliberate crossing of wires” distancing the pen name Shakespeare from its true author, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford.

Variations and Dating of F.B.'s Verse Letter

Mark Bland, a senior lecturer in the Department of English Literature and Creative Writing at De Monfort University, has published extensively on the bibliographical and textual scholarship of Ben Jonson and the London manuscript and book trade of the early 17th century. In “Francis Beaumont’s Verse Letters to Ben Jonson and ‘The Mermaid Club,’” Bland considers the four known manuscript copies of Beaumont’s verse letter “Neither to follow fashion...” The copies are located at the Huntington Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Morgan Library, and the British Library. Bland concludes that the copy at the Huntington Library is closest to Beaumont’s intended verse, while he places the other three copies as more distant, inaccurate versions of the original (156).

The first scholar to publish the entire verse letter was E.K. Chambers, who took the two manuscript versions known to him (those at the Morgan and British Library—the two copies farthest from the original, according to Bland) and combined them into one (figure 1). I respectfully disagree with Bland’s assessment of the Morgan copy as a less accurate version and quote Chambers’ version throughout this paper, with the Huntington and Morgan copy variations noted.

Although attention is usually focused on the lines including the mention of Shakespeare, scholars have attempted to date the original poem by focusing on three elements which appear later in the poem:

- 1) the identity of the person wearing “white and Orrenge tawny” in lines 26–27;
- 2) the time and reason for the person’s misery in line 27; and
- 3) the date of the two plays in line 31 in relation to a proposed sequel.

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<p>224 CONTEMPORARY ALLUSIONS App. B</p> <p>royal gifts, but extravagant and sometimes in debt. No doubt he had many needy followers. On the whole, I think that 1615 is likely to have been the occasion which Beaumont had in mind.]</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To M^r B: J: .</p> <p>Neither to follow fashion nor to shoue my witt against the State, nor that I know any thing now, with which I am with childe till I haue tould, nor hopeinge to bee stilde a good Epist'ler through the towne, with which (5) I might bee famous, nor with any ytch like these, wrote I this Letter but to shoue the Loue I carrie and mee thinkes do owe to you about the number, which (can) best in something which I vse not, be exprest. (10) to write this I inuoke none, but the post of Douer, or some Carriers pist-ling ghost, for if this equall but the stile, which men send Cheese to towne with, and thanks downe agen, tis all I seeke for: heere I would let slippe (15) (If I had any in mee) schollershippe, And from all Learninge keepe these lines as (cl)eere as Shakespeares best are, which our heires shall heare Preachers apte to their auditors to shoue how farr sometimes a mortall man may goe (20) by the dimme light of Nature, tis to mee an helpe to write of nothing; and as free, As hee, whose text was, god made all that is, I meane to speake: what do you thinke of his state, who hath now the last that hee could make (25) in white and Orrenge tawny on his backe at Windsor? is not this mans miserie more then a fallen sharers, that now keepees a doore,</p> <p><small>Title] To Ben Jonson. T. B. A 6 famous] famous A 7 wrote I] writ in A 8 do owe] dew A 9 can] blank in H: are A 10 I vse not] vse not to A 12 Douer] Doare A 14 downe agen.] downe A 15 for: heere] for here; A 17 cleere] deere H: deare A 18 which] & A heare] teare A 19 apte] apt A 21 dimme] diuine A 23 whose text] whoe A 24 I meane to speake:] all to (speake) I meane, A 26 tawny] lawny A 27 mans] om. H 28 keepees] keepe A doore:] doore H</small></p>	<p>No. XLIV FRANCIS BEAUMONT 225</p> <p>hath not his state almost as wretched bene as (h)is, that is ordainde to write the (grinne) (30) after the fawne, and fleere shall bee? as sure some one there is allotted to endure that Cross. there are some, I could wish to knowe to loue, and keepe with, if they woulde not shoue their studdies to me; or I wish to see (35) their workes to laugh at, if they suffer mee not to knowe them: And thus I would Commerse with honest Poets that make scuruie verse. by this time you perceiue you did a misse to leaue your worthier studies to see this, (40) which is more tedious to you, then to walke in a Jews Church, or Bretons Coffon talke. but know I write not these lines to the end to please Ben: Johnson but to please my friend: ffinis: FB:</p> <p><small>30 his] is H, A is] & A write] om A grinne] geinne H: Crime A 31 fleere] feare A 37 thus] yt A 38 verse.] verse H 40 your] the A worthier] wortier H: worthyer A see] vse A 42 Bretons] Britans A 42 talke.] talke H 43 I write] yt I wrote A 44 ffinis: FB:] om A</small></p> <p style="text-align: center;">XLV. EDMUND BOLTON (c. 1616)</p> <p>[From <i>Bodl. Rasal. MS. D 1, f. 14*</i>. This is anonymous, but clearly a draft for the <i>Hypercritica</i> of Bolton (1575?–1633?). The final version (pr. J. E. Spingarn, <i>Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century</i>, i. 82) was also left in MS.; it cannot be earlier than 1616 (cf. Munro, i. 213). It contains no reference to Shakespeare.]</p> <p>The bookes also out of which wee gather the most warrantable English are not many to my Remembrance, of which in regard they require a particuler and curious tract, I forbear to speake at this present. But among the cheife, or rather the cheife are in my opinion these . . . Shakespere, M^r Francis Beaumont and innumerable other writers for the stage and presse tenderly to be vsed in this Argument.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3162.2 Q</p>
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Figure 1: “Neither to follow fashion...” as compiled by Chambers in William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems, II, 224–225.

In his commentary, Chambers attempted to date the poem to coincide with a Knights of the Garter ceremony, presuming that the person wearing “white and Orrenge tawny” would have been at Windsor for an installation into the Knights of the Garter. Chambers proposed a composition date of the verse letter as between 1613 and 1616, but he was unable to identify which nobleman might have been wearing “white and Orrenge tawny” at either of the Knights of the Garter installations he investigated (223).

Another basis for dating the poem has been identifying the “miserable man.” Chambers does not consider the “miserable man” that others have since: but the words “misery” in line 27 and “wretched” in line 29 led Finkelppearl in *Court and Country Politics in the Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher* to date the letter to between 1608 and 1609, identifying the unnamed “miserable man” as John Marston. Marston’s play *The Fawne* is one of the plays mentioned in the poem, and Finkelppearl explains that Marston was punished for a satiric play at Blackfriars and then became a priest to avoid further punishment for this transgression. Finkelppearl understands Beaumont’s use of the word “ordained” and the phrase “endure that cross” as references to Marston’s

new position in the church (68–69n31). He concluded that Beaumont was “speaking to Jonson in guarded language about the wretched future of a mutual friend.”

In “The date of F.B.’s verse letter to Ben Jonson,” Peter Moore agreed with Chambers that the man with “white and Orrenge tawny” was a nobleman, but suggested it was Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex, whose livery colors were white and orange. Moore proposed that the poet was commenting on the trial in 1613 where Devereaux “had been required to admit in public that he was impotent with regard to his beautiful, and allegedly willing, young wife in order to obtain the divorce they both desired” (348).

Bland returned to Chambers’ Knight of the Garter installation idea, proposing that the miserable man was Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, who was installed as a Knight of the Garter in May 1606. Bland explains that Cecil would have been miserable because he had upset the king with his overdone pageantry after the Garter installation ceremony. Bland does not explain the “white and Orrenge tawny” reference, nor how these colors relate to Salisbury, but dates the poem to May or June 1606, noting the two plays mentioned (*The Fawne* by John Marston and *The Fleire* by Edward Sharpham) were written and performed between 1604 and 1607. Bland suggests that Beaumont’s comment about a potential sequel to the two plays wouldn’t make sense with Chambers’ dating of the poem to nine years later (165).

Nina Green agrees with Bland’s dating of the letter to 1606 based on the theatrical allusions to the two plays, but disagrees with the identification of Salisbury, reminding readers that the livery colors mentioned are more appropriately identified with Essex. She concludes, “It thus may be that the individual alluded to in Beaumont’s verses had taken service with the young Robert Devereux (1591–1646), 3rd Earl of Essex, who was at court in 1606” (Green, *Beaumont, 1606*).

It is striking that this poem, of interest because of its comment on Shakespeare’s legacy, has undergone repeated attempts at dating based on identifying an unnamed man who is assumed to be a nobleman or playwright. Edward de Vere was both a nobleman and a playwright, whose connection to the name Shakespeare was, it has been argued, lost to history, due to the misleading story shared by “preachers” as foretold by Beaumont in this poem. Examining the entire poem from this perspective reveals several interesting correlations to Edward de Vere and the Shakespeare Authorship ruse. For this exploration, the 44-line poem is considered in three sections:

- Section One - Beaumont’s Denial (lines 1–15): the poet insists that he doesn’t have any important information to share.
- Section Two - Shakespeare’s Misery (lines 15–33): the poet reveals important information pertaining to Shakespeare’s Authorship.

- Section Three - Beaumont's Lament (lines 33–44): the poet laments the concealment of important information.

Section One - Beaumont's Denial (lines 1-15)

To Mr B:J:

Neither to follow fashion nor to showe
 my witt against the State, nor that I knowe
 any thing now, with which I am with childe
 till I haue tould, nor hopeinge to bee stilde
 a good Epist'ler through the towne, with which (5)
 I might bee famous, nor with any ytch
 like these, wrote I this Letter but to showe
 the Loue I carrie and mee thinkes do owe
 to you aboue the number, which <can> best
 in something which I vse not, be exprest. (10)
 to write this I inuoake none, but the post
 of Douer, or some Carriers pist-ling ghost,
 for if this equall but the stile, which men
 send Cheese to towne with, and thankes downe agen,
 tis all I seeke for: heere I would let slippe... (15)

Beaumont begins by giving readers 14 lines of disclaimers stating what he is *not* doing by writing this poem: he is not following trends, not trying to out-wit any official edicts, he has nothing new to share, he is not trying to show off his talent or get famous, and he is not even going to bother asking his muse to help him (invoking only a letter carrier), implying what he is writing is just as important as a grocery list. He is trying to make it perfectly clear that there is nothing to see here.

But he seems to change direction and share a completely different message when he writes, “Heere, I would let slippe...” For many, the phrase “let slippe” brings to mind the line “Cry havoc, and let slip the dogs of war” from *Julius Caesar*, but the OED also gives an example of this phrase from the Bible, noting that it is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews 2:1: “Wherefore we ought to give the most earnest heed to the things which we have heard: lest at any time we should let them slip.” In this context the phrase signals a warning to pay attention, so Beaumont may have used it as an alert that he was now going to tell readers something important. The wording of the Epistle to the Hebrews reminds readers to heed “that which we have heard,” so the placement of “let slippe” at the end of the list of disclaimers (one of which, coincidentally, relates Beaumont’s denial of seeking to be a “good Epist’ler”)¹ and so near the words “heare,” “preachers,” and “auditors” may lend support to the argument that the poet is alluding to the message of this chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.²

Section Two - Shakespeare's Misery (lines 15-33)

...tis all I seeke for: heere I would let slippe (15)
(If I had any in mee) schollershippe,
And from all Learninge keepe these lines as <cl>eere
as Shakespeares best are, which our heires shall heare
Preachers apte to their auditors to showe
how farr sometimes a mortall man may goe (20)
by the dimme light of Nature, tis to mee
an helpe to write of nothing; and as free.
As hee, whose text was, god made all that is,
I meane to speake : what do you thinke of his
state, who hath now the last that hee could make (25)
in white and Orrenge tawny on his backe
at Windsor ? is not this mans miserie more
then a fallen sharers, that now keepes a doore,
hath not his state almost as wretched beene
as <h>is, that is ordainde to write the <grinne> (30)
after the fawne, and fleere shall bee ? as sure
some one there is allotted to endure
that Cross...

Where the Morgan, British Library, and Folger Shakespeare Library copies all include a variation of “*Preachers **apt(e)** to their auditors to showe...*” Bland provides the Huntington copy’s wording “*Preachers **cite** to their Auditors to shewe ...*” as the “accurate” wording. He makes passing mention that of the four manuscripts, three include the word “apt(e)” (156), but does not comment on the implication of the word itself. When used as an adjective, “apt(e)” means “fitting, suitable,” but Beaumont uses “apt(e)” as a verb, meaning “to adapt, to make fit” (OED). The use of the word “apt(e)” backs up the authorship doubter’s interpretation of these lines; that the real story of Shakespeare was being adapted or changed to something else and that posterity would be hearing this alternate version of the story.

Authorship skeptics have riddled with what was meant in lines 17–18 by “lines as cleere as Shakespeare’s best are,” but the word “clear” is not actually used in two (possibly three) of the manuscript copies.³ The Morgan copy includes “deere” at the end of line 17 with “cleere” penciled in (figure 2). Scholars have accepted that the word *should* be “clear” because that word makes sense in the context of the sentence. However, if the author was hoping to get readers to pay attention here, intentionally using the wrong word might serve to alert readers that his message was not immediately apparent, and readers would need to pay attention and realize the real message would take more thought to accurately receive.⁴

The use of “deere” was one of the errors that Bland felt made the Morgan copy farther from the original intended by Beaumont. It may have been

110. To Mr B: J:

Neither to follow fashion nor to show
 my witt against the State, nor that I know
 any thing now, with which I am with child
 till I have tould, nor hopes to be stilde
 a good Epistler through the town, with which
 I might be famous, nor with any other
 like these, wrote I this Letter but to show
 the Lord & Court and mee thinkes do owe
 to you about the number, which can best
 in something which I vs not, be express
 to write this I invade none, but the post
 of Courte, or some Carriers pitting ghost,
 for if this equal but the stile, which use
 and chesse to towns with, and thanks downe againe
 tis all I see, for heere I would let slippe
 (If I had ^{any} in mee) I should slippe,
 and from all Learnings keepe this, thus as desire, ^{cleere}
 as Shakespeares best over, which our heere shall heere
 Preacher apt to their auditors to showe
 how farre sometimes a mortall man may see
 by the dimme light of Nature, tis to mee
 an helpe to write of nothing; and as free
 as hee, whose text was, god made all that is,
 I mean to speake: what do you thinke of his
 state, who hath now the last that hee could make
 in white and oranges tawny on his hecke
 at Windfox? is not this miserie more
 then a fallen shewer, that now keepe a doore
 hath not his state almost as wretched beere
 as is, that is ordainde to write the gimmer
 after the fauour, and heere shall be as free
 some one there is allotted to indure
 that Cross. there are some, I could wish to knowe
 to loue, and keepe with, if they would not shawe
 their sturdie, to mee; or I wish to see
 their wprkes to laugh at, if they suffer mee
 not to knowe them. And thus I would commence
 with honest Posts that make seruice, verbe
 by this time you perceiue you did a misse
 to haue your wortier studies to sit this
 which is more tedious to you, then to walke
 in a Jewes Church, or Britons Comon talks.
 But know I write not these lines to the end
 to please Ben: Jonson but to please my friend: *Finis J. B.*

Figure 2: Morgan copy of “Neither to follow fashion...” showing a penciled-in correction of “deere” to “cleere” in line 17, The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 1057.

another warning to pay attention, but even if it were simply miscopied from “clear,” juxtaposing the word (or insinuation of the word) “clear” with “the dimme light of nature” may be important: if the story posterity will hear

celebrates a writer led by “the dimme light of nature” what are readers being told? What was this story being adapted from?

The definition of dim is “the opposite of bright or clear” (OED), so the “dimme light of nature” is the opposite of the “clear, bright light of nature.” Is the phrase meant to imply that Shakespeare’s lines were understood to be by someone associated with the clear, bright light of nature by his contemporaries? Edward de Vere was associated with Phoebus Apollo, God of the Sun, and patron of poets by writers of the age (Waugh, “Christopher Marlowe”). Is Beaumont commenting on the adapting of this clear, bright light (Edward de Vere) into a dim one (William Shakspere)?

Beaumont is distressed by this adapting of the truth, and so he tells readers he is going to comfort himself by writing about nothing. However, if readers received his message that he is not being immediately clear and that we need to pay attention, his writing of “nothing” may be intended to reveal or document some important information.

...tis to mee
an helpe to write of nothing; and as free.
As hee, whose text was, god made all that is,
I meane to speake : what do you thinke of his
state, who hath now the last that hee could make (25)
in white and Orrenge tawny on his backe
at Windsor ? is not this mans miserie more
then a fallen sharers, that now keepes a doore,
hath not his state almost as wretched beene
as <h>is, that is ordainde to write the <grinne> (30)
after the fawne, and fleere shall bee ? as sure
some one there is allotted to endure
that Cross...

Beaumont “means to speak” specifically of the writer “whose text was, god made all that is.” A connection might be drawn between “whose text was, god made all that is” and Edward de Vere’s use of the phrase “I am that I am.” This phrase appears in Exodus 3.14: “And God said unto Moses, ‘I AM THAT I AM’: and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” De Vere used the phrase “I am that I am” in a personal letter dated October 30, 1584, to his father-in-law William Cecil (Whittemore, “Reason No. 9”) and it appears in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 121.⁵ De Vere being referred to as “hee whose text was, god made all that is” can be further supported by Roger Stritmatter’s examination of the markings in de Vere’s Geneva Bible (Stritmatter, 2001) which reveal de Vere’s familiarity with and contemplation on Biblical verses which correspond to themes found in the Shakespeare works. Alexander Waugh has also explored evidence pertaining to God and de Vere having co-authored the Shakespeare works (Waugh, “Incalculable Genius”).

The phrase “his state” (lines 24–25) may also provide a clue to Beaumont’s unnamed writer. “State” might indicate a state of being of this writer, but “state” can also describe a member of the nobility.⁶ If so, this noble writer “whose text was, god made all that is” is miserable for some reason. In contrast to what previous scholars have proposed about the miserable man wearing white and Orrenge tawny, the wording could be understood to be describing two different people. I propose that the person Beaumont is referring to is not miserable *and* wearing these livery colors, he is miserable because *someone else* (“the last that he could make”) is being associated with these colors. Moore’s attempt to date the poem identified white and Orrenge tawny as Essex’s colors (348), so Beaumont may be asserting that the writer (“whose text was, god made all that is”) is unhappy because someone (being referred to as “the last that he could make”) has the Essex colors “on his backe at Windsor.” If this unnamed writer is Edward de Vere, is there any reason that someone with Essex colors “on his backe” might be a cause, in Beaumont’s opinion, for de Vere’s misery?

If the person being associated with Essex colors was a nobleman, as several scholars concluded when attempting to date the poem, and Shakespeare is mentioned in the poem, might the nobleman in question be Henry Wriosthesley, the 3rd Earl of Southampton? Southampton was the only dedicatee of works by Shakespeare (*Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*) prior to the proposed time frame of Beaumont’s verse letter: between 1606 (Bland, Green) and 1616 (Chambers).

