

Open letter to Stratfordians and Anti-Stratfordians

of Lamberto Tassinari and Stephen Greenblatt

on Shakespeare and Florio

by Saul Gerevini

"In medio stat veritas."

Recently I have read some works written by Prof. Stephen Greenblatt and Prof. Lamberto Tassinari in which they postulated a negative relationship between William Shaksper (the actor from Stratford thought to have written William Shakespeare's works) and John Florio, one of the most significant cultural figure of the Elizabethan age. Greenblatt reports it in the introduction of his book "Shakespeare's Montaigne" (2014), while Tassinari writes about it in "Shakespeare è il nome d'arte di John Florio" (2008). Unfortunately for them a bad relationship between Florio and Shaksper is impossible since they were close friends and collaborators.

For a better comprehension of this article it is useful to know that "William Shaksper" is one of the ways the actor from Stratford (thought to be William Shakespeare only by the Stratfordians) used to pen his only six signatures in his private documents. To avoid confusion I will be using the name 'Shaksper' for the actor and Shakespeare for the literary identity, because, as we will see, they are two different entities.

There are evidences of this collaboration and friendship between Florio and Shaksper, and since Tassinari invited me (Le Randonneur, September 2014) to expose my evidences to the academic community in order to have an evaluation, I accept his invitation. Thus, I submit this article to the honorable Shakespeare's scholars hoping to be excused in case the attempt in proposing my ideas on a so difficult question as Shakespeare's identity would not sort out what I aim: a clear explanation of who Shakespeare was. I know that Stratfordians and Anti-Stratfordians have very well sedimented and unremovable opinions on this matter, nevertheless I will give my suggestions being sure to bring something new to a very vexed old story.

In case my errors would be too great, or my approach sometimes aggressive to avoid condemnation I beg your pardon, dear readers, hoping in your disposition to comprehension and mercifulness. In this case I invite you to look at the general structure of what I submit to you and not at the particulars. Errors occur also to well established Shakespeare's scholars. This is the case, one of the many, of Prof. Schott McCrea who, writing about Shakespeare's identity, attributed to Florio a sonnet written by John Fletcher. Surely the initials of the names, J.F., tricked him. All this can easily happen.

Having said that, let us get started saying that Greenblatt is a Stratfordian and this means he believes the actor from "Stratford" William Shaksper and William Shakespeare are the same person. Tassinari is an Antistratfordian so he does not consider William Shaksper and William Shakespeare the same person.

He proposes John Florio as the true author of William Shakespeare's works. There are many kinds of Antistratfordians depending on who they propose as Shakespeare: Marlowe, Bacon, Oxford, Queen Elizabeth I, and so on. The list is really long, but no one of them up to now has brought sustainable and credible evidences for their candidates. Anyway, Stratfordians have not done any better than the Antistratfordians in producing evidences for their candidate William Shaksper.

I think Tassinari have good reasons to propose Florio as Shakespeare, but he has no proof to support his arguments, in fact he has not yet been able to be convincing. Before he presented his book (March 2008) on Florio and Shakespeare, I had already written about Florio and Shakespeare as being the same person (Il Tirreno, settembre 2007 - Storia in Rete, January 2008) but what distinguishes Tassinari's view from mine is the relationship the actor from Stratford Will Shaksper had with Florio. I do not share Greenblatt and Tassinari's vision because in books of Shakespeare's time we find that Florio and Shaksper were friends and collaborators.

If we deny it we deny a truth written black in white in well known books of Shakespeare's time. I am going to give evidences for that.

Greenblatt's vision on a bad relationship between Florio and Shakespeare, that more or less every Stratfordian would subscribe, is something we do not find anywhere. Further more, what Greenblatt writes is offensive toward Florio because he creates dangerous suppositions. Given his authority, these suppositions may become a sort of truth in Greenblatt readers' mind, and may form the fundament for a prejudice really difficult to be dismantled. Unfortunately Tassinari does just the same with Shaksper.

Both Tassinari and Greenblatt's works on Shakespeare's identity are not convincing, because they do not consider a long chain of events reported on well known books about the good relationship Florio and Shaksper had. They should take evidence of these facts before expressing any kind of judgments on Shakespeare's identity.

Who is not informed about Shakespeare could not know that there is a discussion on Shakespeare's identity that has been going on for ages, and this is one of the most famous authorship controversy ever. Nowadays this discussion is becoming bigger and bigger, and an increasingly large number of people is interested in it, but Greenblatt and Tassinari write nothing new about this fascinating argument in terms of evidences.

Greenblatt writes that William Shakespeare is a genius of immense capabilities, and this is true because William Shakespeare is an immense genius, but this genius is difficult to be found in William Shaksper's real life and documents belonging to him. So in Greenblatt's book, in absence of clear evidences, we do not understand how Shaksper may have been the author of Shakespeare's works.

Tassinari writes that John Florio is the true author of Shakespeare's works, but he is not able to demonstrate it.

He just writes about all the capabilities and acquaintances Florio had (which are really immense) but he does not solve the problem of how Florio can be Shakespeare. Despite of some intuitive arguments that can relate Florio to Shakespeare, for instance his linguistic abilities (Herman Haller, John Florio: A World of Words, 2013) Tassinari's view is invalidated by Stratfordian scholars, as Darras, because of lack of objective facts. Tassinari just goes on harping on Florio as being Shakespeare but does not bring evidences for it.

Anyway he is not the only one, Antistratfordians up to now have not brought clear and undeniable evidences in proposing their ideas, and in absence of concrete evidences I think it is just the same to propose Marlowe, Bacon, Oxford or some other nobleman or noblewoman as Mary Sidney, and (why not?) William Shaksper too. As Florio is concerned, many may have had more or less the same Florio's abilities, as for instance Francis Bacon or Mary Sidney, as their supporters say: in this case the debate on Shakespeare's identity would go on forever.

We can do all the talks and philosophy we want about the meanings and the interpretations of Shakespeare's works, or even of every single word he penned, and this is really useful in order to create new conceptions from his writings. In this case everyone has to be free to express any kind of idea, even if we should be coherent in treating our arguments. But we can not make too much philosophy or talks about his identity in absence of proof. We should avoid also anecdotal interpretations, because we need solid proof to support our ideas on Shakespeare's identity.

Prof. Jacques Darras, a Stratfordian, asks Tassinari to produce proof if he wants his ideas to be accepted, otherwise everyone (from Shaksper to Bacon, and all the others in between) has the same possibility to be the real author of Shakespeare's works. But Darras too does not bring evidences on Shaksper being Shakespeare. Thus even Prof. Jonathan Bate, a Stratfordian as well as Darras, should produce solid proof about what he says on Shakespeare and Florio, obviously avoiding anecdotal interpretations (Bate, *the Genius of Shakespeare*, 1997).

We should follow the principle that, if we have no proof, we should not talk or write about Shakespeare's identity. This is valid on both sides even if Stratfordian at least have some evidences to support what they say: I think Ben Jonson may be a good reference for them. In fact Stratfordian scholar Jacques Darras has cited Ben Jonson, among others, to reinforce his attack to Tassinari in the blog 'Le Randonneur', and I wonder if Tassinari could be able to reply properly to it. In fact Darras in his attack writes:

le C.A.F. (Comité des Amis de Florio), n'a trouvé aucune preuve, aucun indice, aucun témoignage.
That is: "C.A.F. (Florio's Friends Committee) has found no proof, no clue, no evidences"

To a certain extent Darras is right, since he has more evidences than Tassinari in supporting Shaksper as Shakespeare. On the other side he is wrong, because he has not referred to Florio as an important part of Shakespeare's identity. Like Greenblatt and Tassinari, I think he too should reformulate his ideas on Florio and Shakespeare.