In “The Overlooked but Critical Significance of the Two Dedications to Southampton” James Warren suggests that Edward de Vere was able to negotiate a bargain for Southampton’s life in exchange for severing his connection to the Shakespeare works. Warren writes:

Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford, not only agreed to, but pushed for the permanent substitution of the name William Shakespeare in place of his own because there was something he wanted even more than credit for his literary works: the commutation of the death sentence passed on Henry Wriosthesley, Third Earl of Southampton, who had been convicted of treason in February 1601 for his role in the rebellion organized by Robert Devereux, Second of Earl of Essex. (19)



Figure 3: Henry Wriosthesley, 3rd Earl of Southampton, c. 1600, National Portrait Gallery.

If Bland and Green are correct in the dating of the poem (c. 1606), it would have been written not long after Southampton was released from the Tower by King James (1603), and after de Vere died (1604). If de Vere was able to “make” the deal as described by Warren, it could be considered his “last” as it occurred toward the end of his life. He would have successfully saved Southampton from his death sentence for his part in the Essex rebellion, but if Southampton was still being negatively affected by his association with the house of Essex despite de Vere’s efforts, this might be a cause for de Vere’s misery.

Charlotte Stopes provides a source which indicates that Southampton’s earlier association with Essex was, in fact, negatively affecting him at court. She notes that “Southampton was mysteriously and suddenly arrested in June 1604, and as suddenly released, without trial or explanation.”⁷ Stopes then relates Malone’s suggestion that the arrest was due to “the machinations of Cecil (soon after Lord Cranborne) that the king was persuaded to believe that too great an intimacy subsisted between Southampton and his Queen” (282). Stopes suggests that Malone was basing this comment on Anthony Weldon’s *Court and Character of King James* (1651), where he discusses the trial and condemnation of Cobham, Grey, and Raleigh, and then writes:

Now doth the King return to Windsor, when there was an *apparition* of Southampton being a favorite to his majesty, by that privacy and dearness presented to the Court view, but Salisbury, liking not that any of Essex his faction should come into play, made that *apparition* appear as it were *in transitu*, and so vanished, by putting some jealousies into the King’s head...

If Southampton’s ascension to near-favorite status was blocked by Robert Cecil based on his still being connected with “Essex his faction,” this may explain Beaumont’s use of “white and Orrenge tawny on his back at Windsor” as a description of Southampton. Beaumont imagines that Cecil’s continued ability to thwart Southampton’s ascension at court even after de Vere’s negotiations and sacrifice, would be a cause for de Vere’s unhappiness; that he would be as unhappy with this situation as the common writers who have to keep up the charade about Shakespeare being a natural genius after de Vere’s death:

hath not his state almost as wretched beene
as <h>is, that is ordainde to write the <grinne> (30)
after the fawne, and fleere shall bee? as sure
some one there is allotted to endure
that Cross...

Beaumont may also be trying to reveal more of the story through his choice of plays. He mentions two plays with similar plots: Marston's *The Fawne* and Sharpham's *The Fleire*. Bland relates that "one of Beaumont's jokes is that someone will be required to write another sequel to these that will be called *The Grinne*" (156), but an interesting point that has been glossed over in the study of this poem are the plots of these two plays. *The Fawne* and *The Fleire* are both referred to as "disguised duke" or "disguised ruler" plays. Moore insists that the titles of the plays, and not the plots, were the point Beaumont was making, stating: "These last two are court comedies about disguised dukes but the significance of Beaumont's remark lies in their titles. To fawn means to show servile fondness or delight, while a fleer is a mocking look or speech or a deceitful grin of civility" (349).

However, both *The Fawne* and *The Fleire* have been recognized as disguised ruler plays for some time. In *The Disguised Ruler in Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*, Quarmby states:

the disguised ruler plays that attract the most frequent attention are Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (performance recorded 1604; published 1623), John Marston's *The Malcontent* (published 1604) and *The Fawn* (published 1606), Thomas Middleton's *The Phoenix* (published 1607), and Edward Sharpham's *The Fleer* (published 1607). (3)

The deal Oxford made to remain behind the "dimme light" disguise in exchange for Southampton's life might also be understood by considering the plots of the two plays Beaumont chose to mention. In her examination of *Measure for Measure* and other contemporary disguised duke plays, Rosalind Miles indicates that disguisers fall into two categories: "the self-oriented disguiser who masquerades for his own pleasure or profit...and the disguiser who is motivated by his consideration for others or his concern with their affairs..." She includes as examples of "those who assume a cover because of their loving concern for others" the "distressed fathers of *The London Prodigal* and *The Fleire*" (129).

Similarly, *The Fawne* centers on a father disguising himself for his son's welfare, with Duke Hercules taking on a disguise with the goal of arranging his son's marriage. Beaumont's choice of two plays with concerned, noble fathers disguising themselves to protect or provide for their sons may be an attempt to convey information about de Vere's bargaining away the Shakespeare name to save the younger Earl of Southampton's life.⁸

Section Three - Beaumont's Lament (Lines 33–44)

Beaumont expresses his distress about the loss of the true author's connection to the Shakespeare works, but notes that he is still attempting to share the real story with future generations:

there are some, I could wish to knowe
to loue, and keepe with, if they woulde not showe
their studdies to me; or I wish to see (35)
their workes to laugh at, if they suffer mee
not to knowe them : And thus I would Commerse
with honest Poets that make scuruie verse.

Beaumont appears to hint that the situation was under de Vere's direction when he mentions two disguised duke plays and then writes: "they suffer me not to know them." To "commerse" or communicate the real story without contradicting de Vere's command, Beaumont had to create this poem with veiled information ("scurvie verse") in the form of a letter to the "honest" poet, Ben Jonson.

Beaumont closes with an apology for how unpleasant it must have been for Jonson to have to read the poem in this form, but acknowledges that he was trying to "please my friend," which may be interpreted as trying to document the truth while also adhering to de Vere's wishes to keep his name hidden.

by this time you perceiue you did a misse
to leaue your worthier studies to see this, (40)
which is more tedious to you, then to walke
in a Jews Church, or Bretons Comon talke.
but know I write not these lines to the end
to please Ben : Johnson but to please my frend : ffinis : FB

Beaumont comments that participating in this "commerce" must be more tedious for Jonson than having to "walke in a Jews church" or "Bretons Common talke." Chambers suggests "Bretons Common talke" may be an allusion to *Britton* ascribed to John Breton, a law book that Beaumont, as a lawyer, would have been familiar with (223), but he doesn't offer any comment on "Jews church."

Could the phrase "Jews church" be meant to remind readers of the earlier allusion "let slippe"/ to pay attention found in the Epistle to the Hebrews? If so, its pairing with *Britton* would make sense, because like the Shakespeare works, both *Britton* and the Epistle to the Hebrews have their own authorship issues. A description of the first reveals that: "*Britton* is the earliest summary of the law of England in the French tongue, which purports to have

been written by command of King Edward I. The origin and authorship of the work have been much disputed” (“*Britton* (book)”). Similarly:

The Epistle to the Hebrews of the Christian Bible is one of the New Testament books whose canonicity was disputed. Traditionally, Paul the Apostle was thought to be the author. However, since the third century this has been questioned, and the consensus among most modern scholars is that the author is unknown. (“Authorship”)

Both *Britton* and the Epistle to the Hebrews may also reveal additional information about the “he” “whose text was, god made all that is.” *Britton* was written under command of King Edward I and the work begins with the words “Edward, by the grace of God” (figure 3). In her article, “Lily’s Latin *Grammar* and the Identity of Shakespeare,” Nina Green explores allusions to Lily’s *Grammar* made in the Shakespeare works which direct readers to the line “Edwardus is my proper name” (Green 25–31). Green suggests that the author chose Lily’s *Grammar* because it was well known to his contemporaries, and he could be certain it “would be equally widely available and well known to succeeding generations” (Green, “Oxford as Shakespeare”).

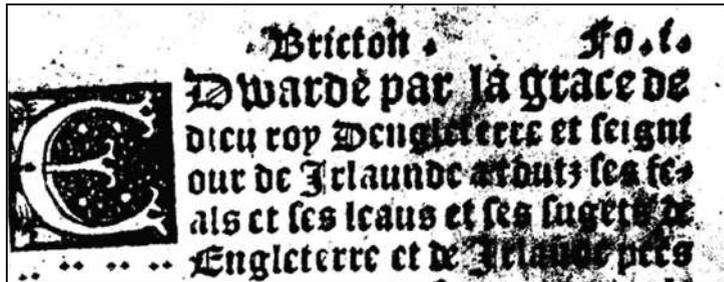


Figure 4:
“Edward, by the
grace of God...”
from the first
page of *Britton*.

Beaumont seems to be employing a similar method with *Britton*—connecting the concealed noble author Edward de Vere to a popular book which opens with the name “Edward.”

The Bible would surely have been even more widely available than *Britton*, and two more possible connections can be made to Edward de Vere’s anonymous authorship by consulting 1 Corinthians and revisiting the Epistle to the Hebrews. De Vere’s use of “I am that I am” has previously been connected to Exodus 3:14, but the phrase also appears in 1 Cor. with wording similar to the opening line of *Britton*. Paul writes: “But by the grace of God, *I am that I am*: and his grace which is in me, was not in vaine: but I laboured more abundantly then they all: yet not I, but the grace of God whiche is with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). The sentiment “by the grace of God, I am that I am...” conveyed here echoes the opening line of *Britton* “Edward, by the grace of god...” while also incorporating the phrase used by de Vere in his letter to Cecil and Sonnet 121 (Whittemore, “Reason No. 9”).

The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with an Argument (figure 5) describing anonymous authorship by the “Spirit of God”:

Forasmuche as diuers, bothe of the Greke writers and Latines witnesse, that the writer of this Epistle for iuste causes wolde not haue his name knowen, it were curiositie of our parte to labour muche therein. For seing the Spirit of God is the autor thereof, it diminisheth nothing the autoritie althogh we knowe not with what penne he wrote it.

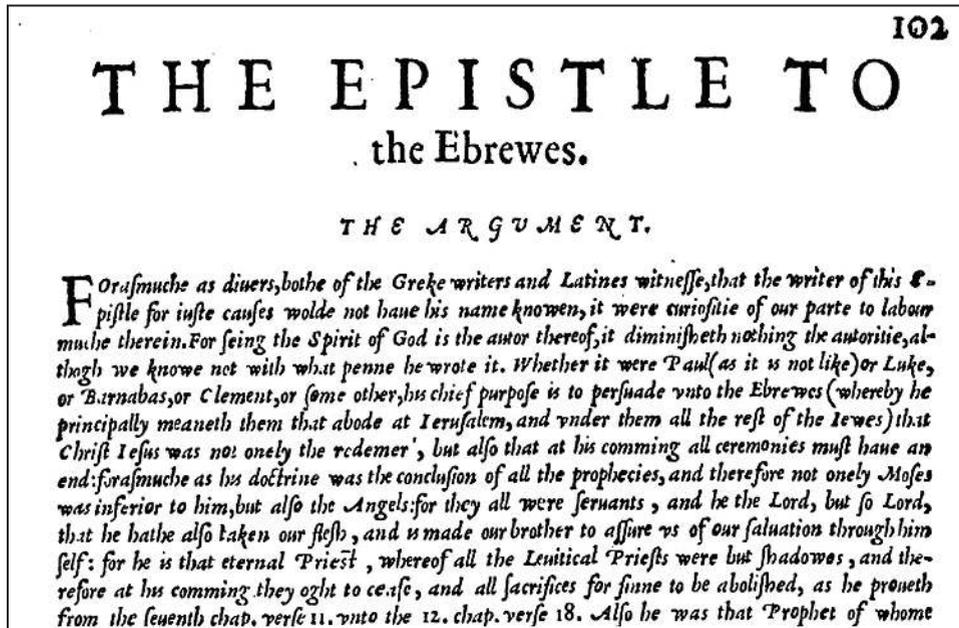


Figure 5: The Argument preceding the Epistle to the Hebrews including the line “the writer of this Epistle for iuste causes wolde not haue his name knowen.” Geneva Bible, 1560.

The sentiment “the Spirit of God is the autor thereof...” is similar to the phrasing used by Beaumont in the line “he whose text was, God made all that is...” and reflects the “grace of God” bestowed upon Paul (1 Cor 15:10) and Britton’s Edward. In some editions of the Bible, the Argument appears on the same page¹⁰ that includes the line “Wherefore we ought to give the most earnest heed to the things which we have heard: lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2).

Considered together, one work with disputed authorship opens with Edward de Vere’s first name, while the Argument preceding the other includes the phrase “that the writer of this Epistle for iuste causes wolde not haue his name knowen,” the same sentiment that Beaumont shared when he lamented that “There are some I could wish to knowe,” but “they suffer me not to knowe them.”

“Neither to follow fashion...” can be understood to be a concerted effort by Beaumont to document the Shakespeare authorship deception and comment on the diplomatic action taken by de Vere to dissociate himself from the works to save Southampton’s life. Beaumont seems to be attempting to share the real story by using the phrase “let slippe” as a warning to pay attention before mentioning Shakespeare, indicating that the story was being changed to celebrate a “dimme light of nature,” commenting on but not naming a nobleman, naming two disguised duke plays, and alluding to two works with disputed authorship, one of which begins with the name Edward and one which notes that the author chose to “not have his name known.” Beaumont’s distress about the loss of de Vere’s connection to his literary works coupled with his determination to obey his wishes resulted in this verse letter whose underlying message needs careful attention for readers to understand that the “dimme light of nature” story is a canard, and the true author behind the Shakespeare name was Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Endnotes

1. The form of the poem as a letter may also lend support to the idea that Beaumont was steering readers toward one of the Biblical epistles.
2. In “A Law Case in Verse: *Venus and Adonis* and the Authorship Question (2004)” Roger Stritmatter explores the use of the word “slips” in *Venus and Adonis*:

Pure lips, sweet seals in my soft lips imprinted,
What bargains may I make, still to be sealing?
To sell myself I can be well contented,
So thou wilt buy, and pay, and use good dealing;
Which purchase if thou make, *for fear of slips*
Set thy seal manual on my wax-red lips.

Stritmatter mentions several definitions for “slips,” including “a piece of counterfeit money,” “a mistake or error” and “a scion or descendant.” He notes that “Venus exhorts a kiss which will ensure secrecy and guarantee against ‘slips’—mistakes of pen or tongue that might inadvertently reveal the intimate secrets of Elizabethan governance” (284). I propose that Beaumont is commenting on one of these secrets in this poem.

3. The word in the Folger copy is blotted; see Poetical miscellany [manuscript], ca. 1640, V.a.96, p 71, available online at luna.folger.edu. The British Library copy can be seen on Shakespeare Documented: <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/letter-beaumont-jonson-refers-shakespeare-name>.
4. The similarity between the error word “deere” and “de Vere” may hold some significance, especially since it appears in line 17, and Edward de Vere was the 17th Earl of Oxford. Further research on the Morgan manuscript copy from “The common-place book of Mr. W. H.” may indicate that the copyist (thought to be William Holgate) was aware of the important information he was including when using the words “apte” and “deere” as opposed to “cite” and “clear.” This copy may also have been intentionally left for certain “heires” (authorship doubters) to discover since, as Chambers notes, it was found about 10 miles from Castle Hedingham, at Earl’s Colne Priory, where “for 14 generations, the church was the family mausoleum of the Earls of Oxford” (“Colne Priory”). Holgate’s commonplace book also includes other entries which may be of interest to Shakespeare authorship researchers, including “On his mistress Beauty” (Sonnet 106), “Of playing at Tennis” by Edward de Vere, and a version of Basse’s “Renowned Spenser...” which inexplicably includes a question mark between the words “Tragedian”

and “Shakespeare” in line 12 (see *The Holgate Miscellany: an Edition of Pierpont Morgan Library Manuscript*, MA 1057, 333, n.12).

5. From Sonnet 121:

For why should others false adulterate eyes (5)
 Give salutation to my sportive blood?
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
 Which in their wills count bad what I think good?
 No, *I am that I am*, and they that level
 At my abuses reckon up their own... (10)
6. The OED provides a definition of state (†22. a. A person of high rank, status, or importance; a dignitary; a noble, lord, or prince; = *estate n.* 3c. *Obsolete.*)
7. The date of this arrest was June 24, 1604, the same date Edward de Vere is reported to have died.
8. An earlier version of this essay considered “last that he could make” as the making or begetting of a child, which might support the Dynastic Succession Theory, which proposes that Edward de Vere and Elizabeth I were the Earl of Southampton’s parents. The concerned fathers in the two plays mentioned by Beaumont would seem to reinforce this theme, but Southampton wouldn’t have been the “last” son de Vere “could make,” he would have been the first, and supporting this line of thinking would require adding “Tudor” after “last” or rearranging the letters in the third nonexistent play from “geinne” to “eigne,” a law term referring to a firstborn son: the title of the third play appears to read “the Grinne” in the Huntington copy and was assumed to be “Grinne” by Chambers, but the title contains no “r” in the three additional copies, where it is written “the Geinne” (Morgan), the “Ginne” (BL), and “the Gennie” (Folger). However, as Warren concluded, “the idea of Oxford as the deal maker works even without considering the PT theory. Those who doubt that Southampton was a royal prince may still conclude that Oxford renounced literary works in order to break the connection between them and the court, itself a weighty enough matter to warrant that action” (Warren 23).
9. The complete first sentence reads “EDWARD by the grace of God, king of England, lord of Ireland, and duke of Aquitaine, to all his faithful people and subjects of England and Ireland, peace and grace of salvation.”
10. One example of the Epistle to the Hebrews Argument and Heb. 2 on the same page can be seen in the 1600 Geneva Bible (437/465). <https://www.proquest.com/books/bible-that-is-holy-scriptures-contained-old-new/docview/2240908495/se-2>.

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Music and Lyrics by E.O.

by Cheryl Eagan-Donovan

My research into Edward de Vere's theatrical career at the British Library, the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, and the Senate House Library at the University of London led me to inquire into the significance of music as one aspect of his development as a playwright and theater maker, and further to compare his knowledge of music with the abundance of songs and musical references in the works of Shakespeare. Exploring the musical skills and knowledge possessed by the 17th Earl of Oxford strengthens the case for his authorship of the Shakespeare canon.

Music was essential to the evolution of drama from the ancient Greeks to the development of stagecraft and storytelling from Sanskrit, Japanese, Chinese, and African cultures. I propose that Edward de Vere was not only the great innovator who changed Elizabeth theater, but also the first writer to integrate songs into his works so seamlessly that they provided the foundation for today's modern stage musical. To learn more, I surveyed the work of several scholars. Washington State University Professor Michael Delahoyde's work on Edward de Vere's madrigals, author Alexander Waugh's research into the music inherent in his poems, and musician Sally Mosher's exploration of the Oxford's relationship with composer William Byrd provide a foundation for inquiry. Additional sources for evidence about the music and lyrics written by Oxford include works by Coppin State University Professor Roger Stritmatter, English Renaissance poetry expert Steven W. May, *"Shakespeare" Identified* author J. Thomas Looney, Blackburn College Professor Emeritus Ren Draya, and composer Katharine Eggar.

A Poet Possessed of Touches of the Singer

For some of the earliest evidence, we can begin by looking at Oxford's lyric poetry, much of which has been set to music. Thanks to the extensive work of Steven May, J. Thomas Looney, and most recently, Roger Stritmatter, many of us are familiar with the significance of Oxford's early poems.¹ These authors have provided ample evidence that Oxford's extant poetry was in fact written with an expert understanding of music and song. Oxford's poetry was the key to my discovery of Oxford as Shakespeare. In "*Shakespeare Identified*," Looney listed the traits and skills that the author of the works of Shakespeare must have possessed and then sought a match among 16th-century English writers. He recognized the importance of Shakespeare's long poems and *The Sonnets* as essential to discovering Edward de Vere as the author. He looked at evidence for Oxford as a lyric poet, analyzed his early poems, examined the early poems and plays of "Shakespeare," discovered parallels in form and content, then looked at the sonnets, specifically themes and structure, and concluded that the evidence demonstrates that Oxford wrote Shakespeare.

Carrying on the work begun by Looney, editors Stritmatter and Thomas Jefferson School of Law professor Bryan H. Wildenthal open their introduction to *Poems of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, Volume 1*, by referencing Alexander's Grosart's 1872 description of Oxford as "a poet possessed of touches of the 'singer'" (Stritmatter 1). Included in the second volume, *Songs and Poems of Edward de Vere*, are songs from the plays of John Lyly, as well as poems published anonymously, under pseudonyms, or attributed to other writers. The editors note that the works included in the entire two-volume collection "exhibit a range of common strategies and motifs," "rhythmic and lyrical fluency," and a practice of "testing the limits of lyric and narrative form" (Stritmatter 5).

While some orthodox academics dismiss it as mere juvenilia, documents show that his contemporaries considered Oxford's poetry to be innovative. Stritmatter and Wildenthal call our attention to the idea that "above all, the experimentation tends toward the musical dramatic," setting the stage for the later, more sophisticated works of "Shakespeare" (5). The first eight poems

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published in *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* in 1576 are followed by the initials “E.O.” signifying Edward Oxenford, and some scholars surmise the poems may have been written prior to “1566, when Richard Edwards, the volume’s purported editor, passed away” (Stritmatter 13). The connection to Edwards is significant as it relates to Oxford’s development as a dramatist and theater maker, which we will examine in detail with Katharine Eggar’s work.² In his analysis of *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, Stritmatter emphasizes the importance of one poem, “My Mind to Me A Kingdom Is.” He explains that it was, “for over a century and a half, wrongly attributed to Edward Dyer, and only identified as Oxford’s by Steven May in 1975,” noting that the popular verse “first achieved anonymous publication in William Byrd’s 1588 collection *Songs and Sonnets*” (Stritmatter 14–15). That this poem first appeared in a collection of Byrd’s works highlights the close relationship between the poet and the renowned composer. Evidence of this relationship forms the basis of Sally Mosher’s analysis detailed below.

Oxford was not just a published poet but also a generous patron of an extended circle of playwrights and poets in the late 16th century, and author Alexander Waugh, in documenting this crucial period in Oxford’s career, has rightly called him “Phoebus Apollo” based on several contemporary references to the 17th Earl as such.³ Apollo was the god of music, dance and poetry, so it is not surprising that Oxford supported composers as well as writers during his life. To learn more about Oxford’s relationship with these Elizabethan composers, we can look at the research presented by Sally Mosher—artist, pianist and composer—in her 1998 article for *The Oxfordian*, “William Byrd’s ‘Battle’ and the Earl of Oxford.”

The Earl of Oxford’s March

She describes their professional relationship as follows: “William Byrd and the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford were both at the Court of Elizabeth I from about 1572 on, both were involved in activities that provided music for the Court, and during this period Oxford saved Byrd from possible bankruptcy by selling a certain property to Byrd’s brother” (Mosher 49). She believes that Oxford and Byrd worked together for a decade or more, and notes that Byrd “is considered the greatest composer of the English Renaissance” as well as being an accomplished keyboard player and singer (Mosher 43). She adds that, “Oxford was known for his musicianship. He was also a ranking Earl who would have had his own ‘tucket,’ or musical signature, to signal his arrival at tournaments and while travelling. The tune that lies at the heart of ‘The Earle of Oxford’s March’ has all the earmarks of such a tucket” (50). Mosher emphasizes that many of Shakespeare’s plays contain the use of tuckets and suggests that we might date their composition to coincide with Oxford’s military ambitions, acknowledging that we do not know if the patron commissioned the work or if the composer wrote it to honor his patron (44–45).⁴

THE EARL OF OXFORD'S MARCH

William Byrd (1540-1623)

♩ = 70
Maestoso

B♭ Trumpet 1
f *mf*

B♭ Trumpet 2
f *mf*

Horn in F
f *mf*

Trombone
f *mf*

Tuba
f *mf*

mp
mp
mp
mp
mp

Moreover, a book of songs published by Anthony Munday in 1588 titled *A Banquet of Daintie Conceits* includes lyrics to accompany the “Earle of Oxenford’s March” (Mosher 43). Since Munday served as one of Oxford’s secretaries, we can infer that the Earl wrote his own verses for the “March” or “Maske” as it was alternately titled. Did Oxford work with Byrd as a film director like Steven Spielberg might work with his composer John Williams? The purported length of Oxford’s relationship with Byrd is quite similar.

Another composer whose praise for Oxford lends credibility to the argument that the poet and playwright was also a gifted musician is John Farmer, who wrote that “using this science [music] as a recreation, your Lordship has over-gone most of them that make it a profession” (Chiljan 95). To Mosher this implies that “Oxford himself may have written his own tucket, with Byrd later devising an elaborate march around it” (45). Mosher examines in detail Byrd’s *The Battle Suite*, in which the first song is identical to “The Earl Oxford’s March,” but has been given the new title, “The March Before the Battle” in *My Lady Nevell’s Book* in 1591 (49).⁵ Mosher makes the analogy to music composed for silent films; the songs in the suite “seem intended



Queen Elizabeth I's virginal, probably made by Benedictus Florianus. Venice, Italy, c.1570, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

as accompaniment for some sort of theatrical piece portraying military action” (46).

However, Mosher explains that the only extant arrangements for “The Earl of Oxford’s March,” with one exception, are meant to be played on the virginal, an instrument not usually used in theatrical productions (47). Listen to “The Earl of Oxford’s March” played on the virginal, as opposed to by a full orchestra with drums and brass, and the difference is apparent. Queen Elizabeth was said to be an accomplished player of the virginal; the Italian virginal she owned is on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, in an exhibit which includes recordings of two Byrd compositions. Mosher, an accomplished pianist and harpsichord player, infers that Oxford was also a talented performer who could play both the virginal and the lute. Finally, Mosher notes that Byrd also composed music for Oxford’s poem “If Women Could Be Fair,” included in a 1588 collection of the composer’s vocal works, and believes we may yet uncover more manuscripts that reveal collaboration between Oxford and Byrd (50).

To understand the importance of the virginal in Elizabethan music, one need only look to the University of Cambridge University Fitzwilliam Museum website:

The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book “is widely regarded as the most important surviving manuscript of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English music. Containing nearly three hundred works, it is certainly the largest” (“The Fitzwilliam”).

Most of the songs of the Elizabethan era were composed for the instrument, which is similar to the harpsichord.

There is some controversy as to the provenance of this collection since, according to the museum, “The transcriber of all this music is popularly believed to have been a Cornishman called Francis Tregian, who is said to

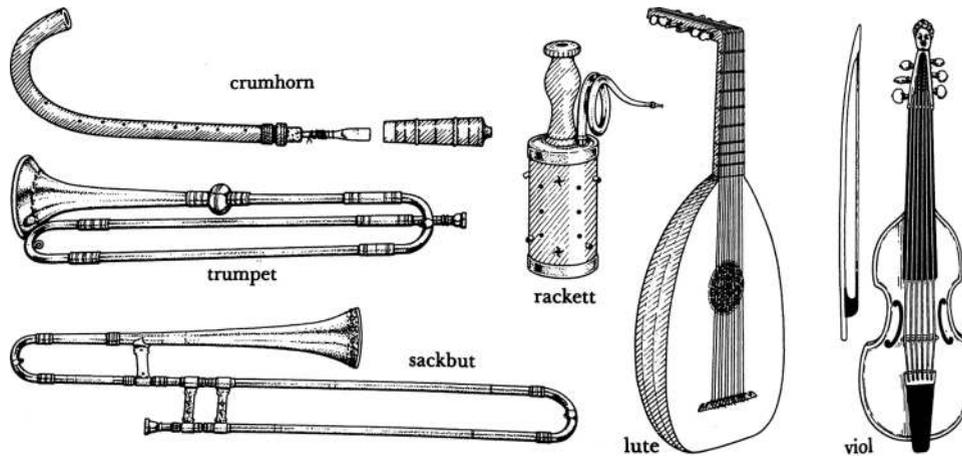
have compiled the book whilst imprisoned in Fleet Prison, London, for being a recusant.... He died in 1619, still a prisoner” (“The Fitzwilliam”). The story was subsequently called into question. “This romantic account of the manuscript’s origin, first formulated in the nineteenth century by Roman Catholic musicologists, has however recently been called into doubt. The Tregian family might in fact have had nothing to do with the production of the book, and it has been suggested that the manuscript was the product of a *scriptorium*—a scribes’ workshop—connected to the English court. Several hands seem to have worked on the transcriptions, but the same Swiss paper is used throughout. This is of a very high quality, and of the type used in English royal documents of the time” (“The Fitzwilliam”). A scriptorium, connected to the court? We know that Oxford had a scriptorium in the 1580s that included translators, and therefore, this story about the origins of the book bears further research.

At the British Library, I examined a book of songs in the Rare Books archive that was written “in a single, neat Italian hand” and elaborately annotated (“Edward de Vere”).⁶ British Library manuscript number Add. MS31992, according to Francis Knights, is part of “the largest contemporary manuscript collection of William Byrd’s works, assembled by the Norfolk gentleman Edward Paston (1550–1630), whose library included at least 50 sets of part books, supplemented by around the same number of printed sets, from both Britain and the continent. The manuscript sets include masses, motets, Italian madrigals, French chansons, consort songs and instrumental pieces—almost everything but keyboard and solo lute music. The Byrd holdings contain a large number of otherwise unknown pieces, and early versions of works later published by the composer” (Knights 56). Included in this collection are the lyrics from Edward de Vere’s poem “If Women Could Be Fair and Yet Not Fond” set to music, once again demonstrating the close connection between Byrd and Oxford. As with *The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book*, the Paston compilation is thought to be the work of a scriptorium.

Since many of Byrd’s compositions were written for the lute, Alexander Waugh researched Oxford’s lyric poetry as it might have been played on the lute. In his presentation “Oxford’s Music and Poetry” for the De Vere Society originally broadcast on YouTube in Autumn 2021, he interviews lutenist Elizabeth Pallet about the instrument and its place in the world of Elizabethan England, the complexity of writing counterpoint music, and the relationship between dances such as the galliard and the volta and the tempo at which a piece



A wood engraving showing dancers doing the galliard (1588).



was played. Waugh notes that Oxford was known to be an excellent dancer; indeed, in August 1578 while on progress, the Queen twice requested Oxford to dance before visiting French ambassadors, an invitation that Oxford refused to comply with.

Waugh further quotes John Soowthern’s praise of Oxford’s musical skill, and notes that though we have no record of the instruments that Oxford played, he likely could play the most popular instruments—the lute, the virginal, and the recorder—since the plays and poems of Shakespeare “display intimate technical knowledge of the workings of each of these instruments” (Waugh). Musicians were employed by noble households as servants, and Waugh explains that Oxford chose those “who could play, sing, act, write poetry, or compose music.” Oxford, known for his generosity, in addition to providing William Byrd with the lease to and proceeds from the manor of Batayles in Essex, arranged an annuity of 20 pounds from his land and property in Essex for the lutenist Robert Hales. Waugh also points out that Oxford returned from his trip to Italy with a “young chorister, Oracio Cuoco, whom he had heard sing at the Church of Santa Maria Formosa” in Venice, so that he might “sing for the queen and the members of the court at Westminster” (Waugh).

In Commendation of Music

Oxford’s enduring interest in music seems clear, but Waugh gives us yet another example of his passion for the art and its connection to the plays of Shakespeare. He refers to the song he identified as penned by the 16-year-old Oxford, titled “In Commendation of Music,” and points out that three lines of these same lyrics appear in Act IV, scene 5 of *Romeo and Juliet*. Waugh explains that these lines precede “a comic conversation between three musicians with names associated with musical instruments.” It is interesting that the poem was incorrectly listed in the 1576 edition of *Paradise* as having been

written by “Master Edwards,” that is, Richard Edwards. Waugh stresses that the poem was removed from all subsequent editions of *Paradise* and cites as evidence for the attribution to Oxford not just “the unique ring of his voice” in the poem, but the existence of a manuscript copy ascribed “Ball,” a pseudonym used by Oxford on three other poems. This seems to be consistent with the fact that attribution to “Master Edwards” also occurs with early plays performed at universities.

Next Waugh provides detailed analysis of the Biblical references in Oxford’s poem “My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is” and its reflection of the Hermetic ideas to be found in Shakespeare’s works. He notes that the song is composed in accordance with the divine trinity, with “layered thematic motifs of three notes each, which are repeated three times, to form a set” (Waugh). He concludes his talk with an interpretation of a sonnet that “praises the combination of music and poetry, comparing it with his friendship with ‘R.L.’” (Waugh).⁷ The poem, “To His Friend Master R.L. in Praise of Music and Poetry,” is significant because it was first published in *The Passionate Pilgrim* as being by William Shakespeare around 1596–97, but subsequently included in a pamphlet by Richard Barnfield titled *Poems in Diverse Humours*, published in 1598. Waugh suggests that Barnfield included “To His Friend...” in the collection of his own poems to hint at the true author, Oxford.⁸

This Noble Science

Further examples of the importance of Oxford’s poetry in assessing his musical proficiency are included in the *De Vere Newsletter No. 18*, edited by Nina Green, which references the works of scholar and publisher Ruth Loyd Miller and Professor Emeritus of English Steven May. Green notes that the Earl of Oxford’s “musical accomplishments were praised by professional musicians” including John Soowthern and John Farmer, who “in his *Divers and Sundry Ways of Two Parts in One*, a treatise on counterpoint published in 1591, gave as his reason for dedicating the book to Oxford, ‘I was rather emboldened for your Lordship’s great affection to this noble science (music) hoping for the one you might pardon the other, and desirous to make known your inclination this way’” (Miller 491 and Green 2).

This contemporary praise for Oxford’s musicianship is corroborated by Steven May’s analysis of the poem “A Croune of Bayes” from the collection *A Paradise of Dainty Delights*. Green cites his deconstruction of the poem, “May notes that: ‘the first stanza of this poem is the second half of its variable refrain. The full refrain occurs as stanzas three and five, and the poem ends with the first half of the refrain’” (Green 1). From this structure, May surmises, “Oxford may have written the poem for the music, or the poem and music both” (Green 1). Based on the 1576 publication date of *The*

Paradise of Dainty Devices, the editor concludes, “If the entire collection was compiled by Richard Edwards, the lyrics in question were actually written before Oxford was sixteen years of age, since Edwards died in 1566.¹⁹¹ Given this promising start, and the fact that the Earl’s interest and skill in music could still attract John Farmer’s notice as late as 1599, it seems reasonable to expect that Oxford wrote other music during his lifetime, and that his songs and instrumental pieces are to be found among the extant music of the Elizabethan period” (Green 2).

In support of this theory of Oxford as an accomplished musician whose abilities match the musical knowledge in Shakespeare’s plays, author Elisabeth Sears cites Cambridge University professor Dr. Edward Naylor in her presentation “Shakespeare, Oxford and Music.” In his 1896 book, *Shakespeare and Music*, Naylor argues that we can analyze Shakespeare’s knowledge of music through two lenses: the historical and the psychological, encompassing the emotional and spiritual aspects of the author’s use of music in the plays and poems (Sears 2). According to Sears, “Naylor also says that out of thirty-seven plays by Shakespeare, there are no less than 32 that contain interesting references to music and have musical matters in the text itself. He also says there are over 300 musical stage directions that occur in thirty-six of the 37 plays and he explains hundreds of musical quibbles in the plays and poems which are otherwise meaningless phrases” (3).

After closely examining the works of composers William Byrd, John Dowland, and Thomas Morley, Sears suggests that Oxford may have written several of the works ascribed to them, and notes that the differences in styles are apparent. She explains that “all three of these composers used the diatonic, or eight-note, scale...[while] Oxford’s music tends to be modal, due to his musical experience in Italy. In *King Lear*, there is another clue to the ancient shape notes and the gamut, or Hexichord” (Sears 2). The significance of Oxford’s travels in Italy was noted by Waugh earlier and is further supported by Delahoyde’s research. Sears analyzes in detail Act I, scene ii, of *King Lear*, which references *The Devil’s Interval* in a scene that echoes *Oedipus*, concluding that “the author was not only well trained in early Italian music, but was also familiar with Greek Tragedy” (8–9).

Sears then explores the conjecture that the popular tune “Greensleeves,” included in John Dowland’s manuscript housed at the Folger Shakespeare Library, may have been composed by Oxford. She explains that tune is derived from a Scottish jig combined with an English Morris dance that Oxford would have seen while serving in Scotland as an adjutant under the Earl of Sussex (Sears 9). She notes that Naylor has identified a song in *Twelfth Night* that references “Greensleeves” and that the song is also mentioned in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Sears 9). Most surprisingly, Sears states that National Public Radio classical music commentator Dr. Karl Haas revealed

“that an early Italian opera, *Turandot*, three hundred years earlier than Puccini’s *Turandot*, included ‘Greensleeves’ as an aria!” (10). Sears asserts that the preponderance of evidence “proves that Oxford knew the science of musical composition and theory.” She concludes that “Farmer’s statement verifies Oxford’s musicianship but it doesn’t tell all, because Oxford’s musical experience in Italy puts him in a different category. It changed his style and technique” (Sears 1).

To better determine the impact of Oxford’s travels in Italy, we turn next to archival research carried out by Michael Delahoyde in Italy for evidence of Oxford’s encounters in Venice and elsewhere during 1575–76. Delahoyde has also edited an Oxfordian edition of *Twelfth Night*, a play that features songs, several references to music, and the use of Italian sources. He contends that the song “Greensleeves” remains a mystery as to its composition. While Sears and others have “suggested that Oxford may have been the composer of this super-famous song, and thus it is a work-of-interest to Oxfordians,” he notes that, “though rumored to be connected with Anne Boleyn, the tradition that Henry VIII composed ‘Greensleeves’ is said to be unlikely due to the work’s Italian structure and style, not imported into England until after [Henry’s] death” (Delahoyde “Verte”). The song was registered in 1580. Delahoyde concludes that “If Shakespeare merely rhapsodized about the emotional and mystical effects of music, as he does through Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* (5.1.79–82; cf. 5.1.71–79), or offered merely a scattered selection of puns as do Julia and Lucetta in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1.2.77ff), we might be impressed that a merchant-class playwright in London had also picked up, aside from his acquired knowledge of countless other fields, some of the vocabulary and concepts of an art sufficiently connected to theater not to be too surprising. But Shakespeare knows specialized technical matters in music: the ‘gamut’ in *The Taming of the Shrew* (3.1.67ff), the rhythm in ‘prick-song’ and the ‘minim rest’ in *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.21–22), [and the] stops and instrumental fingering in *Hamlet* (3.2.364ff)” (Delahoyde, “Music, Monkeys,” 12).