Greenblatt and Tassinari write about a negative relationship between Florio and Shaksper even though each of them give different reasons. Greenblatt suggests that Shakespeare mocked Florio in many occasions, but above all in *Love's labour's Lost*. Jonathan Bate sustains it too, further more he writes about Florio in a really offensive and derogatory way (*The Genius of Shakespeare*, p. 54/58).

In fact Bate writes in his 'the Genius' (p. 56), "Unromantic as (Florio) the thought may be, there is no reason why we should imagine Shakespeare sleeping with Florio's wife as well as pilfering his library and mocking his phrases (...). A spirited and neglected wife, (Florio's wife), like the young lady of the city in the William the Conqueror story, could easily enjoy a turn in bed with the witty poet (Shaksper). And should find hard to resist the advances of the Earl (Southampton), knowing that her husband (Florio) income and hence children's well-being depended on his retaining his post".

Where does Bate get all this? He says "My story is and is not a fantasy", ('the Genius', p. 58). This is not a truth, I mean something reliable and demonstrable, this is speculation. In fact Bate says "these speculations are indebted to the conversation of John Harding" ('the Genius', p. 346), who was Bate's neighbor when he lived in Toxteth, ('the Genius', p. 65). I think that what John Harding reported about Florio should have had a different outcome in Bate's book, since John Harding had devoted forty years of his life ('the Genius', p. 65) in collecting proof in favor of Florio being Shakespeare. I think his evidences are worthy to be studied, or to have the chance to be considered, or at least respected.

I do not think John Harding would have shared what Bate has written about Florio. Surely he would have had good arguments to sustain his view if he had had the chance to do it. But he was not a scholar, so he did not have the chance to express himself on this matter. What is worthy to note here is that Bate, using anecdotal interpretations, ends up being really offensive about Florio. All the people who have read his book, since Bate is an authoritative scholar, could think that what he wrote on Florio is the truth. Could they ever change their mind about Florio? I hope so! But in the while the prejudice has been created. Once more, this is the danger of using suppositions.

Meanwhile Tassinari seems to say that Florio, together with Nashe and others, accused Shaksper to be a dishonest broker and a literary thief who pirated also John Florio's works. Following Bate's "imagining technic", in constructing biographies, I would be tempted to say that Tassinari is right but I can not do it because in books of Shakespeare's time, some of them Florio's books, I find something really different from what Tassinari writes.

These misleading ideas on Florio and Shaksper depend on the fact that they (Greenblatt, Bate and Tassinari) have not considered a long chain of events that point toward a completely new perspective on Will Shaksper, and in particular on the relationship he had with John Florio: their relationship was not negative but, on the contrary, very good.

The events I am talking about are real new evidences. They have never been reported before by any researcher even though many of them have declared 'new evidences'. For instance, Diana Price has not reported "new evidences" in her "Unorthodox biography". In fact, having not cited Florio and his good relationship with Will Shaksper she has not reported "new evidences" but the classic old Antistratfordian ones.

Somehow Will Shaksper is William Shakespeare, but only if we understand that he was John Florio's precious collaborator. As already said, we have to consider carefully certain events to understand this truth. Some of these events are the argument of this article.

John Florio, Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe

These events recount of a destructive, sour, malicious and underground (but nevertheless known by many at those times) quarrel between John Florio, Thomas Nashe and Robert Greene, but mainly between Florio and Nashe. The subject of this quarrel was also William Shakespeare, and following it through the wrinkles of the Golden Age we find out Florio defending and supporting Shaksper from Nashe and Greene's attacks.

This quarrel leads to discover Shakespeare's true identity and creates the basis upon which we can built all the philosophy we want when we have to cope with the interpretation of Shakespeare's works. Otherwise it can be pointless to talk about Shakespeare's works, as his sonnets for instance, considering them as made only by Shaksper, or worse, by the Earl of Oxford for instance. All Shakespeare's works have no meaning if we exclude Florio and/or Shaksper.

Someone says that Shaksper (considering exclusively him as Shakespeare) is a Godsend figure for Shakespeare's Statfordian critics and scholars (as Greenblatt for instance) because having him an unknown existence everything we say can be right: as for instance that he did not need a profound training in education because he was an incredible genius, as Darras seems to suggest. Differently from Darras I think that a genius reveals himself even in his private life and documents, but this does not happen in Shaksper's private life and documents. Instead, we find Florio was a genius not only in his private life and documents but also in his social mobility: his testified, undeniable, close, lovely and friendly relationship with so many nobles, as for instance with the Earl of Southampton, the Pembroke family and the Queen Anne of Denmark, among the many, demonstrates it.

As far as Shakespeare's identity is concerned, things start changing when we consider Shakespeare as a collaboration between Florio and Shaksper. Florio's well known biography, if properly studied and analyzed, allows Shaksper to have a real existence as a man of theatre. Not a genius, but a man who worked hard to make his way, whose outcomes concerning the theatre and literature need to be properly studied and understood. These outcomes become evident only if we look closely to the relationship he had with Florio.

The equation that permits the existence of a real Shakespeare is "Florio and Shaksper together equals Shakespeare". The path to solve this equation is the quarrel Florio had with Greene and Nashe. We can trace the hints of this quarrel following a 'fil rouge', or a red line, but better a "red herring" thread interspersed in Nashe's books.

Why this quarrel has not yet come out, being it so evident? It is not so difficult to trace it back, it would suffice to read carefully Greene and Florio's books to find it out. In the introduction of Greene's *Menaphon* (1589) Greene's friend Thomas Nashe attacks the same person Greene attacks in his *Groatsworth*, written three years later (1592). This person is John Florio. In the introduction of the *Second Fruits*, Florio attacks heavily Robert Greene, Greene and Florio thus were not friends, not were Nashe and Florio. Florio writes that he does not belong to Greene and Nashe's literary circle ("I am not of their faction" are Florio's words, *Second Fruits*, 1591). This is a key factor in understanding Shakespeare's identity, if we miss it everything becomes incomprehensible.

In this case F. Yates is wrong when she writes, in her however remarkable, marvelous and really interesting Florio's biography, that Nashe and Florio were friends belonging to the same literary circle. She is also wrong, I think, when she says that Giordano Bruno was only a magician and refuses him as a scientist, which Bruno was to a certain extent. But her mistakes and misleading points of view on Florio and Bruno are nothing compared to the really great work she did writing about them.

I share Hillary Gatty's vision on Bruno, I think it is unconventional but appropriated. Julia Jones has written a very interesting book on Shakespeare and Bruno, her ideas give a better understanding on the 'shade' Bruno has cast on Shakespeare (Julia Jones, *The Brave New World of Giordano Bruno*, 2000). Her considerations on Hamlet and Bruno's philosophy are really convincing to me.

We should ask ourselves why so much Bruno's philosophy is Shakespeare's works. Did Shaksper knew Bruno personally? Did he read Bruno's books? Let us consider that they were not written in English.

The "great faction of good writers who bandie with me" that Florio wrote about in the "World of Words" does not include Nashe, thus Tassinari too is wrong then (2008, pag. 88) when he writes that "Nashe was a man of letters very close to Florio". Florio and Nashe were not "very close", nor belonging to the same literary circle, because Florio was not of Nashe's faction: it is J. Florio himself who writes it. But among the "great faction of good writers who bandie with me" that Florio refers to we have to include William Shaksper too. The proof is in Florio's 'Second Fruits'.

To understand properly what Florio writes and says we have only to read carefully his texts to find out his enemies and why they attacked him. The greatest Florio's enemies, Nashe and Greene, mainly in the Menaphon's introduction (1589) and in the Groatsworth (1592) are targeting negatively John Florio. Thus in the Menaphon the target is not Thomas Kyd since he did not reply to these attacks, while Florio in his Second Fruits (1591) replied to Nashe's attacks almost "verbatim", as Giulia Harding writes in our website (www.shakespeareandflorio.net). So, analyzing these facts we can have the link, in a very comprehensible way, between Florio and the first citation of Hamlet, as described in the Menaphon. This is really significant: we find "Shakespeare" in the Menaphon, as some scholars sustain, and we have a clear justification for it.