Shakespeare Knows...Madrigals

Delahoyde’s website is an excellent resource for those wishing to learn more about the importance of the madrigal in understanding Oxford’s knowledge of music. He informs us that “five sets of Italian madrigals were printed in England between 1588 and 1598,” and shares the dedication to the 1588 collection *Musica Transalpina*:

I had the hap to find in the hands of some of my good friends certaine Italian Madrigales translated most of them five yeeres agoe by a Gentleman for his private delight (as not long before certaine Napolitans had been englished by a verie honourable personage, and now a

Councillour of estate, whereof I have seene some, but never possessed any). I asked the gentleman if I might publish them, but he always refused, saying “That those trifles being but an idle man’s exercise, of an idle subject, written onely for private recreation, would blush to be seene otherwise than by twilight, much more to be brought into the common view of all men. (Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”).

Most significant in the above dedication are the references to translations for private use, as opposed to publication, which reflects the stigma associated with print amongst the nobility at the time. Nicholas Yonge’s publication of these Italian madrigals created a demand for English madrigals, which was met by Thomas Morley who subsequently published 11 collections of madrigals in the 1590s. “Now is the Month of Maying” provides an example of what Delahoyde calls a typical, light, even trivial type of English madrigal (Delahoyde “Oxford and Music”). For comparison, he suggests the works of Thomas Weelkes. “Despite the general insistence that madrigalists did not set Shakespeare to music, Weelkes is credited with a piece titled ‘Kiss Me, Kate.’ And a 1597 collection of his madrigals includes as lyrics an uncredited poem, #17, from *The Passionate Pilgrim* about which some say there is no reason to doubt a Shakespearean authorship” (Chiljan 94 and Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”). “The most lavish praise for Weelkes centers on ‘the most astonishing of madrigals’ (Whent. Para. 9) ‘Thule, the period of cosmography’” (Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”). He notes that the “final phrases concerning freezing and frying also echo a bit in *The Taming of the Shrew* (2.1.338)” (Delahoyde, “Oxford and Music”). Delahoyde then speculates whether Weelkes could be another of Oxford’s pseudonyms. Delahoyde cites composer John Farmer’s dedication of *The First Set of English Madrigals* in 1599 to Oxford, and notes that “The accounts of the City Chamberlains record payments to travelling companies from 1584/85, when 6s. 8d. was paid to ‘the Erle of Oxfordes musytians’” (Boas 19; cf. Hanson 95), and wonders “what music were they supplied with?” (“Oxford and Music”). Could it have been written by Oxford? Delahoyde acknowledges the previous work of other scholars in this area, particularly Eric Altschuler and William Jansen, and Katharine Eggar, who wrote extensively about Oxford’s theatrical career.

In 1935, Eggar presented her research on Oxford’s music at a meeting of the Royal Musical Association in London, inspired by the publication of Looney’s 1920 book *“Shakespeare” Identified*. She introduced her subject by quoting Percival Golding: “he was a man in kind and body absolutely accomplished with honourable endowments” (Eggar 41).¹⁰ She details Oxford’s involvement with the theater from an early age, beginning with his father’s influence as one of the few noblemen at the time who kept his own troupe of players, and speculates that after coming to London in 1562, “it is likely that Vere attended the Westminster Scholars Latin Play with Her Majesty” (Eggar 42).

In 1563, Westcott's Children of St. Paul's performance for the Christmas Revels at Court would also have been attended by Oxford, making the case for his continued exposure to theatrical productions.

Enter Richard Edwards, Master of the Chapel Royal, the obvious choice to serve as Oxford's instructor in both singing and counterpoint, the intertwining of two or more melodic lines of music. We have previously seen that Richard Edwards is closely connected to Oxford in many contexts. Eggar notes the need for new material for the boys' companies to provide the Queen's entertainment, "something shorter [than the Roman comedies], in simple English with rhymes to help the memory, something pretty and pathetic, to please the ladies, with songs sad and songs merry to show the power of music and give the children a chance to show off their voices" (Eggar 43). This demand, she suggests, was an opportunity for Oxford to work with Edwards on developing new plays.¹¹ This is an important theory about Oxford's career development as a theater maker, the Elizabethan term that encompasses many of the same responsibilities which 21st-century theater directors and producers have. I contend that Oxford worked like a modern auteur, writing and directing his own work, and that his patronage of writers and actors parallels the role of a producer in today's theatrical world, in stark contrast to William Shakspeare of Stratford's recorded business dealings with Elizabethan theater companies. The idea that Oxford collaborated with Edwards in producing musical theater for the Queen is critical to our understanding of his development as a dramatist who understood the synergy of combining theater and music.

Oxford, unlike Shakspeare, was exposed to productions that would inspire his own later work. Eggar describes the entertainments at Cambridge University during the Queen's progress in 1564, including a performance of *Dido*, which Oxford would have witnessed. The elaborate productions at Cambridge and the impression they would have made on the 14-year-old Oxford would be significant.¹² For Christmas 1565, Edwards' Children of the Chapel acted a classically inspired play based on the story of *Damon and Pythias*, which Eggar attributes to Oxford. She concedes that the play "is extant and has always been ascribed to Richard 'Edwards, the Master of the Chapel.'" However, she argues that while "Edwards wrote the music for the play (of which one song, "Awake, ye woful wights," survives)...the actual play, which is entered in the Revel accounts as 'Edwards Tragedye,' was by *Edward*—Edward de Vere—who was indeed, as one title page puts it, 'sometimes of H.M. Chapel'"(44). She further contends that the "alliterative rhyming lines" in the play clearly echo the extant poetry of the Earl of Oxford (Eggar 44). The play presented at Christ Church during the Queen's visit to Oxford University the next summer, in 1565, was *Palaemon and Aryste*, and Eggar notes that in the documentation there is "a reference to the Queen's calling for Mr. Edwards the author." Eggar concludes: "I for one, am inclined once more to

assign the music to the Master, Richard—and the play to the Lord, Edward” (46). She explains that Elizabeth had thwarted Oxford’s desire for military service abroad by putting him in charge of the Revels, and that the Christmas Revels presented in 1571, which coincided with his wedding celebrations, included five plays by four different companies, one of which appears to be a revival of *Palaemon and Arcyte* (Eggar 48). The implication is that the inclusion of this play again suggests Oxford’s authorship of the original.

An Unprecedented Outburst of Theatrical Activity

Eggar traces the appointment of Thomas Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, as Lord Chamberlain, the establishment of his company of players, and Leicester’s Men reconvening, which preceded Oxford’s 1575 trip to Italy, and points out that when Oxford returned to London in the spring of 1576, there was an “outburst of plays” (49). She further speculates that Oxford was involved in the decision to lease space at Blackfriars Theater for a singing school in 1576 and its subsequent use as a space for rehearsals. At the same time, she notes, came the Privy Council’s order allowing Leicester’s Men and five other companies to practice inside the city limits (Eggar 49–50). In 1583, Oxford took over the lease for Blackfriars, the premiere venue for private entertainments for a wealthy clientele. He also reconciled with the Queen that year, and Eggar sees this moment as the catalyst for “an unprecedented outburst of theatrical achievements” (52). With the formation of the Queen’s Men, including the best actors from the companies of Oxford, Sussex, Leicester, and Warwick, she explains that Oxford now had a first-rate troupe, “his own school of Music and Acting for the juveniles and female parts, and—highly important—he had his own private rehearsal theatre” (Eggar 52).

As an example of a highly sophisticated production resulting from these developments, she cites *Arraignment of Paris*, with its “extensive musical references” (Eggar 52). This play is attributed to George Peele, one of the members of Oxford’s literary circle, which included Anthony Munday, John Lyly, and Thomas Watson. The Queen “had the satisfaction of knowing that all the increased expenses fell not on her, but on the Lord Great Chamberlain” (Eggar 53). In other words, Oxford bore the cost of these elaborate Revels. When Oxford complained that “he had toiled for thirteen years to carry out her command to ‘aim all his courses at the Revels’” and had received no compensation, Eggar concludes that the £1,000 annuity was the Queen’s answer (54). The author then tells her audience at the Royal Musical Association, “With this mysterious grant, another epoch in his career opens” (Eggar 54). There are various theories about this unprecedented and exceedingly generous annuity discovered by Oxford’s first biographer, B.M. Ward, for which no accounting was required, and which King James continued after Elizabeth’s death, most notably the research by Bonner Miller Cutting in *Necessary Mischief*.¹³

Eggar was asked about the reliability of the two dedications from Farmer as a basis for determining Oxford's musical ability, as they might be flattery or at best exaggerated praise. She replied that she hopes the three-part counterpoint Oxford is supposed to have written will be discovered (75). To that end I am currently researching Eggar's papers and annotated books at the Senate House Library in London to determine the source of her theory about this and other matters. In support of her argument, her colleague Dr. Fellowes stated that, "It was impossible that a man of Oxford's culture should *not* have been a musician" (Eggar 57) [emphasis mine]. When challenged by Fellowes to justify the assumption that because Oxford knew counterpoint, he must have been a composer, Eggar explained, "Lord Oxford did many things both anonymously and pseudonymously. He was very mysterious. He would never put his name to a thing if he could avoid doing so" (58).

If the name William Shakespeare is a pseudonym employed by Oxford for his poems and plays, it seems likely that, if he also composed music, he would have used a pen name, several different allonyms, or composed anonymously. To return to the argument that Oxford invented not just modern theater, but also what became the basis for the stage musical, I consulted Ren Draya's 2011 article "Singer and Song: The Music in *Twelfth Night*," which makes the direct analogy between *Twelfth Night* and a modern stage musical. Draya explains that "the songs in a Shakespeare play can be considered as intrinsic as the action or the dialogue; songs can convey plot, highlight character, or underscore a specific mood" (17). To support this view she analyzes several of the songs in *Twelfth Night*. The song "O Mistress Mine" is based on a popular melody found in Thomas Morley's 1599 collection, "with the lyrics being Shakespeare's invention" (Send 94 and Draya 19). Although the tune is melancholy, she notes that its message to Olivia is optimistic: to live for the moment and enjoy today because you never know what tomorrow will bring. This juxtaposition of music and lyrics is what made the Beatles' compositions so unique: an upbeat tempo or melody subverted by a sad story, or vice versa. Complexity is what characterizes great musical compositions such as symphonies, operas, and even film scores. Draya concludes that, "music is a key element" in the play (19). I contend that Oxford has given us a prototype for what will eventually become the Broadway musical. I remain optimistic and join with researchers Eggar, Sears, and Mosher in the hopes that the continued search for manuscripts will provide further evidence that Oxford was not just an extraordinary writer, but also a composer.

Endnotes

1. See Steven W. May's *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts*. University of Missouri Press, 1991 and J. Thomas Looney's *Shakespeare Identified* edited by Ruth Loyd Miller, 3rd ed. Kennikat Press, 1975.
2. Katherine Eggar (1874–1961) was a classically trained pianist and composer, a feminist, and Shakespeare archivist. Her talk presented to the Royal Musical Association in 1935 is a major source for this paper. She corresponded with J. Thomas Looney and Captain B.M. Ward, author of *The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford (1550–1604) from Contemporary Documents*, London: John Murray, 1928.
3. Alexander Waugh is a musician and writer who has produced classical records, served as Chief Opera Critic for the *Mail on Sunday* and the *Evening Standard*, and has written books and articles on music and Shakespeare, as well as a stage musical. He currently serves as Chair of the De Vere Society. In his 2021 article “1591: A Watershed Year for Oxford and the English Theatre,” Waugh cites the poet Henry Lok as referring to Oxford as Phoebus-like in his patronage. The article is available on the De Vere Society website, De Vere Society - Promoting the life of Edward de Vere. <https://deveresociety.co.uk/>.
4. Professor Emeritus of Music Ross Duffin, of Case Western Reserve University, claims to have discovered Oxford's Galliard in a John Dowland lute manuscript at the Folger Library in Washington, D.C. (“Oxford's Galliard.” V.b.280, “A commonplace book of songs and dances for the lute.” Ca. 1600. John Dowland. The Folger Shakespeare Library.) He proposes that Oxford was not the composer but the patron who commissioned and paid for the work. He also said that he found no correspondence to or from Oxford in Byrd's archives. In his article “An Encore for Shakespeare's Rare Italian Master” for *The Elizabethan Review*, Duffin argues that the reference to Julio Romano in *The Winter's Tale* is a punning allusion to the Italian musician and composer Giulio Caccini (ca. 1545–1618), who was also known as Giulio Romano, in addition to being a reference to the sculptor, painter, and architect Giulio (Pippi) Romano (ca. 1499–1546). Duffin points to another musical allusion in the play, this one to “Rogerero,” a tune to which a popular ballad entitled “All such as lead a jealous life” was set, as an example of Shakespeare's use of music to enhance the theme and advance the plot of the play. See Duffin, Ross W. “An Encore for Shakespeare's Rare Italian Master,” *The Elizabethan Review*, Vol. 2, 1994.

5. Mosher argues that Byrd may have omitted Oxford's name in the title as a result of the Earl's fall from favor in the 1590s.
6. According to the British Library website listing of digitized music manuscripts (2017), the document is described as "A collection of miserere, anthems, motets and madrigals, in Italian lute notation." The British Library website was compromised by a cyberattack in October 2023, and the research resources have not yet been fully restored. As a result, one cannot currently access further information about Add. MS 31992 online. Francis Knights is Director of Studies in Music at Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge.
7. Waugh discovered that in 1595, William Covell in his work *Polymantia* had revealed that "R.L." was actually the 3rd Earl of Southampton. See "A Fair Youth, a Dark Lady and Shakespeare—the scandal exposed!" on Waugh's You Tube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN3ZOOonJQqk&t=755s>.
8. For additional information about Richard Barnfield, see Waugh's video "Richard Barnfield Knew..." *Alexander Waugh You Tube Channel* Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvfOnw-NixEM>.
9. Georgetown University professor and author Richard M. Waugaman suggested to me that because *The Paradise of Dainty Devices* was published in 1576, perhaps it was compiled and released by Oxford, as Edwards had died ten years earlier.
10. The quote from Percival Golding is taken from MS 4189 archived in the British Library's Harleian collection, which I viewed and translated, and about which I subsequently co-wrote an article with Bonner Cutting. See "Does the 17th Earl of Oxford 'Lieth Buried in Westminster?'" *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter*, Summer 2022.
11. Eggar argues that some plays performed at Cambridge University attributed to "Master Edwards" were actually written by Edward de Vere. See further discussion of this in subsequent paragraphs.
12. This is one of the subjects of the author's new documentary film project, *All the World's a Stage*.
13. See Miller Cutting's "A Sufficient Warrant: Examining Oxford's 1,000 Pound Annuity," in her book *Necessary Mischief*, 2018.

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A Reply to Robert Prechter's "Avisa: Queen Elizabeth or Penelope Rich?"

by John Hamill, Matt Hutchinson, and Alexander Waugh

Robert Prechter's article "Avisa: Queen Elizabeth or Penelope Rich?" published in *The Oxfordian* 25 (233–241), strives to demonstrate that John Hamill's argument for Penelope Rich as the wife "Avisa" in the anonymous 1594 pamphlet *Willobie His Avisa* is misplaced and the work is a straightforward paean to the unmarried Queen Elizabeth (Prechter, 2023: Hamill 2022). We shall attempt to show that Prechter is incorrect and that *Willobie* is not about Queen Elizabeth, but was an intended libel against the promiscuous courtier and sister of the Earl of Essex, Lady Penelope Rich.

We begin with Prechter's short summary of Hamill's theory, which posits that Edward de Vere and his wife, Lady Oxford, adopted a male heir (Henry de Vere) as their own, in the full knowledge that he was the natural son of Penelope Rich by Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton. Prechter states:

In brief, the case for Rich is that a 20-year-old bisexual youth impregnated a 31-year-old married woman with at least three children, and that another married couple, at the pinnacle of English nobility, were content to raise the philandering couple's illegitimate son as if he were their own biological offspring.... (Prechter, 233–34)

Penelope Rich was born in January 1563 while Henry Wriothesley was born in October 1573. Henry de Vere's birth in February 1593, places conception around May 1592. Southampton would therefore have been eighteen, not

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twenty, at the time of this "philandering," while Penelope Rich would have been twenty-nine, not thirty-one. Rich had six children alive at this time.

Prechter continues with a quotation from the orthodox scholar Eric Sams, insinuating that Hamill was "just making things up":

Eric Sams wrote about orthodox biographies of William Shakespeare, "What I noticed immediately...was that people were just making things up! Absolutely non-stop!" (Sams, 69). This is what seems to be going on with the Penelope Rich hypothesis. (Prechter, 238)

The citation here is incorrect—the quotation occurs in Rosenbaum's *The Shakespeare Wars* (69–70), not, as Prechter erroneously lists, in Sams' book *The Real Shakespeare*. More importantly, in the book that Prechter cites, *The Real Shakespeare*, Sams devotes an entire chapter to *Willobie His Avisa* and reaches a conclusion diametrically opposed to Prechter's and on parity with Hamill's—that *Willobie* was a libel that made lewd commentary on the protagonists of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. For instance:

The scurrilous *Willobie*, the gutter press of its day, also offers broad hints of even graver scandals. 'H.W. being sodenly infected with the contagion...the secresy of his disease...W.S....was now newly recovered of the like infection...wound...weak and feeble...Phisitions [physicians]...a plaster, if not to heal, yet in part to ease his malady'; these ostensible metaphors of passion are surely deliberate references to the cause and course of venereal disease. This is confirmed by canto lx (208), which both by quotation and by textual reference directs the reader's attention to the passage in Proverbs (5:3ff) warning men against the harlot ('her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on

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hell’) and the mortal malady she harbours (‘lest... thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and body are consumed’). (Sams, 98–99)

Some literature exists to suggest that Shakespeare may have been suffering from venereal disease, symptoms of which could prevent the author from fathering a child. Sams continues:

At the same time, ‘Avisa’ may also represent a very different character, namely the so-called Dark Lady, whose favours the poet shared with his fair friend (Sonnets 41.9; 1 44. 1 314 etc.). On this interpretation, which has been the subject of much speculation, Avisa’s categorisation as ‘chaste and constant’ would be intended as ribald irony. (Sams, 97)

Sams also notes that:

The Sonnets of course describe just such a triangular relationship as outlined in *Willobie*, where W.S. ‘not long before had tried the curtesy of the like passion’ (190–91) (cf. Sonnets 40, 41, 42, etc.). Given that this allusion is indeed direct and intentional, and that Avisa shadows the Dark Lady as well as Elizabeth I, here for the first time is a definite date. W.S. was ‘now newly recovered’, i.e. the Dark Lady infatuation so memorably recorded in the Sonnets was over by 1594. (Sams, 98)

By quoting Sams against Hamill, Prechter has demolished his entire argument—and Sams is far from alone in his viewpoint, such that Prechter’s contention that *Willobie* is a simple paean to Elizabeth is a minority view, both among Oxfordian and Stratfordian scholars.

For instance, in his article for *The Oxfordian* (2019), “What Role Did the Herbert Family Play in the Shakespeare Cover-Up?” Bruce Johnston writes:

In 1594 a salacious allegorical poem entitled *Willobie His Avisa* was published.... Oxfordian scholars identify the two males in *Avisa*’s lurid

Alexander Waugh *co-edited, with John Shaban, Shakespeare Beyond Doubt? Exposing an Industry in Denial (2013) in which he authored a chapter on Shakespeare’s knowledge of Italy. In 2014, Waugh debated on behalf of the Oxfordian theory in the Fleet Street debate, Does the Authorship Question Matter? In his 2014 Kindle e-book, Shakespeare in Court, Waugh exposed the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust as a prime source of fraudulent misinformation about William Shakespeare. In 2015 he was presented the Oxfordian of the Year Award. Waugh was a past President of the Shakespeare Authorship Coalition and until his passing this year, served as Chairman of the De Vere Society. Waugh is also author of several books, including Classical Music: A New Way of Listening (1995), Opera: A New Way of Listening (1996), Time (1999), and God (2002). With Roger Stritmatter, he has recently completed a three-volume scholarly study of contemporary allusions to William Shakespeare.*

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love triangle as: (i) de Vere/Shakespeare—an older, married “actor” with the initials W.S.; and (ii) Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton—a youth tutored by W.S. to woo the now-married former mistress of W.S. This *Avisa* scenario resembled the lurid triangle in de Vere’s Sonnets that were circulating in manuscript during the 1590s and printed in 1609. By hyphenating “Shake-speare,” the 1594 *Avisa* text signalled to the general public that this name was a pseudonym. *Avisa* thus poisoned the “William Shakespeare” name for Oxford, and also signalled to rogue publishers, printers and plagiarists that they might pirate the plays and poetry of de Vere and perhaps face manageable risks. (Johnston, 73)

Katherine Chiljan in *Shakespeare Suppressed* writes that Avisa’s “chastity and fidelity is so overstated that it is almost suspicious” (Chiljan, 233). Chiljan continues:

the reference to a scandalous love triangle, [was] intended to embarrass this nobleman, the author of *Lucrece*.... The *Willobie* writer gave enough clues to confirm Southampton’s identity as H.W.—Henry Willobie; and by placing him in a love triangle with Shakespeare, the *Willobie* writer also revealed his belief that Southampton was the fair youth of the Sonnets. (Chiljan, 241).

Chiljan also saw Avisa as the “dark lady, the married woman with whom the great author and the Fair youth were romantically involved” (Chiljan, 241).

It is worth pointing out that *Willobie His Avisa* is based around the story of the mythological wife Penelope who, during her husband’s long absence, rebuffs a number of suitors. As early as 1588-89, Penelope Rich was associated with the Greek Penelope via poets and musicians of the time, such as William Byrd. As Professor Jeremy Smith writes:

Byrd had a prominent role to play in the legacy that surrounded Sidney after his untimely death. Byrd’s *Psalmes* of 1588 featured two poignant elegies for Sidney, prominently placed, and at least one poem that celebrated Rich.... Byrd also used quantitative metrics in “Constant Penelope,” where he cast Sidney’s muse as Ulysses’s wife “Penelope.” (Smith, 530)

Further,

Byrd’s *Songs* (1589) featured two more works that concerned Rich; they appeared side by side in the collection. The twenty-seventh song, “Penelope, that longed for the sight [of her Ulysses],” features another Homeric reference, and in the twenty-sixth, “Weeping full sore,” the adjective “rich” appears as a thinly disguised pun for Sidney’s muse (“This Lady Rich is of the gifts of beauty / But unto her are gifts of

fortune dainty”). The “rich” pun was a device the poet and his followers (including Constable in particular) often used. (Smith, 531)

The shadowing of Penelope Rich with Elizabeth was also common in the 1590s. Jeremy Smith, a Professor of Musicology with a specialization in early modern music and composers such as William Byrd, notes that the *Triumphes of Oriana* (1601) was not a straightforward paean to Elizabeth as is sometimes believed, but that its publisher, Thomas Morley, “and his mentor, William Byrd, were enmeshed, via their music, with strategies surrounding the royal succession” (Smith, 507).

Smith continues:

By proposing a different allegorical identity for Oriana and also for the character Diana, who appears in key works by Byrd and in all the Oriana madrigals as well... the Psalmes and the Triumphes originally reflected a shared goal among Essexians and Catholics to promote James VI, whose wife Anna of Denmark is our ‘true’ Oriana, as Elizabeth’s successor. In this enterprise the Psalmes played an important role: propping up Essex as the “heir to Sir Philip Sidney.” But the real star was Lady Penelope Rich, née Devereux. (Smith, 511)

Smith spends many pages detailing Penelope Rich’s portrayal as Diana. Rich, like Elizabeth, was often associated with Diana, by Constable for instance, in his *Diana* Sonnets, and as the dedicatee of Montemayor’s *Diana*, translated out of Spanish by Bartholomew Yong (c. 1582) who “praised singular knowledge and delight wherewith she [Lady Rich] entertaineth and embraceth this particular subject of DIANA.”

In his *Affanie*, which many Oxfordians are aware of due to Fitzgeoffrey’s tantalising epigrams to “Bardus” or “The Bard,” Fitzgeoffrey writes:

4. To Cynthia

Depart the sky, Cynthia, in the night Elizabeth will rule the stars, more bright, more chaste. Or rather do not depart the sky, let you govern the stars by night, and she the English by night and by day.

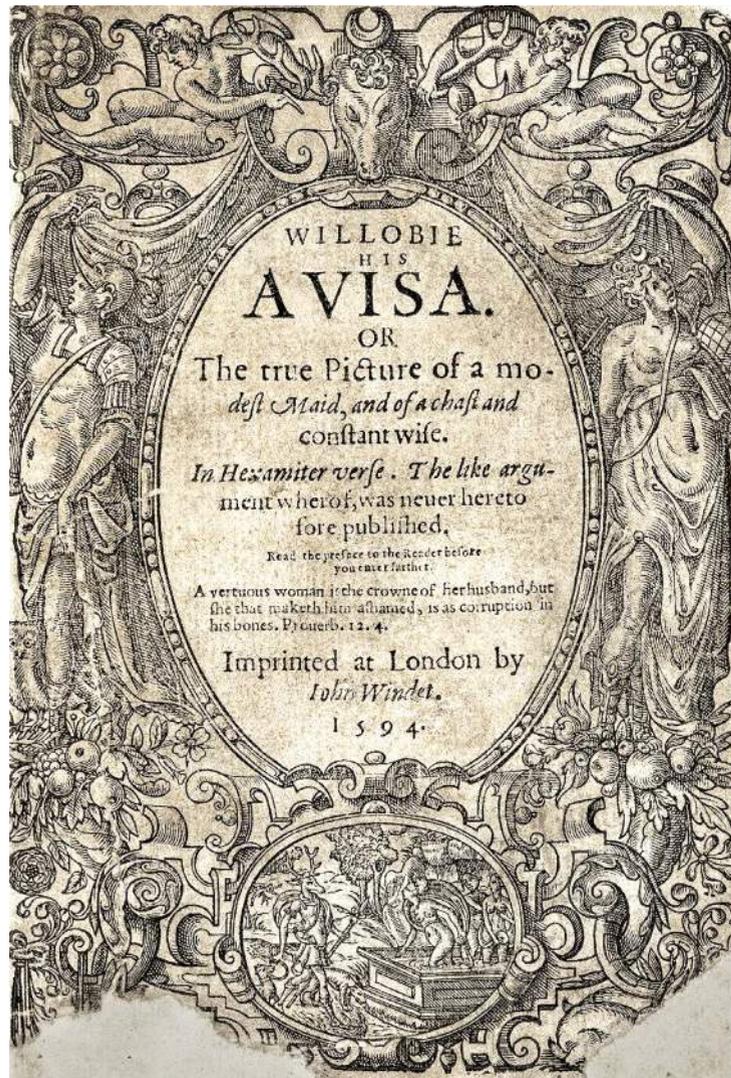
Fitzgeoffrey is clearly distinguishing between Queen Elizabeth and another woman going by the name “Cynthia,” who is associated with night sky stars, as Penelope Rich had been when Sidney cast her as “Stella,” not to mention Lady Rich’s love of black. She wore black clothes and had her rooms at Essex House painted in black and adorned with black drapery and furniture. Oxfordians need to reconsider their automatic identifications of “Diana” and “Cynthia” to Elizabeth, as Penelope Rich was frequently referred to by these names as well.

Noticeable omissions from Prechter's argument

Prechter fails to mention numerous points that counter his thesis. For example, key to establishing the real-life identity of Avisa is the fact that she is described, over and over, as a married woman. Indeed, she is alluded to twice on the title page alone as a wife. All through the book she is described as a "constant" and/or "loving" wife, with both adjectives bearing delicious double meanings. In Canto 52 Avisa plainly states "I am a wife," admitting the same in Cantos 13, 35 and 54. In Canto 53 she is told "You are a wife." This important fact about Avisa should not be ignored by those attempting to read the poem as a simple paean of praise to the unmarried Queen Elizabeth.

Prechter further omits all mention of the title page engraving to *Willobie His Avisa*, with its blatant allusions to cuckoldry. Here the figures of Diana (Lady Rich as aforementioned) and Pallas/Minerva (Shake-speare) are seen together hiding under a bedsheet. Above them is the head of a blind stag. There are in fact two stags depicted on this page, just as two stags serve as supporters to the heraldic arms of Penelope's husband, Lord Rich.

Figure 1: title page of "Willobie His Avisa or The true Picture of a modest Maid, and of a chaste and constant wife".



Antlers and horns are symbols of cuckoldry. At the top of the page we see two cherubs, representing erotic love, each with an arm around an antler, each looking to one of the bedsheeted figures while pointing as though to link the two via cuckoldry (Figure 2).



The scene of a horned Acteon and Diana at the bottom evokes the famous phrase “grow horns like Acteon,” another cuckold reference (Figure 3).



Needless to say, Robert Rich had been known as a cuckold to Penelope for some time, as Professor William Ringler states:

Lord Rich continued to maintain outwardly amicable relations with his wife and acquiesced in her infidelity because it was to his advantage to do so — her brother the Earl of Essex, who was something of a philanderer himself, was considered the most influential nobleman in the kingdom. (Ringler, 444)

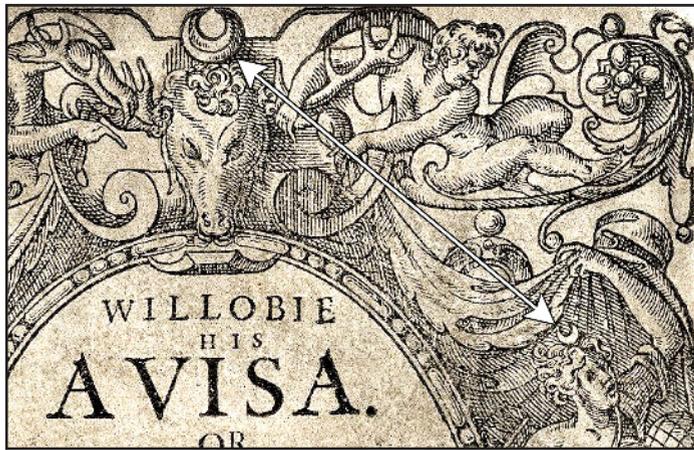
On the right of the title page Diana is depicted with her crescent moon and arrows (Figure 4).





The subject on the left is Pallas Athena, with helmet, breastplate, scrolls signifying writing, owl, pomegranate and olive branch (Figure 5).

On the left-hand side Pallas-Minerva (born from the head of Zeus shaking her spear) is likely representing Shakespeare. Diana is specifically linked to the blind stag above (the cuckold) by each of them having a crescent moon upon his/her head (Figure 6).



Also absent from Prechter's argument is any mention of a pamphlet called *Penelope's Complaint*, which was published to counter *Willobvie His Avisa* in 1596. As Michael Mooten observes:

Penelope's Complaint purports to be a reaction against the libelling of Penelope that occurred in *Willobvie His Avisa*: this immediately confirms to us that the central theme of *Willobvie His Avisa* has been an attack on an unchaste woman named Penelope. If this wasn't the case then why would there even be a need for a pamphlet like *Penelope's Complaint* to defend the morals of Penelope that *Avisa* had called into question? (Mooten, n.d.)

Equally important to the assessment of *Willobvie* is the fact that it was censored under the Bishops' Ban of 1599. Again, this crucial evidence is omitted by Prechter. The ban, which had nothing to do with Elizabeth, was engineered by Essex's good friend John Whitgift and, as Cyndia Clegg has argued, may well have been done on Essex's behalf to protect the Essex circle from political satire (Clegg, 1997). This fits with Penelope Rich (Essex's sister), not Elizabeth, being *Avisa*. If *Willobvie* was a simple paean to Elizabeth about her chastity, why on earth was it censored?

One point Prechter makes that should be conceded is when Hamill ponders Kurt Kreiler's contention that Oxford wrote *Willobie*. Prechter points out the obvious contradiction—why Oxford would want to expose his own scandalous behaviour? Hamill agrees that this is not a strong argument on Kreiler's part, and just raised it as a theory. He has since rejected it.

Prechter cites some possible mismatches between the characters in *Willobie His Avis* and those whom Hamill identifies as real-life counterparts, but fails to realise this was common with *Roman-a-clefs*. "As Annabel Patterson has argued," writes Penny McCarthy, citing Patterson's *Censorship and Interpretation*, in *Roman-a-clefs*, "the writer making the allusion is likely to aim off exactitude in order not to be too blatant" (McCarthy, 29).

There are plainly more mismatches between those whom Prechter seeks to identify as real-life counterparts (Elizabeth's potential suitors) than he has found against Hamill's thesis. Prechter should not expect to have it both ways. It is worth pointing out that Barbara De Luna's *The Queen Declined*, which argues that *Willobie* is primarily about the Queen rebutting her suitors, has not been accepted on either the Stratfordian or non-Stratfordian side of academia.

Other points raised by Prechter in his article need to be cross-examined. On page 234, for instance, he chides Hamill for detecting a hint of the name Penelope Rich in the *Willobie* line "Let Lucrece-Avis be thy name." While Prechter concedes that "Lucrece" (from the Latin *lucrum*) can allude to the English words "rich" or "riches," he insists that only "this word pertains to his claim. The other, *Avis*, is the Latin word for bird." Indeed, he is correct on that score, but were he to look up the word "penelope" in any number of old dictionaries he would find that it is used to mean "a certain bird." As Levaniouk (2001) writes in relation to the mythological Penelope:

A good point to begin looking for Penelope's diachronic dimension is her name, which, I suggest, is a *nom parlant*. When Penelope compares herself to Aedon, she compares herself both to a woman with a bird name, and to a bird. Penelope's own name is also derived from that of a bird, and it signals her belonging to a thematically related group of bird-women in myth.

Thus, Hamill is correct in his assertion that the "Let Lucrece-Avis be thy name" hints at the name Penelope Rich as "Rich-Penelope." Hamill is also correct in connecting the words fortune or fortunate to Penelope's surname, Rich, but Prechter does not agree:

Hamill notes that there are lyrics at the end of the publication that are to be sung "To the tune of Fortune" and declares, "'Fortune,' as we know, is a synonym of 'rich'..." (Hamill 271). But it isn't. "Fortune My Foe" was a well-known ditty of the day, "licensed as a ballad in 1565–6" in

which fortune means luck or destiny, as determined by the goddess Fortune. The original song's opening line is, "Fortune my foe, why dost thou frown on me?" (Prechter, 236)

"Fortune" may not be an exact synonym for "rich," but "fortunate" certainly is and contemporaries had no difficulty in connecting the words "fortune" and "fortunate" to the name of Penelope Rich. As Sidney wrote of her in his *Astrophel and Stella*: "She hath no misfortune but that rich she is," while John Davies in his *Microcosmos* (1603), dedicating a poem to Penelope Rich, wrote: "To descant on thy name as many do...I should (dear Lady) allude unto that which with it compared is...to be rich was to be fortunate...thou wast much more than most unfortunate though richly well thou plaidst that haplesse part." Is Prechter aware of Waugh's identification of Penelope Rich as "fortunate Cleopatra" with corresponding margin note "Lucrecia" in William Covell's *Polimanteia* of 1595? This occurs in the same sentence as Shakespeare is revealed to be "Our de Vere a secret" and as Southampton is shown to be the narcissist hidden in the phrase "dearly beloved Delia" and its corresponding margin note "All Praise worthy." In Daniel's *Cleopatra* the super-rich queen is forced to give away her beloved son, the illegitimate Caesarian—corresponding neatly with the theory that Penelope Rich gave her illegitimate son, Henry Vere, to the Oxfords in 1593.

Prechter seems to be unaware that "Fortune my foe" was most famous in the Elizabethan era for being sung at the funeral of the 1st Earl of Essex—Penelope's father—and would therefore have been strongly associated with the Essex circle and with her. Moreover, he ignores the fact that the words of the song as given in *Willobie his Avisa* are not the same as the words of "Fortune my Foe." It is merely stated that the words from *Willobie* are sung "by a constant wife [i.e., Avisa]...to the tune of Fortune." Thus she sings to the tune of Essex the related tune of fortune, including the words "I am content...This is my choise and therewith I am content...content am I." These are the last words from Avisa's mouth, which clearly allude to the famous saying "Content is rich"—used even by Shakespeare, and set to music in a song entitled "Content is Rich" by William Byrd, who was evidently alluding to Penelope Rich.

Prechter continues to attack Hamill's use of "ironia" to interpret *Willobie*:

In a fundamental leap, Hamill declares that *Willobie His Avisa*, which is subtitled *the true picture of a modest Maide, and of a chaste and constant wife*, is not about its announced subject but rather is composed entirely in the method of *ironia*, in which the author employs "a form of deliberate mockery in which one says the opposite of what is obviously true," in this case with the aim of berating Avisa and "dispraising her unchaste behavior" (Hamill, 261). He needs this argument because he

keeps repeating that Penelope was promiscuous, which contradicts the idea of a chaste Avis. Yet he offers no passages from the poem demonstrating an ironic tone. (Prechter, 237)

As noted, virtually every commentator has suspected *Willobie* is a libel and not what it claims to be—the cover supports this. On the *Shakespeare Documented* website of The Folger Shakespeare Library, a staff member writes of *Willobie*'s introductory poem:

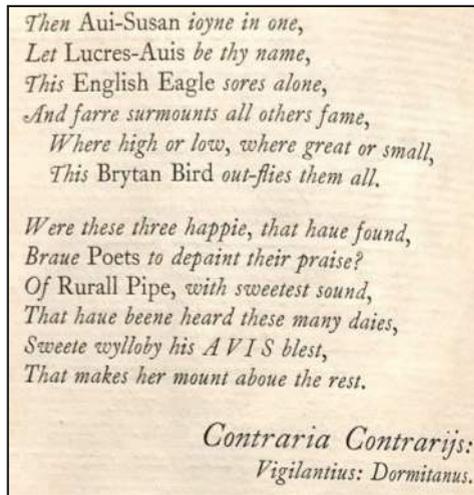
The poem lacks an authorial attribution and is instead signed, “Contraria Contrarijs: Vigilantius: Dormitanus” (roughly, “Contrary to the contrary: watchful: sleeping”).