In Greene's Groatsworth Florio is the "Absolute Johannes Factotum" who Greene is talking about, we can understand it reading carefully Florio's World of Words (1598), I am going to give proof for this. In this case we have found a capable "Shakeapeare", sustainable and reliable. It is still Florio the "Italian pen" so despised by Nashe in the introduction of Greene's Menaphon, we find evidence of it in Florio's Second Fruits. In this case we find the reasons why Florio preferred to work in "disguised arrays", as Nashe says, and we clearly understand the importance of the collaboration Florio had with Shaksper. Nashe would not have been a 'good collaborator', his psychological profile and attitude to life and writing would not have allowed it. Shaksper fitted perfect the role instead, there are evidence of it in the Second Fruits.

In the Groatsworth "Shake-scene" is not only Shaksper, but Florio and Shaksper working together, as represented by the "tiger's heart in a player's hide". We find evidence for it both in the Second Fruits, were there are reference to Shaksper, in Chettle Kind Heart's Dream (1592) and in 'the Return from Parnassus'. It is really easy to understand all this stuff, we need only the attitude and patience to dig in the right books of Shakespeare's time to make all this evident.

Among these books we have to list also "Willoby his Avisia", where we can find something really interesting: this "something" makes evident that Saul Frampton is wrong in writing about Florio and "Willoby his Avisia". To give a hint: in 'Willoby his Avisia' we should consider carefully the intimate relationship between the young HW, the new actor, and the 'old player' called WS. This WS is supposed to be William Shakespeare by scholars. I repeat: 'the old player' not 'the young player', Shaksper was not 'old' at the time 'Willoby his Avisia' was published (1594). Looking in this direction it could come out that the 'old player' and 'Johannes Factotum' cited by Greene in his Groatsworth might be the same person. Anyway, I agree with Frampton that Florio was the overseer who revised Shakespeare's Folio in 1623, I wrote it too in my book (November 2008).

Johannes Factotum

Many Stratfordian researchers and scholars (such as Jonathan Bate in "the Genius of Shakespeare") have proposed "Absolute Johannes Factotum" and Shaksper as the same person, but none of them has brought evidences for it. Also the first John Florio's supporter, Santi Paladino, tried in 1936 (more or less) to propose "Absolute Johannes Factotum" as Florio, but he did not bring evidences.

Like many others Paladino in his book made just a lot of suppositions, in fact Herman Haller writes about it: "a pamphlet rife with fantasy and historical distortions written during the Fascist period, with Shakespeare being identified with Florio's father Michelangelo" (Herman Haller, John Florio: A Worlde of Wordes, 2013).

Haller defines my book on Shakespeare and Florio (2008) "rather entertaining" and I hope this is a positive comment. In case "entertaining" does not indicate a positive evaluation, I anyway thank sincerely Professor Haller for having read my book and for his kindness in expressing his view.

Nevertheless, Paladino's affirmations and suppositions are very close to the truth, and anyway closer than those of Greenblatt. In fact, after Corrado Panzieri researches, we can sustain that Michelangelo Florio may have had a part in constructing Shakespeare. Panzieri is writing a book where he can demonstrate, in documents of Shakespeare's time, that Michelangelo Florio returned to England around 1577 and died in London in 1605. Traces of his live and movements can be detected in Shakespeare's works, as Panzieri and Massimo Nobili reports in some of their articles. Michelangelo Florio's life may give a profound insight and comprehension on many things that up to now remained unexplicable and misterious about Shakespeare's works, as for instance his deep knowledge of Italy (see Nobili and Panzieri's articles in www.shakespeareandflorio.net).

Panzieri too can give an autoritative explanation on why John Florio was known as Johannes Factotum, while I can give a precise description why the "absolute Johannes Factotum" cited in Greene's Groatsworth and John Florio are the same person: all supported by undeniable proof, or very close to be undeniable at least. Giulia Harding, who shares part of my vision on Florio and Shakespeare, can do very easily the same thing, if not even much better than me. What distinguishes my vision from hers is mainly the sonnet of "Phaeton". I sustain it was written by Shaksper while I think she proposes the Earl of Southampton instead.

High speed composition technicf

What are the reasons why Florio and Nashe quarreled? Mainly two: Southampton's patronage and writing. Let us focus our attention on the writing matter, Southampton's patronage will be discussed further on.

In the Menaphon (1589) Nashe writes that someone, who is a writer, steals from other writers (one of them being Nashe himself) and passes his pilfers to a player: "repose eternity in the mouth of a player". This writer is John Florio, we understand it reading carefully what Nashe and Florio write of each other: Nashe in the Menaphon and Florio in the Second Fruits. Nashe writes that Florio is very fast in making his works, compared to the time Nashe needs in writing. Why? Obviously: this writer, this "idiot Art Master", pilfers from other authors. Let us analyze a bit of this quarrel. These excerpts are taken by the Menaphon and by the Second Fruits. If you read the Menaphon alongside the Second Fruits you will find out the quarrel between Florio and Nashe with no effort. Writing to his university friends Nashe says about Florio's students at Cambridge (as Southampton for instance):

"I cannot so fully bequeath them to folly as their idiot art-masters, that intrude themselves to our ears as the alchemists of eloquence, who (mounted on the stage of arrogance) think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse", (Menaphon).

Florio got the hint to him and replies: "Some, like Alchymists distilling quintessences of wit, that melt golde to nothing, & yet would make golde of nothing", (Second Fruits).

Nashe goes on: "Let other men (as they please) praise the mountain that in seven years bringeth forth a mouse, or the Italianate pen that, of a packet of pilferies, affords the press a pamphlet or two in an age, and then, in disguised array, vaunts Ovid's and Plutarch's plumes as their own", (Menaphon).

Florio answers: "Some with Amadysing & Martinising a multitude of our libertine yonkers with triviall, frivolous, and vaine vaine drogeries, set manie mindes a gadding; could a foole with a feather make men better sport?", (Second Fruits).

Nashe: "give me the man whose extemporal vein in any humour will excel our greatest art-masters' deliberate thoughts, whose inventions, quicker than his eye, will challenge the proudest rhetorician to the contention of like perfection with like expedition", (Menaphon).

Florio: "If I proove more than I promise, I will impute it to the gracious Soile where my endeavours are planted, whose souveraine vertue divided with such worthless seedes, hath transformed my unregarded slips to medeinable simples", (Second Fruits).

Nashe: "Was it not Maro's twelve years' toil that so famed his twelve Aeneidos? Or Peter Ramus' sixteen years' pains that so praised his petty logic?", (Menaphon).

Florio: "is not the number of twelve wonderfull?", and then goes on saying "Manie sowe come, and reape thistles; bestow three yeares toyle in manuring a barraine plot, and have nothing for their labor but their travel", (Second Fruits).

Nashe: "To leave all these to the mercy of their mother tongue, that feed on naught but the crumbs that fall from the translator's trencher, I come (sweet friend) to thy Arcadian Menaphon, whose attire (though not so stately, yet comely) doth entitle thee above all other to that temperatum dicendi genus which Tully in his Orator termeth true eloquence", (Menaphon).

Florio: "the reason why, because they leave the lowe dales, to seeke thrift in the hill countries; and dig for gold on the top of the Alpes, when Esops cock found a pearle in a lower place", (Second Friuts).

At first sight this quarrel could seem not so simple to be understood, but if you practice the exercise of

digging in these books (Menaphon's introduction 1589, and Second Fruits, 1591) the arcanum will become really clear. In particular, who is trained in Shakespeare's studies will recognize in these lines the same critics that Greene moved to the 'upstart crow' in the Groatsworth (1592), for instance in: "who think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of bragging blank verse".