This poem is signed off with the intriguing phrase (Figure 7):

Contraria Contrarijs [opposite of opposites]

Vigilantius: Dormitanus [Vigilant: dormant]

Vigilant, or “wide awake,” is clearly the opposite of “dormant” or “deep sleep.” This seems to be telling the reader to be open to the possibility that some of the story may be the opposite of what is being said: the most obvious example of this would be that the woman is not fending off these suitors at all, but sleeping with them. Indeed, the concluding line of the poem, “That makes her mount above the rest,” can be seen as playing on the word “mount” as “ascend” but also “copulate.”



As Michael Mooten observes, the “ironia” trope was well known to Elizabethans, with numerous publications either deploying it as a technique or describing it. Mooten quotes from Abraham Fraunce’s 1588 publication *The Arcadian Rhetorike*, which describes *ironia* as

a trope, that by naming one contrarie intendeth another. The speciall grace whereof is in iesting and merie conceipted speaches. This trope continued maketh a most sweet allegorie, and it is perceiued by the contrarietie of the matter it selfe, or by the manner of vtterance quite differing from the sense of the wordes, for then it is apparant that wee speake but iestinglie, and not as wee thinke.

The book contains a goldmine of information for the rhetoricians of the time, many examples of which are used throughout *Willobie*.

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Mooten writes:

Fraunce goes on to describe a form of Ironia called 'praeteritio'. This form of Ironia praises its target but keeps subtly letting slip hints that the praise is disingenuous (Mooten, n.d.)

As Fraunce himself puts it:

There is also a kinde of Ironia called...Praeteritio in Latin, a kinde of pretēded omitting or letting slip of that which indeed wee elegātly note out in the verie shewe of praetermission, as when we say; I let this passe; I passe it ouer with silence. Like vnto this is that which is called of the Latinists Negatio, a denial or refusall to speake, as, I will not say that which I might, I will not call you, &c. when neuerthelesse we speake and tell al.

Indeed, the introductory poem uses several rhetorical devices that suggest Penelope is Avisa.

Tarqayne pluckt his glistering grape,
And Shake-speare, paints poore **Lucrece** rape.
Though **Susan** shine in faithfull praise,
As twinkling Starres in Christall skie,
Penelop's fame though Greekes do raise,
Of faithfull wiues to make vp three,
To thinke the Truth, and say no lesse,
Our **Auisa** shall make a messe.

A "messe" is a group of four: the four faithful wives are Lucrece, Penelope, Susan and Avisa. The poem continues:

Two thousand years have scarcely seen
Such as the worst of these has been

Mooten writes:

This caustic comment is clearly telling us that something is amiss with one or more members of this group of virtuous women. The author now takes a cue from Ovid and performs a metamorphosis. The women now undergo a poetic metamorphosis into birds of chastity.

From the text:

Then Avi-Susan joyne in one
Let Lucrece-Avis be thy name
And far surmounts all others fame.
Were these three happie that have found
Brave poets to depaint their praise?

Sweet Willobie his AVIS blest,
That makes her mount above the rest.

Mooten argues:

We see that Susan and Lucrece become birds of chastity and Avis emerges as an Eagle but Penelope is conspicuous by her absence. How has a group of four suddenly shrunk to a group of three? The Elizabethans were well versed in the use of rhetorical devices. ‘Occultatio’ is the rhetorical device of drawing attention to something by deliberately omitting to mention it. . . . We also notice that a progression is occurring, each woman’s name is coming closer to spelling Avis. We start with Avi-Susan, then we have Lucres-Avis, Penelope is not named in this sequence but the sequence is insinuating that her name is going to be Penelope-Avisa. The progression must be

Avi Susan... Avi
Lucris Avis... Avis
Penelope Avisa... Avisa

Both Susan and Lucrece have been accounted for, so the only explanation is that Avis and Penelope have been merged into one. Now they are one and the same and together represent a living English woman and consequently Penelope is no longer a figure of Greek mythology.

The poem continues:

This English Eagle sores alone,
And farre surmounts all others fame,

About which Mooten comments:

We notice that an Eagle is definitely not the traditional bird of chastity. Doves, swans and turtle doves were the normal birds of chastity, but all of these are the prey of the predatory Eagle: the Eagle is the enemy of the birds of chastity. Hadrian Dorrell tells us that the name Avis has been chosen because it reflects Avis’s nature. Dorrell explains that A’ Visa is a Latin derivative meaning “The bird not seen.” The bird not seen in this poetic metamorphosis is Penelope. (Mooten, n.d.)

This, coupled with the poem signed as “contrary to contraries” seems to be alerting the reader to the possibility that some of the story may be the opposite of what is being said.

Further evidence suggests Penelope Rich is the target of *Willobie His Avis*, as it concludes with a poem entitled “The praise of a contented mind.” William Byrd had set to music a poem “My Mind to me a Kingdom is,” naming it “In praise of a contented mind.”

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Professor Steven May has written an authoritative article on why the attribution of the poem "My Mind to me a Kingdom Is" in the mid-19th century to Edward Dyer is incorrect, concluding that its true author was Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (May 386).

In Willobie His Avisa "The Praise of a Contented Mind" contains another "messe" or group of four, yet this time with very unchaste women—Eve, Cressida, Helen of Troy, all of whom Elizabethans considered harlots, and Penelope. The poems contain numerous allusions to stars, evoking "Stella" of Philip Sidney's sonnets, although this identification was not widely known at the time.

In his attempt to separate Penelope Rich from the mythological Penelope Prechter continues contra Hamill as follows:

More claims follow suit: a mention of Penelope of *The Odyssey*, he says, indicates the unchaste Penelope Rich (Hamill, 262). But it doesn't; it refers to a famously chaste woman of classical literature. (Prechter, 237)

As noted above, Penelope Rich was associated with the Penelope myth as early as 1588–89. Indeed, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* sonnets, in which Penelope Rich is portrayed as Stella, consists of 108 sonnets—the same number of suitors in the Penelope myth. Alluding to the mythological Penelope would have turned contemporary readers' thoughts to Penelope Rich. Alastair Fowler (1970) quotes the 17th-century polymath Sir Thomas Browne, who, drawing from Eustathius's commentary on *The Odyssey* and on Athenaeus, describes an Ancient Greek game called Penelope:

Prodigal paramours disposed their men, when they played at Penelope. For being themselves an hundred and eight, they set fifty-four stones on either side, and one in the middle, which they called *Penelope*, which he that hit was master of the game. (Fowler, 175)

Thus continues Fowler, "the absence of the 109th or Penelope sonnet-stone from Sidney's sequence confesses Astrophil's failure as a lover" (175).

In summing up Prechter states:

When we take time to sort out authorship, we almost always find that things are simpler than they seem. Such is the case with *Willobie His Avisa*. (Prechter, 238)

This is bemusing given a) the Shakespeare Authorship Question continues to divide scholars after several centuries with no consensus being reached as to the authorship of the works of Shakespeare; b), scholars cannot agree on the authorship of numerous works of the time, including *Willobie His Avisa*, along with other works in the "golden age of the pseudonym" such

as *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*; and c) Prechter himself claims that Oxford wrote Nashe's and Greene's works—among others—a claim supported by very few.

Prechter concludes:

George Gascoigne, a self-proclaimed champion of the Queen, wrote a poem celebrating Elizabeth's chastity in rebuffing all suitors, but passed on before he could publish it. After a long delay, his stepson decided to bring it to press. (Prechter, 238).

Why after such a long delay? Gascoigne died in 1577. *Willobie* was published in 1594. Which scholar supports Prechter's identification of Gascoigne as the author of *Willobie*? Prechter finishes his essay with

Breton did not set out to wound anyone or expose anything; he simply wanted the public to read and appreciate one of his stepfather's most interesting works. He succeeded. People are still reading it. (Prechter, 238).

Prechter's critical assessment of *Willobie* is not supported, either as a straightforward paean to Elizabeth or as a good piece of literature. *Willobie* is commonly perceived to be a pedestrian piece of poetry, described by *The Oxford Companion to English literature* as "uninspired" (Drabble, 1071) and "dull," "written in glib and jingling verse" in the *Stanford Studies in Language and Literature* (Gray, 144). It is of great interest due to its being the first independent mention of "Shake-speare" and its likelihood of being a *roman-a-clef*, depicting real Elizabethans, not because of its poetic qualities.

For a more balanced review of Hamill's work, the reader is urged to consult Earl Showerman's review of Hamill's book in the Winter 2023 *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* and Eddi Jolly's review in the October 2023 *De Vere Society Newsletter* (Showerman 2023; Jolly 2023). For those wanting to learn more about *Willobie*, they should consult Michael Mooten's essay, Hamill's book and watch Alexander Waugh's several online presentations on *Willobie*, which give much detail and further insight into this fascinating piece of the Shakespeare puzzle.

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Reply to Prechter's "Avisa: Queen Elizabeth or Penelope Rich?"



A Response to the Rebuttal—Avisa: Queen Elizabeth or Penelope Rich?

by Robert R. Prechter, Jr.

I would like to begin by expressing great respect for much of the work of my fellow Oxfordians who authored the preceding rebuttal. The present reply addresses only one subject.

My 2011 article for the journal *Brief Chronicles* hypothesized that George Gascoigne wrote the main verse and prose material within *Willobie His Avisa*, loosely chronicling the suitors of Queen Elizabeth until his death in 1577. To access the paper, see the Works Cited section at the end.

The rebuttal on the foregoing pages promotes an opposing idea: that Penelope Devereux Rich is the subject of *Willobie* as well as Shakespeare's Dark Lady and the mother of a bastard child fathered by the Earl of Southampton, whom Edward de Vere and Elizabeth Trentham secretly adopted and raised as the 18th Earl of Oxford. Even after carefully reviewing the proponents' latest material, I remain unaware of any substantive evidence, historical or literary, for any of those claims.

With three renowned authors collaborating on the rebuttal, the finest features of their case are surely before us. The following review will cover first their objections to my case and then the elements of their positive case.

Replies to Refutations

The rebuttal says, "*Willobie* is not about Queen Elizabeth but was an *intended libel* against the promiscuous courtier...." Quite fittingly, George Gascoigne's

story, “The Adventures [of] Master F.J.,” published within *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres* (1573), elicited the very same charge, against which Gascoigne had to defend himself. Their impression of *Willobie* fits my case just fine.

The rebuttal corrects my timeline, saying that Southampton was only 18, not 20, at the time of Henry de Vere’s conception, and Penelope Rich was 29, not 31, and she already had given birth to six children. This adjustment *lowers* the likelihood of a sexual liaison between Southampton, who was a teenager, and Rich, who was 29 and so actively producing children with her husband that she would have to have been quite deft to produce yet another baby, never mind covertly.

The writers say, “Prechter fails to mention numerous points that counter his thesis.” They give four examples. The first is that Avisa is a married woman. But I did cover that point: Queen Elizabeth was “married” to England. The second instance is an interpretation of the artwork on the cover of *Willobie*. Since I do not think it qualifies as a point (see discussion below), it was not “omitted.” The third purported omission is that *Willobie* “was censored under the Bishops’ Ban of 1599.” That ban—which in fact failed—fits my narrative as well as theirs. The fourth instance is “any mention of a pamphlet called *Penelope’s Complaint*, which was published to counter *Willobie His Avisa* in 1596.” Rest assured, my book *Oxford’s Voices* features an entire chapter on Peter Colse’s book, covering the reason for the response (which is compatible with the ban) and who I think really wrote it.

The rebuttal says I fail to understand the equation that *Avis* is the Latin word for bird, and that *penelope* in old dictionaries means “a certain bird,” so Avisa = Penelope. Yet Queen Elizabeth was referred to as a phoenix, and portraits of her feature a phoenix and a pelican, respectively, in pendants, earning them the titles the “Phoenix” and “Pelican” portraits. So, by the same logic, Avisa = Elizabeth. If an Elizabethan poet were to refer to a great woman of the day as a Bird, which connection would be far better known?

The rebuttal notes, “Barbara De Luna’s *The Queen Declined*, which argues that *Willobie* is primarily about the Queen rebutting her suitors, has not been accepted on either the Stratfordian or non-Stratfordian side of academia.” That is true and unfortunate. She was not alone, however, as G.P.V. Akrigg came to the same conclusion in 1968. But consider: How does anything being out of favor in academia help the case that Penelope Rich is Avisa, which is far further out of favor in academia?

In my short article, I commented that the editor of *Willobie* hoped the public would read and appreciate the poem. The writers misinterpret that statement to mean I think the poem is “a good piece of literature” and proceed to school me by quoting two authorities on its shortcomings. But my article

calls the poem “murky” and the poet “not admirable”; my paper states that the poem suffers from “a dearth of poetic artifice”; and the Henry Willobie chapter in *Oxford’s Voices* declares flat out, “the poem is tedious.” So, I have not been schooled. On the contrary, the poem’s tedium is perfectly in accord with the wearying narrative verse that George Gascoigne produced under his own name.

As far as I can tell, the writers have no idea who wrote *Willobie*, whereas my case is holistic in relating its author to the subject matter and writing style. Hamill even entertains the idea that our own Earl of Oxford wrote *Willobie*, writing, “a possibility is that *Willobie* might have been a way Oxford revenged himself against both his mistress and his lover...a way to subtly and safely express his outrage, but from behind the scenes...” (Hamill, 165). Never mind the unsubstantiated claims of “outrage” and “revenge.” Since we agree the poem is bad, how can it be Oxford’s?

Reviewing “Positive” Evidence Offered for the Case

The rebuttal corrects the source of my quote, “people were just making things up...!” Apologies for the error; I must have read or misread a secondary source. The quote is still Sams’, however, and the sentiment still applies, as I trust you are about to see.

Supposed Hints within Texts and Pictures

The rebuttal discerns “blatant allusions to cuckoldry” within the artwork on the title page of *Willobie*. We are told, “Here the figures of Diana (Lady Rich as forementioned) and Pallas/Minerva (Shake-speare) are seen together hiding under a bedsheet.” That is not so. Rather, there are two characters *not* identified as Rich and Shakespeare on *opposite* sides of the page, facing *away* from each other, holding drapery *above their heads*, not around them like a sheet. (Go to figure 1 on page 264 to see for yourself.) Had the artwork intended to depict a promiscuous woman, it surely would have featured Venus, not the virginal goddess Diana. The writers continue, “There are in fact two stags depicted on this page, just as two stags serve as supporters to the heraldic arms to Penelope Rich’s husband, Lord Rich.” This observation might be convincing if, say, two stags were supporting the heraldic arms of Lord Rich. Instead, there is a stag’s head at the top of the page, and the image at the bottom is the half-stag, half-human Acteon in metamorphosis before Diana bathing. In opposition to the writers’ claim that Acteon’s horns imply cuckoldry, Ovid’s story relates that Acteon was punished severely for invading the virgin goddess’s space. If anything, both images better fit my view of *Willobie*’s theme: that the Virgin Queen stood aloof from, and drove away, her suitors.

The writers advise, “Oxfordians need to reconsider their automatic identifications of ‘Diana’ and ‘Cynthia’ to Elizabeth, as Penelope Rich was frequently referred to by these names as well.” That is fine, but none of their examples even remotely indicate that Rich is Avisa, the Dark Lady or the secret mother of Henry de Vere. To promote their case about the name Cynthia, they assert that Charles Fitzgeoffrey’s poem “To Cynthia” “is clearly distinguishing between Queen Elizabeth and *another woman* going by the name ‘Cynthia’....” But Fitzgeoffrey isn’t doing anything of the sort. He is talking about the moon and the queen. As Wikipedia notes, “Selene, the Greek personification of the *moon*, and the Roman Diana were also sometimes called *Cynthia*” (Wikipedia). Here are Fitzgeoffrey’s lines:

Depart the sky, Cynthia, in the night Elizabeth will rule the stars, more bright, more chaste. Or rather do not depart the sky, let you govern the stars by night, and she the English by night and by day.

Translation:

Go away, Moon, and let Queen Elizabeth rule the night. Better yet, stay where you are, governing the stars at night, while our queen governs the English people around the clock.

In trying to advance a connection, the rebuttal asserts that “Cynthia” in the poem denotes Rich, who was “associated with the night sky stars” as Philip Sidney’s Stella. Rich cannot, however, be both the moon and separately the stars. Fitzgeoffrey’s poem rightly distinguishes between them, saying that Cynthia, the moon, *governs* the stars. So, the whole analysis is void. Even if it were valid, it wouldn’t tell us anything about Avisa.

The writers refer to W.C.’s *Polimantia*, where names mentioned in some of the text and marginalia are presumably codes for other names. They assert that the phrase, “fortunatelic fortunate Cleopatra” indicates Penelope Rich. Why? because “fortune” equals “rich.” On the other hand, Cleopatra equals Cleopatra. So, what else is involved? Well, in Samuel Daniel’s *Cleopatra*, we are told, “the super-rich queen is forced to give away her beloved son, the illegitimate Caesarion—*corresponding neatly with the theory that Penelope Rich gave her illegitimate son, Henry Vere, to the Oxfordees in 1593.*” This is a clear example of a predetermined theory being used to wrench meaning out of a text. My chapter on W.C. in *Oxford’s Voices* gives a much neater (and more exciting, in my view) interpretation of the meaning of W.C.’s choice of words, and it does not require any substitute identifications.

The rebuttal spins even further into the realm of conjecture when attempting to derive meaning from a short poem in the preface to *Willobie* signed

“Contraria Contrarijs,” under which is written, “Vigilantius: Dorminatus.” The writers find vast significance in those words:

Vigilant, or “wide awake,” is clearly the opposite of “dormant” or “deep sleep.” This seems to be telling the reader to be open to the possibility that some of the story may be the opposite of what is being said: the most obvious example of this would be that the woman is not fending off these suitors at all, but sleeping with them. Indeed, the concluding line of the poem, “That makes her mount above the rest,” can be seen as playing on the word “mount” as “ascend” but also “copulate.”

This type of analysis fills countless pages in Hamill’s book, but it’s not persuasive. First, the signature relates to the poem, not the whole book. Second, one opposite does not imply another, much less the “obvious example” that “awake” and “sleep” mean that Avisia is having sex with men she is depicted as rebuffing. And “mount” here does not remotely mean “copulate.” See for yourself:

Sweete wylloby his AVIS blest,
That makes her mount above the rest.

The author is *sweet*, Avisia is *blessed*, and she soars *above the rest*. She does not *mount* anybody, nor is she *mounted* by anybody. The poet is offering kind words, not salacious charges. Birds “mounting” toward the sky is a common trope in Elizabethan poetry.

The rebuttal includes a questionable two-page analysis of an introductory poem in *Willobie*. Let us note just one problematic claim: The poem cites four chaste women from fiction. The writers quote a comrade who calls the concluding lines “a caustic comment” and proceeds to speculate on why it’s there, but it is not a caustic comment. The poet says, “Two thousand years have scarcely seen / Such as the worst of these has been.” In other words, over two millennia, few women have been as chaste as the least chaste of these heroic women. Time and again, the writers’ method is to turn a clear meaning into something conspiratorial, without clinching the argument.

The writers make much of the fact that Philip Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* comprises 108 sonnets. Why? because there are not 109 of them! Apparently, an ancient Greek game called Penelope involves 54 stones on two sides, totaling 108, and one stone in the middle representing Penelope, so clearly, “the absence of the 109th or Penelope sonnet-stone from Sidney’s sequence confesses Astrophil’s failure as a lover” (Fowler 175). I don’t know if Sidney had such a concept in mind, but even if he did, how therefore is his beloved Stella Willobie’s Avisia? Or the Dark Lady? Or the secret mother of Henry de Vere?

Quotes from Others

The rebuttal quotes a slew of scholars, but to what end? I doubt most of them have signed on to the Penelope Rich case.

Eric Sams, notes the rebuttal, wrote a chapter interpreting *Willobie* as pertaining to “scandals” and that Avisa “*may* represent...the so-called Dark Lady” of Shakespeare’s sonnets. But even Sams admitted, “Avisa shadows the Dark Lady *as well as Elizabeth I...*” (Sams 98). That Avisa tracks Elizabeth is half a point directly in my favor, with no offsetting implication that Penelope Rich is the Dark Lady, much less Avisa.

The rebuttal quotes a scholar who noted that “Shake-speare” is mentioned in “the 1594 *Willobie* text.” The reference is in the *prefacing* text, a detail important to a proper dating analysis. Regardless, the poet’s mention of the Bard is in no way indicative of scandals involving the Earl of Oxford. Erin A. McCarthy explained, “Whoever wrote it does not, as John Leigh notes, praise Shakespeare and his poem so much as argue that Henry Willoughby has created *an equally virtuous poetic subject*” (McCarthy). The poet’s sentiment fits my hypothesis, not theirs.

Curiously, the writers admit that *Willobie* “is based around the story of mythological wife Penelope who, during her husband’s long absence, rebuffs a number of suitors.” They quote William Byrd celebrating Penelope Rich as being akin to “Ulysses’s wife.” Yet they simultaneously and vociferously charge that Penelope Rich was promiscuous, making the overall argument self-contradictory. For what it’s worth, I don’t think she was promiscuous. She had children exclusively by her husband (in a forced marriage) and then exclusively by her true love.

My article of last year challenged the writers’ claim that *Willobie* is written in the style of *ironia*. Instead of providing examples, they quote a scholar who sensed that within the poem, the “chastity and fidelity is so overstated that it is almost suspicious” (Chiljan 233). But “almost suspicious” does not equate to *ironia*, so we continue to await examples. Elizabethan literature, as we know, is packed with paeans to Elizabeth’s chastity and fidelity, and they all seem overstated. *Willobie* is another case in point.

In sum, I find not only the absence of a comprehensive case that Penelope Rich is Avisa, the Dark Lady, and the secret mother of a noble bastard, but also the lack of a single convincing point. I find a hodgepodge of loosely connected assertions, none of which leads, either individually or collectively, to the desired conclusion. I believe my paper presented a logical case for both the theme and authorship of *Willobie*, and I welcome one and all to give it a look.

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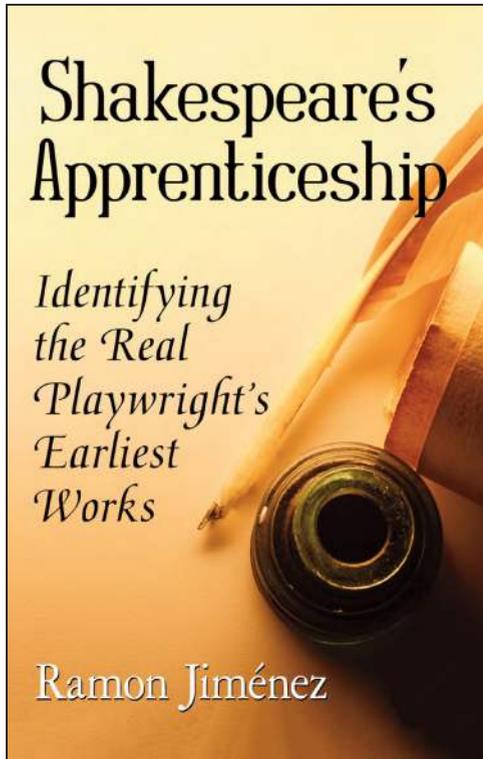
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Book Reviews



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The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy

Knowledge, Rhetoric, Identity

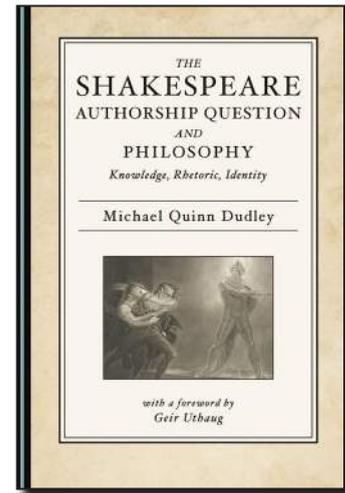
Reviewed by Phoebe Nir

The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy. By Michael Dudley. Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2023, 334 pages (hardcover \$124).

If you needed further convincing that Stratfordians are intellectually dishonest, Michael Dudley has provided an elegant inventory of their failures in *The Shakespeare Authorship Question and Philosophy: Knowledge, Rhetoric, Identity*, published by the increasingly Oxfordianism-curious Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Puzzled by the religious fervor of the orthodox Shakespeareans, and their mandarins' seeming imperviousness to rational arguments, Dudley has undertaken a philosophical investigation of bardolatry, journeying through such varied thinkers as Hegel, Foucault, Barthes, and Chomsky to arrive at an overarching epistemological framework for understanding why belief in William Shakspeare of Stratford has proven so durable.

Towards this end, Dudley offers a wealth of analytical tools and rubrics to pinpoint precisely where the machine starts to break down. Each chapter is built around a different *analysand* through which we might logically evaluate the authorship debate. Examples include "Stratfordian Epistemology and the Ethics of Belief," "Theories of Truth and the Authorship Debate," and "By Nature Fram'd to Wear a Crown? The Ideological Basis of Shakespeare's 'Natural Genius.'"



Dudley's book is heady but peppered with witty asides, and explications of the Contextomy fallacy or totalitarian rhetoric are helpfully interspersed with thought experiments involving *Star Trek* and beautiful literary quotes. My favorite comes from Jennifer Michael Hecht's *Doubt: A History*—"The grace of Shakespeare is that there is always another side to things; there is always doubt."

In one of the most impactful chapters, Dudley analyzes 50 personal essays from the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship's "How I Became An Oxfordian" series, mapping the phenomenology of the Stratfordian-to-Oxfordian paradigm shift. Dudley models his research approach for this chapter after the work of his mother, Dr. Nancy Dudley, for her 1987 doctoral dissertation on Kuhnian paradigm shifts after intense religious experiences, and in my opinion, this generational collaboration yields the book its richest insight—that escaping the Platonic "cave" of Stratfordian orthodoxy for the "real world" of Oxfordianism in many ways parallels a life-changing encounter with the divine.

Dudley credibly posits that undergoing the Oxfordian paradigm shift can increase an individual's capacity for empathy, just as a numinous experience might. For evidence, he points to Charlton Ogburn Jr.'s moving recitation of Macbeth's "tomorrow and tomorrow" monologue in PBS's 1989 *Frontline* documentary. Ogburn is brought nearly to weeping as he contemplates Edward de Vere's despair. Dudley notes that "this pattern contrasts dramatically with the Stratfordian tendency for self-projection... in which biographers so often choose to see themselves in the author; Oxfordians—while still possessed by awe and admiration of his greatness as an artist—are nonetheless capable of connecting emotionally with Shakespeare *as a fellow human being*, rather than imposing themselves onto the author in an attempt to—somehow—inject him with some measure of humanity, which has never really worked" (219).

Dudley sets up his book by recalling a young woman who couldn't understand how *anybody* could believe in the myth of Stratford. The fact is, of course, that decades later, the vast majority of people still "believe" in the Bard of Avon, and our sense-making institutions by and large still consider Oxfordianism to be a conspiracy theory. Dudley sets out to explain how this can be the case through philosophy, and he succeeds on his own terms.

Phoebe Nir, a 2010 Presidential Scholar of the Arts in Writing, holds a BA in Theater from Brown University and a Masters in Drama Therapy from New York University. She makes educational videos about the Shakespeare Authorship Question on YouTube and TikTok as @phoebe_devere, and has begun shooting a documentary film about how Oxfordianism is covered in the media.

However, the truth is that the young woman's question might be better addressed through study of evolutionary biology or political science; consulting the writings of Richard Dawkins or Nicolo Machiavelli might have yielded more satisfying, if more cynical, results than consulting those of Aristotle and Kant. Dudley's epistemological explanations are fascinating, but I could not help to think that the lion's share of our current dilemma comes from the simple fact that people are taught about the Stratford myth from a young age, and our scholarly caste would rather persist in sunk cost fallacies than admit that they have been spouting misinformation for their entire careers.

Chapter One invokes Upton Sinclair's famous quote, "It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it," which struck me as more to the point than Chapter Two's assertion that Edward de Vere is too obvious a fit for "Shake-speare" to be a satisfying authorship candidate for scholars. Dudley writes at length about Hegel's concept of *aufheben*, which holds that having tension between two concepts allows one to perform a type of "sorcery" or "alchemy" in creating an entirely new Second Reality in which the disparate notions can be held together.

"There is, then, a dialectical relationship between the Author and the individual William Shakspere. It might be said that, metaphorically speaking, Stratfordians have been engaging in the alchemical process of turning the 'base metal' that is Shakspere into the 'gold' of Shakespeare" (52).

Dudley's point is interesting, but to me is undercut by the Stratfordians' incessant invocation of their much-vaunted *prima facie* case, which holds that we should determine "Shake-speare's" identity exclusively on the basis of existing documentary evidence, with no imagination or funny business.

Dudley draws his argument out even further, suggesting that orthodox Shakespeareans are involved in "a form of initiation, in which enduring the arduousness of navigating the 'blind alleyways that promise illumination but do not deliver' is not an impediment to understanding, but a Hermetic-like ritual necessary to gain knowledge of their 'God'" (57). Frankly, I think this gives priggish and literal-minded Stratfordians too much credit by a half; in my own experience, discovering the existence of the close-knit and semi-clandestine Oxfordian community bears a much greater resemblance to a Hermetic-like initiation, not to mention Alexander Waugh's extensive research on Edward de Vere's relationship to that very subject.

Dudley has done beautiful work in mapping out how to build a truth-conducive academic framework. In my opinion, his system may offer less long-term utility in understanding the Stratfordians than it will in ensuring that the Oxfordian academic community avoids falling into the epistemic

potholes that he has so lovingly plotted. Oxfordianism sadly has a long institutional history of schisms and excommunications; the Prince Tudor Theory remains as hotly contested today as it was in the 1940s, and now, as then, there are many who would rather quell its discussion than risk bad optics. The Oxfordian community is likewise struggling to maintain collegiality around such controversial subjects as Oxford's sexuality, and Robert Prechter's proposal that Oxford may have published under numerous pseudonyms besides "William Shakespeare."

Dudley's work makes one thing crystal clear: it is impossible to produce high-quality research in an academic community that has corrupted its standards. Perhaps it would behoove Oxfordian scholars to regularly review Dudley's metrics in order to ensure that our own practices remain truth-conducive and epistemically sound. The sad reality is that the Stratfordian catastrophe is not so unusual; hostility and closed-mindedness are the most common human responses to confrontation with the unknown, and the pursuit of objective truth is by comparison exceedingly rare. While the orthodox continue to dominate prestigious institutions, their grotesquerie can serve us as a model of what not to do.

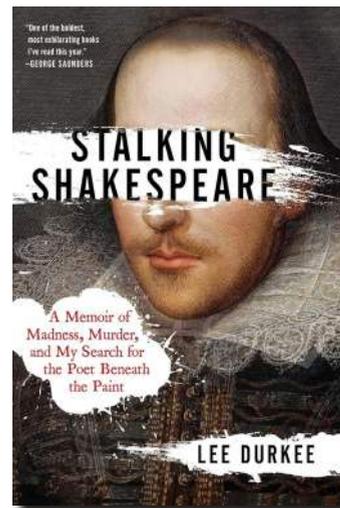
Stalking Shakespeare: A Memoir of Madness, Murder and My Search for the Poet Beneath the Paint

Reviewed by Elisabeth Waugaman

Stalking Shakespeare: A Memoir of Madness, Murder and My Search for the Poet Beneath the Paint. By Lee Durkee. Scribners, 2023, 263 pages, (hardcover \$17.79 or Kindle \$14.99).

Questioning Shakespeare's identity has recently taken on a refreshing new turn with authors adopting humor and a personal tone to lighten academic reading for non-academic readers. In *Stalking Shakespeare*, author Lee Durkee, a fiction writer, investigates Shakespeare's portraits, interviewing a variety of curators. The book forms a perfect mirror into the intellectual and artistic history of the Shakespeare authorship question.

Durkee succeeds in writing an academic book that appeals to the general public because the stories he tells are so personal. This personal approach forces open the rusty gates of academia to the general public—there is no impenetrable academic curtain of unexplained, esoteric code words, just personal experience. Bypassing academic theories upholding the status quo, the fantasies of scholars who seek to make sense of the nonsensical, the public can ponder what we know and decide what seems reasonable and what doesn't. How is it that a man with no known education, no travel abroad—in fact, a man for whom no words of praise are written at his death despite his reputation as “the soul of the age”—how such a candidate wrote the greatest works of the English language replete with knowledge of English, French, Latin, Greek



and Anglo-Saxon as well as a knowledge of the law, international political intrigues, French courtiers, astrology, astronomy, and pharmacology, defies the imagination as well as common sense.

The unwillingness of academics to question the accuracy of their assumptions is not unique to the Shakespeare authorship question. The work of Gregor Mendel, an Augustinian monk, the father of genetics, was criticized and basically ignored until after his death. Francis Peyton Reus' work on the transmission of cancer by a virus was ignored for years because he was an MD, not a physiologist. Geologists denied Alfred Wegener's theory of continental drift until after his death. Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar's theory on Black Holes was so denigrated he was forced to leave England. Crick and Watson were ordered to stop their research on DNA. The implications of repressive groupthink are painfully evident in hindsight (Waugaman). Unfortunately, the same is true for Shakespeare studies.

Durkee has much to offer Oxfordian scholars seeking a wider, more open-minded readership. First, he makes himself a sympathetic character: he reveals he is an imperfect human being—a divorced, depressed father living in a place he hates for the sake of his son. He also depicts himself as an alcoholic writer in the august, Southern, Faulknerian tradition. He adds an addiction to Adderall. The alcohol, the Adderall, the link to Faulkner, all serve as the Fool's motley cap of yore: only the fool can tell the truth because he is safe from the king's (i.e., the establishment's) rage: he is, after all, only a fool with no assets. Durkee spells out this freedom when he describes himself as “a dilettante,” an outsider looking in. Because he is an outsider looking in, he is not blinded by the system. He is free to ask questions—“with no tenure at risk” as he points out (Durkee 39). He begins his quest with no authorship candidate in mind.

Durkee notes that he has mastered software capable of examining facial anomalies and by using multiple scientific methods for examining portraits: spectral technology, infrared reflectography, x-ray examination, dendrochronology (determining the age of a painting on wood by determining the age of the wood), pigment analysis, raking light, and ultraviolet examination over many, many years—“just as museums were beginning to put their collections on line,” which dates back to the 1990s (Povroznik 3). Durkee has a collection of more than 40 folders, with folders within folders. After detailing both

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the psychological and the scientific dimensions of his quest, he concludes by linking multiple interpretations: “In the end, it [the search for a portrait of the real Shakespeare] changed the way I look at history, art, politics, and myself. It certainly changed the way I look at William Shakespeare” (Durkee 5). Durkee artfully captures the reader’s curiosity with an existential question. What did he discover that changed how he sees, not just Shakespeare, but himself and the world? Thus, Durkee uses allegory—an Elizabethan trope—to snare 21st-century readers.

Durkee presents a parade of Shakespeare portraits—some that may be Shakespeare that are not identified as such, others that are identified as such that are not, and still others that are not, but have been vainly altered to morph them into a portrait of Shakespeare. In the world of Shakespeare portraits, things get messy very fast as portraits are “restored.” What becomes crystal clear is that once a painting exhibits potential for becoming “a Shakespeare portrait,” strange things begin to happen. As these paintings are restored, there are many alternations that may include the background, the clothing, the hairline, any or all of which are “restored”—i.e., altered. Portraits owned by private individuals, the Royal Shakespeare Company, or even the Folger Shakespeare Library have all undergone “restorations” that significantly altered the original portrait or failed to reveal alterations to the original portrait. As the reader follows Durkee into this restoration morass, a sense of intellectual nausea rapidly ensues. “How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, Seem to me all the uses of this world! Fie on’t! ah fie! ’tis an unweeded garden, That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature Possess it merely” (*Hamlet*, 1.2.133–37). Shakespeare “portraits” are very profitable.

For the average reader, it will come as a shock that two of the world’s most idealized Shakespeare organizations, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Folger Shakespeare Library, have “portraits of Shakespeare” whose histories are problematic. The RSC and the Folger have both been accused of failing to fulfill their caretaker mandate for their “Shakespeare portraits.” The Royal Shakespeare Company has “the Flower original,” long thought to be either the portrait, or a copy of the portrait used for the Droeshout engraving. The RSC had the portrait repaired and repainted—“restored”—in such a manner that the respected German scholar Hildegard Hammerschmidt-Hummel, who had studied the portrait before it was “restored,” declared that it was not a restoration but a forgery. Her accusation was either belittled or ignored, a common academic practice for dealing with inconvenient truths.