This means that the critics to the "upstart crow" in the Groatsworth was not an isolate case, nor it did come out all of the sudden, it is just the continuation of what Nashe had already written in the Menaphon about John Florio. This is why, when the Groatsworth was published, Florio thought that the real author of the critics to the 'upstart crow' was Nashe. We understand it reading what Florio and Nashe write of each other both in Florio's "World of Words" (1598) and in Nashe's "Lenten Stuff" (1599).

Giulia Harding has done a very great work in writing for our site a series of articles that illuminate very well on these subjects. I recommend to read her articles to better understand what I am reporting here, since she treats at length what in this article is only summarized.

Anyway, we can understand that Nashe is really critical towards this 'idiot Art Master' (Florio got his 'Master of Art' at Magdalen College, Oxford) because he (Nashe) prefers "the man (Greene) whose extemporal vein in any humour will excel our greatest art-masters' deliberate thoughts", not the man (Florio) "whose inventions, quicker than his eye, will challenge the proudest rhetorician to the contention of like perfection with like expedition".

While Florio is really fast in producing art, since his "invention" is "quicker than his eye", Nashe's approach is to invest time to ponder his production. Time for him is fundamental, in fact he says: "Was it not Maro's twelve years' toil that so famed his twelve Aeneidos?". Thus, for him the time invested in producing art counts very much, that is why he appreciates "the twelve years' toil that famed" Virgilio's Aeneidos, not the "invention" of someone which is "quicker than his eye" in writing. This because for Nashe the writer's art whose "invention is quicker than his eye" can only be plagiarism. That is why he despises the 'Italianate pen' and 'the packet of pilferies' that this pen produces.

Florio got the reference to him and answered in his Second Fruits: "is not the number of twelve wonderful?", and then adds: "Manie sowe come, and reape thistles; bestow three yeare's toyle in manuring a barraine plot, and have nothing for their labor but their travail". To Florio, thus, is not the time (twelve weeks, months or years) but the ideas. In fact if the "plot" is "barren" even if you work hard (toyle) for "three years" you end up having nothing "for their labor but their travail". This is the problem, Florio and Nashe had different conception about producing art.

But let us go back to Nashe's affirmation "repose eternity in the mouth of a player". If the writer was Florio, who was the player? William Shaksper? Probably! As we will see, we find the definitive proof for it in Florio's Second Fruits, and we can be sure that in 1591 Shaksper was the 'actor' working side by side with Florio. But in 1589 he could have been also someone else. Is it this the reason why, around 1590, Robert Greene still goes on speaking about someone he had already mentioned as a Batillus in 1584, as Diana Price points out? It may be! In fact, Greene in 1590 (Francesco's Fortune) writes about one not well specified 'Roscius' that seems to be the same representation of the Batillus he cited in "The Mirror of Modesty" (1584).

The general consensus about Greene's target is the actor Edward Alleyn. Even though this can be true we should dig this subject in function of the new evidences about Florio and Shaksper since Greene, as Nashe, were 'multi-target' in their critics. Their target thus can be both Florio/Shaksper as well as Alleyn/Florio, and why not Shaksper/Alleyn/Florio? Florio was in strict contact with Marlowe, they both were Walsingham's secret agents and both strictly connected to the School of Night. Alleyn was the leading actor of the theatre company for which Marlowe worked. Could Florio and Alleyn have had some kind of interconnection? There are no limitations to think it could be so.

Anyway, as we have seen, Florio replied to the Menaphon Nashe's attacks two years later, in the letter "to the reader" of his *Second Fruits*, and his reasons are definitively convincing and acceptable, in fact in Florio's opinion the stealer is Nashe, we understand it from what he writes about Nashe and Greene: "They snuff our lampes perhaps, but sure they add no oyle". As far as speed composition is concerned, what Frank Kermode writes in his "Shakespeare's language" about the theaters of Shakespeare's time helps us to further understand Florio's reasons.

High speed composition was a necessity in the theatre of that time, as I think Kermode seems to suggest saying that everyone working at the Globe was "constantly motivated by the urge to entertain successfully a paying public" (*Shakespeare's language* p. 13, Italian edition). Therefore the playwrights had the necessity to compose in such a way to draw paying spectators every day to the theatre, not only to spread culture: the timing in preparing the theatrical works was of paramount importance. Having said that, Florio had in great account the fact of spreading culture, he was a wonderful language constructor, in fact he significantly contributed in building modern English language. You can refer to Giulia Harding's articles to deep this subject in our website.

Considering that the break-even point to fill up the Globe and gain the money to pay everyone working in it was more than one thousand paying people per day, we can understand, as far as theatrical compositions were concerned, that Nashe was out of the league. We have seen that Nashe himself, in the *Menaphon*, says his composition technic, compared to that of Florio, was slow and pondered because art needs to be pondered, mainly poetry where every line has to be well conceived and meditated, as Ben Jonson thinks too.

What Nashe says implies a lot of time upon a line, and this is just the contrary of what theatre production needed at that time. It was much easier and quicker to "rearrange" properly and suitably for a paying public (also) some other author's works. We could say "less time more gain", mainly if someone's "inventions" is "quicker than his eye" in challenging "the contention of like perfection with like expedition".

What I am saying matches Jonathan Bate consideration on Shakespeare's writing technic in fact he writes: "our modern conception of genius makes creativity synonymous with originality. In matter artistic, there is no more severe accusation than of plagiarism. Student (...) are scandalized that Shakespeare did not make up his own story (...) but to the Elizabethan this procedure would have been admirable (...) the genius is in the embellishment", (Bate, *the genius of Shakespeare*, p.12).

Then, following what Bate says about Shakespeare's writing technic we can imagine something like a kind of "cut and paste" plus "embellishments". To cut and paste some other writer's books, embellish them and 'repose' them 'in the mouth of a player' at high speed is Thomas Nashe's accusation to Florio. Reasoning on what Bate says about Shakespeare's technic it is worthy to consider that Florio and Shakespeare had the same composition technic, as F. Yates seems to suggest (F. Yates, *John Florio*, 1934, p. 39/43). "Time is money" English people say, and Shakespeare is English (after all Florio was born in England).

As far as 'time in composing for the theatre' is concerned, we have to note that Ben Jonson was really proud to boast that, differently from his usual much longer time in preparing his works, his *'Fox'* (1607) was prepared only in five weeks. It is the case to consider that one of his precious collaborator, in preparing this famous Jonson's comedy, was John Florio. It is also meaningful that Jonson in his dedication to Florio wrote "To his loving Father and worthy Friend Master John Florio. Ayde of his Muses. Ben Jonson seales this testimony of Friendship and Love." This is a very important testimony on behalf of Florio as a shadow-writer or, at least, as a collaborator.

What I want to say is that Ben Jonson could speed up the composition of his "Fox" and conclude it in five weeks also because he had John Florio on his side as his precious collaborator. What other meaning could we give otherwise to "master John Florio, my father, hide of my muse"? So, Jonson in this case is a source both to trace Shaksper's existence, as I think he reported in his diary and in the conversations he had with Drummond, and Florio's theatrical and literary ability. If Florio has been the "hide" of Jonson's muse he can well have been Shakespeare's muse too. That Florio was Shakespeare's muse is what Nashe and Greene say in their books, mainly and specifically in the Groatsworth.

The return from Parnassus

It is useless to mention the official recognized writers who collaborated with Shakespeare (Middleton, Heywood, Fletcher and others...) but it is useful to note that Shakespeare WAS a collaborative writer: collaboration was (and still is) the theatre paradigm. Considering what Nashe says about Florio and his high speed composition technic, Florio and his 'theatrical team' (who included Shaksper) were in the condition to recycle and/or rework a lot of other author's writings. This is what comes out from the dialogue between Gullio and Ingegnoso in "The Return from Parnassus", where Gullio and Ingegnoso stand for Florio and Nashe. This book was written around 1600, more or less, by Nashe's supporters: that is why Florio is called 'Gullio' and Shakespeare despised, in fact he is praised only by a 'gullible' figure (Gullio), while Ingegnoso does not much appreciate him. Let us see:

Gullio. But stay! it's verie true good witts have badd memories. I had almoste forgotten the cheife pointe. I cal'd thee out for new year's day approacheth, and wheras other gallants bestovve Jewells upon there mistrisses (as I have done whilome) I now count it base to do as the common people doe; I will bestowe upon them the precious stons of my witt, a diamonde of invention, that shall be above all value and esteeme; therefore, sithens I am employed in some weightie affayrs of the courte, I will have thee, Ingenioso, to make them, and when thou hast done I will peruse, pollish, and correcte them.

Ingenioso. My pen is youre bounden vassall to commande. But what vayne woulde it please you to have them in?

Gullio. Not in a vaine veine (prettie, I'faith!): make mee them in two or three divers vayns, in Chaucer's, Gower's and Spencer's and Mr. Shakspeare's. Marry, I thinke I shall entertaine those verses which run like these; Even as the sunn with purple coloured face Had tane his laste leave on the weeping morne, &c. O sweet Mr. Shakspeare! I'le have his picture in my study at the courte.

Let us understand what Gullio (Florio) and Ingegnoso (Nashe) are saying here. Gullio instead of jewels to his mistresses prefers to give them "precious stons of my witt, a diamonde of invention", this means that he wants to write them something, but since he has no time he asks Ingegnoso to "make them". When Ingegnoso has done it Gullio "will peruse, pollish, and correcte them". We have to note that the way Gullio expresses himself, "I will bestowe upon them the precious stons of my witt, a diamonde of invention, that shall be above all value and esteeme" recalls Greene's critic to the conceited Crow in the Groatsworth: "[the crow] supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you, and beeing an absolute Iohannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey". Nashe/Ingegnoso expresses the same concepts about Gullio/Florio in the "Parnassus".

We have also to note that Gullio is the only 'Shakespeare's supporter and defender', in fact he exalts and praises him "O sweet Mr. Shakspeare! I'le have his picture in my study at the courte", while the way Ingegnoso (the voice of the students from Cambridge) refers to Shakespeare is negatively critic and annoyed. This means that Nashe's Cambridge supporters where rather snobbish and annoyed about Shakespeare. Moreover, Shakespeare is cited but never takes part directly to the discussion, as if he were only a fictional figure who does not represent a real person: in fact he is not a real person but a literary identity. In Lenter Stuff (1599) the way Nashe depicted Florio remembers closely Gullio, while 'Honest Humphrey' refers to Shaksper. So, in 'The Return from Parnassus' the quarrel between Nashe and Florio/Shaksper still goes on, but this time the students from Cambridge carry it on. Why?

In the introduction to the *Hermites Tale* (1597/8?), where we find a honest Humphrey (Shaksper) that Nashe depicted as a stupid and a vainglorious in his *Lenten Stuff* (1599), we have Florio saying that he is "no Scholler", obviously showing to be against a certain kind of scholar, probably those against whom he wrote:

*Be circumspect how you offend a schollers, for knowe,
A serpent dooth bite not so ill
As dooth a schollers angrie quill.*

(John Florio, *Second fruits*, 1591)

This may explain the bitterness that Cambridge's students show in writing about Florio/Gullio in the 'Parnassus', since Florio had always struggled against certain scholars, as we know he did with Nashe and his supporters. This happened also because he was of Jewish-Italian origin and consequently suspected to be a devil. As John Eliot demonstrates in his attack to the domination of foreigner writers in his *Orthoepia Gallica* (1593), John Florio in particular was considered the most dangerous and an aggressive foreign upstart crow. Florio had to be circumspect about people like Eliot and company.

What happens to Rodrigo Lopez, who was the personal physician of Queen Elizabeth, tells us how difficult could have been Florio's condition in the Elizabethan England. Both Florio and Lopez were of Jewish origins, and probably they knew each other. Lopez, unjustly accused to have attempted to the Queen Elisabeth's live, was arrested, tortured, hanged, drawn and quartered. These are very threatening reasons to behave really carefully, as Florio had always done. I think it is possible that Lopez's story may have inspired Florio/Shakespeare's Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*.

The way Shakespeare looks at Shylock and the world around him, the deep knowledge Shakespeare has of Jewish culture and the compassionate way he analyzes how badly the Jews were treated, differently from the xenophobe way Marlowe described them, to me suggests the idea that this mysterious author had to be very close to them, if not even one of them as Luis Borges suggests. Florio was somehow one of them.

Going back to the 'Parnassus', Nashe/Ingegnoso's answer is "My pen is youre bounden vassall to commande.

But what vayne woulde it please you to have them in?". In this case Ingegnoso is "employed" by Gullio as a writer, since he says "My pen is youre bounden vassall to commande". This is the same situation described by Robert Greene in his *Groatsworth* when the player, who seems a wealthy gentleman, asked Roberto to write for him. However Ingegnoso is not free to write what he wants in fact he asks also in which style Gullio prefers to have his "precious stons of my witt": "But what vayne woulde it please you to have them in?" Ingegnoso asks.

Gullio answers: "Not in a vaine veine (prettie, I'faith!): make mee them in two or three divers vayns, in Chaucer's, Gower's and Spencer's and Mr. Shakspeare's", this means that Gullio gives Ingegnoso the task to write the scripts in different styles, among which also in Shakespeare's style. But what is significant here is that Gullio, after he receives Ingegnoso's work does something that Jonathan Bate reports Shakespeare did with other authors' works: he "peruses, polishes, and corrects them". It is whorthy to repeat what Bate says about this:

"Our modern conception of genius makes creativity synonymous with originality. In matter artistic, there is no more severe accusation than of plagiarism. Student (...) are scandalized that Shakespeare did not make up his own story (...) but to the Elizabethan this procedure would have been admirable (...) the genius is in the embellishment". As you can see Bate says that "Student (...) are scandalized that Shakespeare did not make up his own story (...)", as Gullio does in the 'Parnassus', but this is not a problem because "to the Elizabethan this procedure would have been admirable (...)", and Shakespeare could do that because "the genius is in the embellishment", and as we can see in the dialogue between Gullio and Ingegnoso, Gullio (Florio) once received Ingegnoso's scripts "will peruse, polish, and

correcte them", that is: he will "embellish" Ingegno's work. This is enough to understand Ingegno/Nashe's fury toward Florio.

If the genius, according to Bate, does not consist (only) in creating something new, as Florio did for example with the first seventeen Shakespeare's sonnets among the others, but also in the process to "embellish" what already exists, then this is exactly what the students from Cambridge (obviously Nashe supporters) report Gullio (Florio) did with Ingegno/Nashe's works. This also testifies that Florio's theatrical activity, despite Nashe says he acted in "disguised array", was well known at the time. Is this a contradiction to what I say about Florio's hidden life as a man of theatre? No, it was a kind of convention to do it in a quiet and reserved way for certain people.

A lot of nobles, for instance, did it but sometimes they used pseudonyms to shield their artistic activities. People knew, more or less, who was the person behind the pseudonym. Sometimes it was not a mystery, as in the case of "Shakespeare" (as Thomas Nashe's quarrel with Florio reveals), but sometimes the man behind the pseudonym had to be careful in avoiding too much publicity. This is the case of the nobleman who used the pseudonym A.B. for instance. We find him in Florio's *World of Words*, described by Florio as 'Amanilis Bonitas'. This pseudonym shielded a noble who was a Florio's close friend, in fact his death created a great sorrow in Florio's soul. His name is Robert Deveraux, the Earl of Essex. Florio read and probably revised what Essex had written (as indicated in the letter to the reader of *A World of Words*) but his name is not cited, his pseudonym, A.B. is used instead. Everybody knew that A.B. was Essex. He too was fond of literature, as well as his sister, Penelope Deveraux, considered one of the most beautiful woman of that time.