The Folger has the largest collection of Shakespeare portraits in the world. Durkee’s greatest frustration is the repeated failure to examine supposed Shakespeare portraits based on science—especially considering the incredible advances that have been made in the field since the 1940s. A Folger trustee statement forbids the x-ray of Shakespeare portraits “unless there is a public

out-cry” (33). Durkee then proceeds to reveal the clash between the Oxfordians and the Folger over the Ashbourne portrait in the 1940s. He tells just enough of this decades-long story to avoid asphyxiating the reader. Durkee wonders why the Folger continues to exhibit the Ashbourne painting after “identifying” it as a mayor of London. At the end of the book, Durkee enters the Folger and looks at the Ashbourne. I will not reveal what he sees, but it is chilling and a mirror of the history he has so thoroughly studied. This seems to be the perfect time for “for a public outcry” for a detailed analysis of the Ashbourne with all the new technology now available. The Oxfordian community needs to do this now while Durkee’s and Elizabeth Winkler’s books are stirring up interest in the Shakespeare authorship question.

By now, anyone familiar with the evolution of Shakespeare “biographies” over the centuries sees the history of Shakespeare biographies and Shakespeare “portraits” sadly mirroring each other. Whereas Shakespeare biographies keep adding more “could have’s,” “might have’s,” “probably’s,” and “certainly’s,” until we literally attain in pages the equivalence of Mark Twain’s infamous 600 barrels of plaster to cover nine bones, portraits thought possibly to be Shakespeare suffer the same assault—with removal of anything that is not “Shakespeare.” Alterations include scraping and repainting, the alteration of clothing to fit the fashion, the removal of hair and anything else that might identify a portrait as not Shakespeare. In one case, Durkee observes the painter’s signature moved around the portrait with each restoration. In short, nothing is off limits as far as “restoration” goes, just as nothing is off limits as far as imagining a Shakespeare biography. Durkee makes it quite clear that anybody who questions a portrait’s restoration, or even worse, anybody who questions an iconic Shakespeare portrait, is subject to ridicule. Ridicule and *ad hominem* attacks have been the *modus operandi* of Stratfordians for more than a century, not only in academia but also in the world of portraiture: kill the messenger.

With an unknown biography, authors can enrich it with a plethora of conditionals and subjunctives, but with a painting, changes leave scars that are now discernible with modern technology and more so with every passing year. The history of the defacement of “Shakespeare’s portraits” is concrete evidence that they have been manipulated: there are no conditionals or subjunctives that can hide the scars. Unlike a biography for which there is no evidence and for which the argument is “We don’t know, so you can’t prove it’s not true,” or “He was a genius so anything is possible,” with a portrait you can now no longer get away with “restoration” that includes changes to the portrait. If changes are made, they are visible via technology. As Durkee reveals, the history of Shakespeare’s portraits is one of mistaken identity at best and knowing falsification of identity at worst, with the latter being frequently utilized because a portrait becomes invaluable once it is possibly an authentic painting of the Bard.

Durkee leaves us feeling like we just fell into the cesspool one time too many. Like Diogenes, we are left to wonder if an honest man can be found. Well, yes he can be—Durkee is an honest man, but he pays a terrible price. He makes it very clear what it's like to keep banging on a locked door to the castle keep. Understanding what he is up against, Durkee chooses the same path as Elizabeth Winkler does in *Shakespeare Was a Woman and Other Heresies*: he takes his discoveries to the general public with the hope that, eventually, sheer numbers will make a difference. When the establishment is corrupt, the only way to win the struggle is to take it to the people.

In 2023, Nathan Heller ignited a firestorm with his article, “The End of the English Major” in *The New Yorker* (Feb. 27, 2023). Trying to cast the blame for the death of English studies on a lack of government spending, the new age of computers, etc., English professors have failed to consider that layers of literary theory and esoteric vocabulary have fossilized the study of English literature, taking the life out of it. If we are going to save the study of English literature, we need to make it relevant to our everyday lives once again: the theory du jour is not going to save it. We need to bring back psychology and the life of the author to understand the literary work on a human level. With that understanding of our strengths and weaknesses, literature prepares us for the real world and how to deal with it. For Shakespeare studies to regain their viability, censorship of the authorship question must stop so that students can ponder what these great works of literature mean without the shackles of what Shakespeare of Stratford could or could not have known.

Durkee's book leaves us with a challenge. It is time for “a public hue and cry” (which is what the Folger requires) for a new examination of the Ashbourne portrait with all the new technology available since it was last studied in the 1940s. We don't want it to meet the same fate as “the Flower Portrait.” Hopefully, it's not already too late.

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Is That True? Shakespearean Explorations

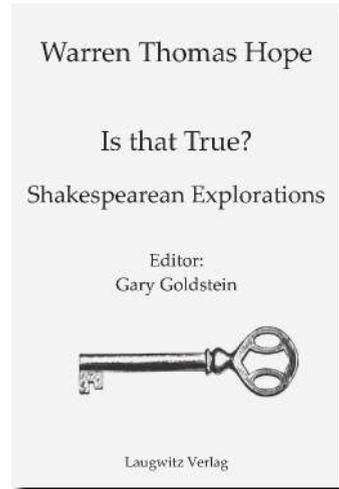
Reviewed by Michael Delahoyde & Don Ostrowski

Is That True? Shakespearean Explorations. By Warren Hope. Verlag Laugwitz, Germany, 2024, 200 pages (paperback \$12.00).

In addition to “learned and valiant,” one character in *Twelfth Night* is said to be “In voices well divulged,” meaning praised by many. The same may be said of both Shakespeare and Warren Hope, but with the additional subtler meaning that these latter two express themselves in a number of diverse voices, coming from single consistent perspectives. We can find this in the collection of Warren Hope’s writings, published here and covering half a century of original research and scholarship: articles, reviews, and other writings.

After concisely dismissing Shakspeare of Stratford and establishing Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford as the logical author behind the adopted name “Shakespeare,” Hope sheds Oxfordian light on a wide variety of topics such as identifying the inspiration behind Shakespearean characters, situating Shakespeare in the context of other writers of his time and later, and giving sound consideration to the *Sonnets* and their reception as both personal and published poems.

Hope appreciates others’ insights and scholarship too—historical, literary, biographical, even fictional. He also appreciates the others themselves,



offering admiring, informative, and touching obituaries for late Oxfordians. To our delight, in another tone of voice, he nevertheless pulls no punches when exposing Stratfordian misrepresentations, politics, and “fakery”; self-important academic empty jargon; or cheesy sentimentalism among commentators on Shakespeare.

Unifying all these divergent pieces is Hope urging us, inspiring us, to follow him in a love of the poetry and of the monumental accomplishments of the real Shakespeare.

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This compilation of eight articles and twenty-five reviews is an impressive selection of the epitomes of the published work of Prof. Warren Hope, who spent 50 years exploring and writing about the Shakespeare authorship question as a scholar of the English Renaissance.

Hope brilliantly lays out his literary evidence for concluding that the 17th Earl of Oxford (Edward de Vere) was the author of the works attributed to William Shakespeare. The articles in Part I of this collection demonstrate his reasons for arriving at that conclusion. While his reviews in Part II of books by those who support the conventional view and by those who support the Oxfordian view, as well as by those who try to circumvent the authorship question, are incisive.

The entire collection is complemented by an informative introduction, not only about the academic achievements of Hope, but also about the nature of the Elizabethan theater. All in all, *Is That True?* is a worthy contribution to the growing Oxfordian scholarly literature.

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The Starre, the Moone, the Sunne

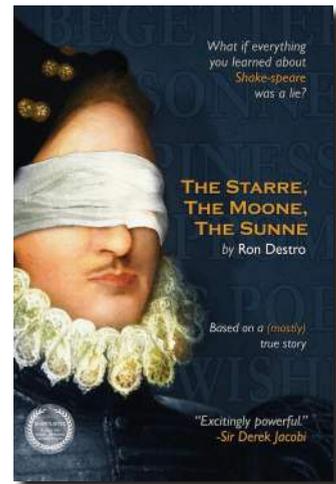
Reviewed by Richard M. Waugaman

The Starre, the Moone, the Sunne. By Ron Destro. Australia: Contempo Publishing, August 31, 2023, (paperback, \$16.99 or Kindle \$14.99).

What, exactly, was the relationship between the 17th Earl of Oxford and William Shakspeare, merchant of Stratford? Would we ever like to know! Until solid evidence answers this perennial question, we have fine imaginative writers such as Ron Destro to slake our thirst to know more. As Destro has said, he hoped to reach a wider audience with his murder mystery than do the nonfiction works of Charlton Ogburn, Mark (Margo) Anderson, Noemi Magri, Richard Whalen, Roger Stritmatter, and others. The many murders in his novel suggest that Oxford's authorship was kept secret because people were killed for disclosing it.

Oxfordian readers will enjoy seeing insider jokes with characters such as "Jack Loney," "Charles Ogburn," "Master Strittmaster," and "Marianna Magri." Names of many other Oxfordian scholars are equally transparent. A hidden name that will slip by most readers, though, is "Sam wanted a maker" (90) alluding to Sam Wanamaker, the actor credited for his tireless efforts to have the Globe theater reconstructed. A notorious Stratfordian friend of mine appears in the novel as "an ill-nurtured dolt by name of Allen of Nilson" (138).

The book's title alludes most directly to a secret message "inked" on the palm of the printer Nathaniel North, which he shows his son Nicholas just before



Nathaniel is beheaded. Deliberately or not, Destro's title also brings to mind the third and fourth verses of one of Oxford's favorite psalms—Psalm 8, in the *Whole Book of Psalms* translation that he favored:

“And when I see the heav'ns above,
The sun, the moon, and all the stars,
Lord, what is man...”

Oxford's Sonnet 21 deliberately echoes Psalm 8. In turn, Psalm 8 may have influenced St. Francis's famous “Canticle of the Sun” (which itself may have also influenced Sonnet 21): “Laudato sie...spetialmente messor lo frate Sole...per sora Luna e le stelle” (“Praised be...especially Brother Sun...Sister Moon and the stars”).

We're all familiar with unreliable narrators, who can make us feel smarter than them. Arthur Taverner, our ostensibly deceased narrator here, is often clueless about the larger picture, just telling us what he knows. It's disarming, and helps the general reader not feel as overwhelmed with unfamiliar Oxfordian facts and theories.

With the *Oxford English Dictionary* as reference, Destro uses only vocabulary that was extant when the novel takes place. He may take this a bit too far—wondering why he uses “hissself” rather than “himself,” I looked this up, and was surprised to find that “himself” goes back to Old English. Similarly, although “little” also goes back to Old English, we find it replaced regularly by the less familiar “tittle.”

Oxfordian readers will notice many passages that come from Destro's fertile imagination. Lest traditionalists be tempted to pounce on these as untruthful, the cover of the novel plainly acknowledges, below the title, “Based on a (mostly) true story.” And his character Eliza Sears repeats, “my tale is true (mostly)” (141). The narrator himself says the number of Oxford's children “[depends] on whose lies you believe” (194). A novel is indeed the best place for many unproven speculations about Oxford's life. Oxford was said to entertain his companions with tall tales. Some of them have become accepted as factual. But we should remind ourselves that professional writers of fiction sometimes make use of their talents to tell fictitious stories about their lives.

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One story that finds its way into Destro's novel involves pirates seizing Oxford's ship as he crossed the Channel after his 14 months on the Continent. Yes, Oxford's account of the details of this alleged event seems to have been believed at court. However, we might recall that, in creating his brand, Julius Caesar told a similarly self-aggrandizing story of his brave encounter with pirates (it was only in the 20th century that historians acknowledged that Caesar was prone to embellishing the facts). Perhaps both stories are true. In Destro's novel, though, it's the Widow Sears who tells of the pirates, and the narrator says of her that "she was happy to inform. Some say happy to *invent*" (172).

The book began as a screenplay some twenty years ago, but it was put in a drawer when it was pre-empted by Roland Emmerich's film *Anonymus*. That gave Destro many more years to read Oxfordian scholarship and to develop his ideas. Like *Anonymus*, Destro's novel takes poetic liberties with chronology. In it, for example, Oxford's mother remarries only one month after his father's death. And Destro has the Queen agree to reopen the theaters, on condition that Oxford support Robert Cecil being named the Queen's principal secretary. He has these latter two events happen the same year Oxford began receiving his £1,000 royal annuity (whereas they actually took place ten years apart). The Queen also demands that Oxford start writing history plays, to "prepare our subjects for the battles to come, the fight against Rome" (195). For Oxfordians, that is a plausible theory to explain why the miserly Queen awarded Oxford his £1,000 pension in 1586. Destro, in his defense, is writing an appealing fictional narrative, not history. And Destro follows other post-Stratfordian works of fiction such as Amy Freed's 2001 play *The Beard of Avon*; Sarah Smith's 2003 novel *Chasing Shakespeare*; and Ros Barber's 2014 novel in verse, *The Marlowe Papers*.

Destro has a fascinating biography. An actor, director, playwright, and teacher, he discovered the Oxfordian theory some 25 years ago from his distinguished voice teacher at Columbia, Kristin Linklater. Destro is intimately familiar with the psychology of actors—"Want to know the true heart of a player? Then watch him *on* the stage and not *off* of it. For that is where he may truly be [himself]" (91). Even though some Shakespeare actors tell Destro that knowing who wrote the plays doesn't matter to them, he maintains that it should matter to the director. Oxfordians often experience new depths of pleasure and understanding in watching a play, knowing it was Oxford's work, and knowing more about what is going on between the lines—just as Oxford's court audiences would have known.

Each reader will react differently to specific elements of the speculative plot, given the lively disagreements among Oxfordians about such matters as whether or not Shakespeare was in fact a "player." Personally, I find it plausible that this was an invented detail, to assist in portraying him as a front man,

either before or after his death. After all, there is no record of his acting after 1604, the year of Oxford's death. Some have called on the Shakespeare Oxford Fellowship to take an official position on such undecided issues. The late past President of the SOF, Thomas Regnier, wisely counseled us instead to tolerate our differences.

One of the many pleasures offered by this highly readable book is the Oxfordian wordplay throughout. Pirates have "a length o' daggers and a load o' swaggers" (170). Later, Lyly is with Oxford's chapel singers, while nearby, guests in the Queen's garden stretch "from the *lilies* to the lilacs" (188; my emphasis). Soon after this, we read of "the peering at the peers that peeped by" (190). On the next page, Oxford says—with the Euphuistic alliteration on steroids that pervades the book—"Oh, Horatio...the howling hounds of hell do haunt me still." At another point, "many onlookers looked on" (196). There are many other features that made Destro's novel a delight to read. Caroline Spurgeon, in her 1935 *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells us*, wrote, "Shakespeare has clearly a very acute sense of smell, and is peculiarly sensitive to bad smells" (78). Throughout the novel, Oxford detests foul smells. And he pleases the Queen when he presents her with Italian perfumed gloves.

Those who prefer audiobooks have the good fortune of being able to listen to Sir Derek Jacobi narrate it.

The Shakespearean Interplay with Marlowe

Reviewed by Gary Goldstein

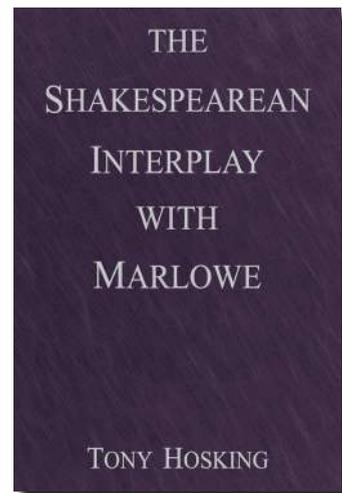
The Shakespearean Interplay with Marlowe. By Tony Hosking. The Shogi Foundation, 2024, 197 pages (\$37.00 includes shipping, available directly from <http://www.shogifoundation.co.uk/>. The international payment method is Paypal).

Tony Hosking is an Oxfordian scholar who joins the ongoing debate about the nature of the literary relationship between the Earl of Oxford and Christopher Marlowe, though he is at odds with other scholars. Did Christopher Marlowe’s works influence Shakespeare or was it the other way around? Was it a mutual engagement between the two dramatists during the years 1585–1593, when Marlowe’s seven plays and two poems were produced on stage or circulating in manuscript?

Hosking posits that it was reciprocal in that both authors borrowed from each other throughout their careers. Hosking is categorical in stating that “Every play or poem by Shakespeare or Marlowe has parallels in each other’s work.” He also claims that Marlowe is the Rival Poet in Shakespeare’s Sonnets rather than Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex, who Peter Moore proposed in his *The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised* (2009).

See https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/TOX18_Peter_Moore_Essex.pdf.

According to Richard Malim, author of *Shakespeare’s Revolution* (2022), the influence more likely flowed from Shakespeare to Marlowe since the Earl of



The Shakespearean Interplay with Marlowe

Oxford had been writing poetry and plays since the mid-1570s. Thus, when Marlowe began to write in the mid-1580s, there was only one predecessor of any note: Oxford. In that relationship, Malim asserts, Oxford was a “witty parodist of Marlowe.”

Hosking delineates the intimate interplay in the plays and poems between the two poets.

Marlowe in *The Jew of Malta*:

But stay! What star shines yonder in the East?
The lodestar of my life, if Abigail. (2.1)

Shakespeare in *Romeo and Juliet*:

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?
It is the East, and Juliet is the sun! (2.1)



Marlowe in *2 Tamburlaine*:

Holla, ye pampered jades of Asia!
What, but ye can draw but twenty miles a day,
And have so proud a chariot at your heels... (4.3)

Shakespeare in *2 Henry IV*:

Shall packhorses,
And hollow pampered jades of Asia,
Which cannot go but thirty miles a day... (2.4)



Marlowe in *Doctor Faustus*:

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? (5.1)

Shakespeare in *Richard II*:

Was this face the face
That every day under his household roof
Did keep ten thousand men? (4.1)



Hosking goes on to outline seven parallels between *1* and *2 Tamburlaine* and *Titus Andronicus*, but also a horde of other textual allusions between the two dramatists in what is clearly an ongoing dialogue of parody and celebration.

Finally, Hosking presents abundant evidence from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* that he admired Marlowe enough to quote liberally from the latter's works while delivering a series of eulogies for him in the pastoral comedy (3.3): "When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room," a reference to Marlowe's murder in a tavern during an argument with colleagues over the bill. It also refers to Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, where Barabas says in the opening scene: "inclose infinite riches in a little room." Thus Shakespeare here makes both a literal and literary echo of Marlowe and his works.

That admiration in *AYLI* was deep enough for Shakespeare to also quote from Marlowe's poetry. In Act 3, scene 5, Phoebe says: "Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might, 'Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?'" (from *Hero and Leander* line 171).

In a final flourish of admiration for Marlowe, when Touchstone is flirting with Audrey, the clown mentions that "most capricious poet, honest Ovid" (3.3), since Marlowe had translated Ovid's *Love Elegies*. And while Shakespeare lifts a storyline or two from the Roman poet, he is only mentioned by name twice in all of Shakespeare's plays—here and in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

There is a last point about Shakespeare's tributes to Marlowe in *AYLI*—we exclaim upon a man's death when it happens; six years later, we simply refer to him in the past tense. Since experts believe *AYLI* was written in 1599, the topical allusions to 1593 clearly demonstrate an earlier date of composition than the current scholarly consensus.