She was that Stella to whom Philip Sidney (known as Astrophil) wrote 'Astrophilo and Stella', a well known book to John Florio since he was the 'overseer' (a kind of modern editor) of Sidney's *Arcadia*. Philip Sidney's sister, Mary Sidney, another John Florio's acquaintance, apart from being a good writer, became the Countess of Pembroke. Penelope Deveraux, known as Lady Rich, Lucy Russell, the Countess of Bedford and the Queen Anne, King James's wife, were among the closest friends of Florio. This just to talk about 'social mobility', an esteemed ability that Bate attributes to the genius of Shakespeare (Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare*, p. 5), but that it is difficult to be detected in Shakespeare's real life and in his private or official documents. As we can see Florio had this ability in abundance, as testified in his real life and in his private documents.

Florio was not a noble, even though a gentleman, and given his social position discretion in producing art was to be used. Nashe would not have dared to insult Essex, for instance, as he did with Florio: the consequences for Nashe would have been really severe. Moreover acting with discretion was better than boasting his "disguised" activity, because in any case the theatre was not a decent occupation. In fact in 1640, more or less, the Puritans imposed the closure of the theaters because in their opinion the theatre was an immoral activity. Then for him, who was employed by very important noble families as a tutor for their children, "Shakespeare" was a shield to move freely and respectfully while he went on doing what he loved most: writing poetry and scripts for the theatre, because he loved poetry and theatre. In Florio's testament we find something interesting about poetry and theater to reinforce the idea that Florio wrote poetry, in fact we find that Florio had made collections of sonnets:

"Item, I give and bequeath unto the right honourable, my singulare, & ever honored good Lord William Earle of Pembroke Lord Chambérlaine: to the Kings most excellent Majestie, and one of his royall counsell of state (if at my death hee shall then bee living) all my Italian, French and Spanish bookees, as well printed as unprinted, being in number about Three hundred and Fortie, namefy my new and perfect Dictionary, as also my tenn Dialogues in Italian and English, and my unbound volume of diuers written Collections and rapsodies, most heartilie entreating his Honourable Lordshippe (as hee once promised mee) to accept of them as of a signe and token of my service and affliction to his honor, and for my sake to piace them in his library eyther at Wilton or els at Baynards Castle at London(...).

In his testament, personally handwritten by him, Florio gives us some precious information, for instance: that as a man of culture he possesses a lot of books; his acquaintances, such as kings and

Queens, divers nobles and in particular William Pembroke; dictionaries, French and Spanish books; but what interests us more are the "unbound volume of diuers written Collections and rhapsodies". This is important because "rhapsodies" is a collection of sonnets and Florio has "divers written Collections and rhapsodies". This is what we find in Florio's testament.

At page 4 of his "the Genius of Shakespeare" Bate, writing about Shaksper's private documents and testament, says: "It is in the nature of official documents that they pertain to bare facts of birth, marriage and death (...). We do not learn very much from them about his (Shaksper) character as it affects what we are interested in: his plays. And we can all too easily read to much into them (...)". And specifically about Shaksper's testament Bate writes: "The second-best bed is certainly a curious detail (...)", and so on.

Once we have read what Bate writes about Shaksper's testament, which is an official document, we realize that, a part a reference to Ben Jonson, there is nothing else in it to talk about if not a "second-best bed" and these are fact, not speculations. In Florio's testament we can find something really interesting that relates him to literature and to William Pembroke for instance: William Pembroke and Shakespeare's sonnets are bound together. His collection of sonnets was dedicated in 1609 to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, that Mr. W. H. cited by the 'ever living Poet', William Shakespeare. Giulia Harding has written two really interesting articles on Shakespeare's sonnets (Giulia Harding, [www.shakespeareandflorio.net/sonnet part I/sonnet part II](http://www.shakespeareandflorio.net/sonnet%20part%20I/sonnet%20part%20II)), I think they should be read if we want to understand more about Shakespeare.

Anyway, having seen what Gullio/Florio did with other authors' writings (in this case Nashe's writings) we can consider that many people could have prepared writings to be represented in the theatre (as Oxford for instance, or even the Queen as suggested), then they (Florio and company) could have transformed, rearranged, edited and represented these different authors' works under the name of "Shakespeare", that is "FS&Co." (Florio, Shaksper & Collaborators). 'FS&Co.' does not exist, it is a label I invented hereby to better express my view.

This procedure, that according to Bate "would have been admirable", could explain the different voices (I mean, the presence of different authors' way of writing) we can hear in Shakespeare's works, even though often we are not able to detect who they are. Let us see and consider what Bate writes in specific about Shakespeare's technic of composition:

"Here is an example of his composition method in action. A passage in Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's 'Life of Marcus Antonius' describes the moment when Antonio first sees Cleopatra (...)". Then Bate makes an example of Norht's writing:

"the poop whereof was of gold, the sails of purple, and the oars of silver (...)". After that Bate introduces Shakespeare's technic:

"Shakeapeare wrote for a bare stage and an appreciative ears (...)", so he transformed everything by "turning North's prose into evocative verses". This is the transformation:

*"The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne
Burned on the water. The poop was bitten gold;
Purple the sails, and so perfumed that
The air was love-sick with them. (...)"*

As we can see, what Shakespeare has done with North's excerpt produces a completely different outcome: let us say that Shakespeare had "bestowe upon them the precious stons of 'his' witt, a diamonde of invention, that shall be above all value and esteeme", as Gullio was going to do with Nashe's work in the Parnassus.

Then Bate goes on saying: "this was the art of copiousness which they were taught in school: take a piece of received wisdom (...) turn it on the anvil of your inventiveness, and you give it new life" (Bate,

the genius of Shakespeare, pp. 10/12, 1987). That's it, this is what Bate says about Shakespeare's composition technic. What comes out from Bate explanation is Gullio's technic, that is: 'perouse, polish, and correct' someone else's work, in a nutshell "embellish" them. This is also what Yates says about Florio's composition technic:

"as with Guicciardini, Florio's method (of composition) with Guevara is to pick sentences and paragraphs which appeal to him and string them together with connecting links of dialogue" (Yates, Florio, p. 39, 1934), the same thing Gullio does in the Parnassus with Ingegnoso's works. So, Florio, Gullio and Shakeapeare had the same way of composition. Can Bate demonstrate at cent per cent that Shaksper did the same? Florio had been using this technic at least since 1578, when he published his first book, "First Fruits". Nashe confirms what Yates writes on Florio it in the Menaphon's introduction.

When Shaksper came to London Florio was already well trained in this technic, and he did not make mystery he used it, as Yates reports, even knowing he could risk to be accused of plagiarism. In fact, as we read in Nashe's books, this is what really happened. The problem perhaps is that Nashe did not understand Florio was paving the way to the future, not simply copy other authors' works: cut and paste is an important high tech function nowadays to save time in writing with a computer. Having said that, it could be clearer that the kind of homogeneous character perceived in Shakespeare's works can be the result of the editing made by Florio, as explained he did in the Return from Parnassus. This view is nothing else than an extension of what Bate proposes about Shakeapeare's composition technic since, using Bate's words, we could say that "the genius of Shakeapeare is in the embellishment". This is what happens also in the modern theatre and cinema.

We are used to consider Clockwork Orange as a Stanley kubrick's work but in reality Kubrick took Antony Burgess Book (Clockwork Orange) and remade it for the cinema. Florio and Shaksper, as written in Greene and Nashe's books, did the same for the theatre using also other authors' books. why? In what Frank Kermode says about the theaters of that time we could find the solution, in fact he explains that the theatre was also a big business and Kermode do not hesitated to propose Shakespeare also as a modern art film director (Shakespeare's language, p. 13, It. version). What I think mainly Shaksper did for the FS&Co.

Being a good art theatre director is really difficult, we need genius for it (even though it is not requested to be a genius in writing) mainly if we want a lot of paying people come and see what we do. As reported by Nashe (Bate, the genius of Shakespeare, pp. 16/17, 1997) this is what happened with Shakespeare's works: a lot of paying people went to see them. So, Shaksper had his specific genius and his work in the theater was "graced".

Analyzing what Florio says of his friend Shaksper's work, in the "Hermites Tale", we find that he defines as "graced" what Shaksper did, and in the way he does it we understand why Cambridge's students portrayed him (Florio/Gullio) as a deep Shakespeare's lover in "The Return from Parnassus": Florio, in the 'Hermites Tale' is loving and caring toward Shaksper.

If you go to www.shakespeareandflorio.net and you look at Giulia Harding's documents you will find "The Hermites Tale". On page 6 there are two sonnets, read the sonnet in the second page (signed as B2). As you can see (line13) Florio defines "graced" the work of his friend Shaksper. Is it Florio who writes? And is the receiver Shaksper? Yes! As you can see (in line 8) there is a clear reference to Nashe: "And famous Nashe, so dear unto us both". Obviously this is a satiric and ironical affirmation. This is however the sign that the quarrel between Nashe, Florio and Shaksper was going on even in the Hermites Tale: the red line, or better the "Red Herring" I have already mentioned can be detected among the pages of this book where an 'honest Humphrey King' recounts his story. All these things can give a new perspective, a change supported by facts differently from what Statfordians and Antistratfordians write on Shakeapeare. As to me, I am not a Stratfordian nor an Antistratfordian, I consider myself as a Strat-Florian.

The truth on William Shakespeare's genesis is written, black and white, in well known books of Shakespeare's times. What we have to do is to make this truth evident. This will not damage the actor from Stratford Will Shaksper, as the Oxfordians among the many tend to do, but it will make him and his friend J. Florio stronger.
So, let's get started to deep some aspects of Shakespeare's literary identity.

The genesis of Shakespeare

A very important thing to consider about William Shakespeare's identity is that there was no one named "William Shakespeare" in England before 1593. There was a William Shaksper in London, but no one called William Shakespeare. This because "William Shakespeare" is not the name of a real person but the label of a literary organization, thus this identity has only a literary consistency, and sometimes even an economical and financial one. As I have already said, the first time this name appeared was in occasion of the publication of 'Venus and Adonis' in 1593. That is why "Shakespeare" (who from 1593 on seems to have a real existence as a person) writes:

"But if the first heire of my inuention proue deformed, I shall be sorie it had so noble a god-father..."
William Shakespeare, Venus and Adonis, London 1593.

Some scholars are puzzled by this affirmation, since Shakespeare had already produced something before 'Venus and Adonis'. So, why he says this is his "first invention"? The meaning of "the first heire of my invention", is that 'Venus and Adonis' was the "first" time the label 'William Shakespeare' was presented to the public. Who knows whether Robert Greene's attack to the Shake-scene in his Groatsworth had a part in suggesting the name "Shake-speare" to Florio and Shaksper.

They, FS&Co., had already made some works before 1593, for instance "the Taming of the Shrew" or "the Two Gentlemen of Verona", but they did not sign them as William Shakespeare, in fact they did not sign them at all. Even after 1593 some works of FS&Co. were not signed as "Shakespeare", they will be attributed to Shakespeare only in the Folio of the 1623 where almost all Shakespeare's works were collected. In the Menaphon, published in 1589, William Shaksper may have already started to work with Florio: that is what Nashe seems to suggests, even though their collaboration become clear from 1591 on:

"Mongst this kind of men that repose eternity in the mouth of a player, I can but engross some deep-read schoolmen or grammarians...". Menaphon, introduction written by Thomas Nashe. London 1589.

Many other actors may be apt to this role in 1589 instead of William Shaksper, but from 1591 on the role is his.

Anyway, it is easy to understand that Nashe speaks about someone who writes (men that repose eternity), and someone else (in the mouth of 'a player') who "act" what the writer does. Analyzing carefully different texts written by Nashe we realize that there is a kind of cooperation between the writer and the actor, thing that will be evident and dramatically clear in Greene's Groatsworth. But is Nashe really speaking about Florio in the Menaphon preface? Scholars say that Nashe is referring to Thomas Kyd. So where is the proof? I have already given some evidences of this, but here I want to deep some aspects of that "long chain of events" I mentioned.

My attention to these events was captured by the introduction of Florio's Second Fruits (1591), because I noticed that in the letter to Nicolas Sander, the addressee of Florio's dedication, there was a curious attack to someone who had cast a book called 'Mourning Garments'. The terms Florio used in his introduction are:

"Sir in this stirring time, and pregnant prime of invention when everie bramble is fruiteful, when everie mol-hill hath cast of the winters mourning garments..."

These are the first lines of the 'Second Fruits' introduction and before finishing the second line Florio is quarreling with someone who has published a book entitled "Mourning Garments" (1590). When we go and check who this author is we find surprisingly that this 'someone' is Robert Greene, the most famous among Shakespeare's enemies. We may wonder why Florio is attacking Greene defining him in so offensive terms: A 'fruitful bramble' is not an image that pours out wit; As far as 'molehill' is concerned, if we think about a mole digging and pushing out rubbish (to form a molehill) from his den, we could see a kind of association with the intestine, (den), pushing out s**t. I do not think it is too far

fetched saying that Florio here represents Robert Greene as a stupid and his book a shitty work.

So, why did Florio offend Greene so heavily? I think because, among the rest, in the introduction of *Mourning Garment* we find a critic to some men who "pass by sound flesh and seize on ulcers" and they are "like carrion crows that fly over fair meadows and sit on fens...". More or less this is what Florio is doing with Greene's book (*Mourning Garment*) in the introduction of his *Second Fruits*. Even though Florio published his *Second Fruits* (1591) after the publication of Greene's *Mourning Garments* (1590), surely he expressed somehow his thought about Greene's works before its publication, that is why Greene reacted so offensively.

Furthermore, Florio may have seen references to him in these lines: "(...) the exterior habit of the Jews bewrayed their interior hearts, and such as mourned for their sins were by prescript and peremptory charge commanded to discover it in their garments" (*Mourning Garments*). These lines may have recalled to people's mind John Florio's Jewish origins, which in Elizabethan England was not a very good thing: it could have the same effect of a 'Papal Bull', that is an invitation to kill him without being punished. The reference to the "wantonness" and "greed" that Greene refers to in the beginning of *Mourning Garments* is, again, the way Thomas Nashe had already portrayed Florio in the *Menaphon* using the metaphor of the 'Panther'. It is in fact Nashe that Florio has in mind in his *Second Fruits* in the following lines: "Some, like Alchemists distilling quintessences of wit, that melt golde to nothing, & yet would make golde of nothing (...)", as we have already seen.

And it is always Nashe, in Florio's mind, the person he refers to when he points his finger against who goes "Adamising and Martinizing" around. The word "Martinizing" is a clear reference to Nashe involvement in the Martin Malprelate quarrel through his "An Almond for a Parrot" (1590). These lines and words portray Nashe who, referring to Florio, and his private students at Cambridge, wrote in the introduction of Greene's *Menaphon* (1589): "But herein I cannot so fully bequeath them to folly as their idiot art-masters, that intrude themselves to our ears as the alchemists of eloquence".

Nashe's introduction to the *Menaphon* is precious since it gives a lot of indications on Florio and Nashe's relationship before 1589, in fact it suggests that Florio was at Cambridge around the time Nashe was at Saint John College. How can we say that? Nashe in the *Menaphon* has something to say about those who do not "wear gown" at the university, and this is the case of the tutors who accompanied rich students to the college. We know that when Southampton went to Cambridge was about autumn 1585 and at that time Florio was not employed since his work at the French embassy was just finished.

In Stope's biography about Southampton she says that he was a diligent student and followed his tutor with care. Stope seems to present the Earl's tutor as patient, caring and efficient. We have letters written in Italian by the Earl to William Cecil (Lord Burghely) that were sent in order to verify the progress in his studies. The Earl's tutor's hand is present in the Earl's Italian letters when corrections or help were needed, and Stope reports that the tutor's written Italian style is a very fine one. This is a distinctive Florio's mark. As indicated in the *Basilikon Doron* translation made in Italian handwriting by Florio, we have the clear evidence that his Italian style is a very fine one.

But other elements indicate that the Earl's tutor was Florio at Cambridge. For instance we do not find him around London at that time, as Giulia Harding suggests, and we know that Florio had had good references for his work at the French embassy by Mauvassiere, the French ambassador, where Florio among the rest tutored efficiently Mauvassiere's daughter. When Mauvassiere left England with Giordano Bruno (1585) he wrote letters to Burghley to report the good service Florio had done at the embassy, both as lawyer and as tutor (we find this information in the *State Calendar Papers* of that time). This happened before the Earl went to Cambridge, and these letters helped Florio in having immediately another important task from Cecil: going to Cambridge with the young Earl as his tutor.

So, we have no evidence of Florio in London from 1585 to 1589; we know that Cecil gave him another task immediately after Mauvassier left England; we know that the Earl's tutor wrote in fine Italian; but

above all we have indications from Nashe that the Earl's tutor was just Florio.

In fact if we follow the "Tam Marti Quam Mercurio" key-words thread in the Menaphon introduction (I mean, go and find these words in the Menaphon introduction to read what Nashe says), and we look at what Florio writes about it (the key-words are always 'Tam Marti Quam Mercurio') in his Second Fruits, we would not make a great effort to understand that one of those who do not "wear gown" and "dry-brained dolts" at Saint John University, Cambridge, was John Florio. It is really clear that these references are specifically for him: Florio, as a tutor, did not wear a gown at the university and he was against surfeiting and really critic toward who drank a lot, as Nashe and his Friends did: that is why Nashe portrays him as a 'dry-brained dolt'.

Analyzing carefully Nashe's introduction to Greene's Menaphon alongside Florio's Second Fruits we find out that the evidences suggest once more that Nashe's target is John Florio, and he is still speaking about Florio when he says that "in a frosty morning you" can meet someone "who affords" you citing "all Hamlet".

As this first citation of the Hamlet (known as Ur-Hamlet) is concerned, we have to read carefully the metaphors written by Nashe in the Menaphon to understand that the target of Nashe's critics is not the Kyd, but the Fox. Consequently Nashe is not talking about Thomas Kyd but about John Florio, who Nashe portrays as a Fox who pilfers and rewrites the works of other authors, beyond exploiting his students at the university, in Nashe's opinion. The Kyd, in the Menaphon, is one of those who is exploited by the Fox (Florio). If we read carefully the metaphors Nashe writes citing Aesop we understand it. Obviously, we have to know what Aesop writes about the tale of the Fox and the Kyd. Lately some Stratfordian scholars have sustained that Shakespeare had to be in Cambridge before 1590, thus they say that when Nashe speaks about Hamlet in the Menaphon the reference is to Shakespeare. I agree!

Then the Ur-Hamlet could be a first lost Shakespeare's works or, as I think, a work that Shakespeare surely knew at that time. It may even be a work written by Kyd, as proposed: is this the meaning of Ben Jonson affirmation on Shakespeare "sporting Kyd"? It could be! Anyway Shakespeare/Florio already knew it well, as Nashe says, even though he may not have written it. Anyway, some scholars sustain that Shakespeare wrote it before Kyd. This is what I think Eric Sams suggests ("The Real Shakespeare" 1995, pp. 68/72), and Jonathan Bate does not discharge this idea (Bate, the Genius of Shakespeare, 1997, pp. 359/360). I share the Stratfordian position on Ur-Hamlet, but differently for them I can demonstrate that Nashe, concerning Hamlet in the Menaphon, is not speaking about Shaksper but Florio. Florio is the person in pole position, Stratfordians can not deny it otherwise they have to bring grounded evidences for Shaksper.

Shaksper and the Sonnets of Shakespeare

To cut a long story short, going back and forth, looking for references to Florio and Nashe's quarrel, in some books of those times ("Anatomy of Absurdity", 1589, by Thomas Nashe; "Menaphon", 1589, by Robert Greene; "Mourning Garments", 1590, by Robert Greene; "Second Fruits", 1591, by John Florio; "Groatsworth", 1592, by Robert Greene; "Kind Hearth", 1592, by Henry Chettle; among others) we can draw a precise picture of Shakespeare's identity that involves undeniably Florio, as the main and central figure, and Shaksper as his closer collaborator. In fact, as an example, a year before Greene's Groatsworth, in Florio's Second Fruits a sonnet dedicated to Florio by an anonymous friend who names himself Phaeton, among other things says in line 9 and 10:

"So when that all our English witts lay dead, (Except the Laurell that is ever Greene,)...". Sonnet of Phaeton, 1591.

Someone does not need to be a genius to understand that who wrote this line had Robert Greene in mind, also because Florio is precisely offending him in the first two lines of his Second Fruits dedication to Sander, as we have seen. William Minto says that "Phaeton" was written by Shakespeare, while E. K. Chambers says "I do not find Minto's conjecture very convincing, although the sonnet has merits".

Does it have the merits to be considered a sonnet written by Shakespeare? Yes, because Shaksper wrote it and because Florio may have had a hand in it, since at that time Shaksper was a student of Florio. The standard is not completely that of Shakespeare but "the sonnets have merits", as Chambers says. Some Antistratfordian would say that "this sonnet was not written by Shaksper because he was not able to write, there are not evidences for it a part six very badly written signatures that do not depend on his favor". But if we analyze sonnet 145 of Shakespeare's sonnet collection we can not avoid to note that the reference to Hanna Hathaway on line 13 is undeniable, as Andrew Gurr sustains.

Thus the man from Stratford William Shaksper was able to write poetry, even if his handwriting is not that of a professional, as his signatures indicate. Could he write as Shakespeare? I do not think so, many Stratfordian critics say that sonnet 145 should be taken away from Shakespeare's sonnet collection because of its scarce value. We should take note of it, even though other sonnets are of a very higher standard than sonnet 145.

This is the case of sonnets 135. We can argue that Shaksper did not write it, but the references to his name are undeniable, and considering that he wrote sonnet 145 we cannot deny that somehow he had a part in the production of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Having said that, sonnet 135 and 136, considered to be 'a single pyrotechnical variation on the word Will' (Serpieri, 2007), can be the example of how Shaksper (sonnet 135) and Florio (sonnet 136) wrote poetry.

In fact even though these two sonnets seem to come out from the same hand, their semantic and stylistic structures indicate they have been made by two different schemes of thought. Sonnet 135 is rather superficial compared to sonnet 136, but neatly superior to sonnet 145. Semantically and stylistically speaking 136 is far more complex and philosophically more elaborate than 135. In 136 there is a kind of introspection that we do not find in 135. Following what Serpieri says, they could have been made in the same period of time, being them "a single pyrotechnical variation on the word Will". But even if they do not belong to the same period, 135 has not the introspection of 136. This is the kind of introspection one achieves also studying deeply language models and making translations, as Florio did with Montaigne:

"They come, they go, they trot, they dance: but no speech of death (...). At the stumbling of a horse, at the fall of a stone, at the least prick with a pin, let us presently ruminare, and say with ourselves, What if it were death itself?"

This is a very small excerpt from Montaigne translation made by John Florio, 'that Montaigne to whom Shakespeare has so great a debt', George Coffin Taylor may say. Among the lines of Florio's Montaigne translation we perceive depth, and a kind of reasoning and stylistic approach (should we say stoic?) we can perceive in sonnet 136, but it is not perceived in 135. It is as if sonnet 136 had been made after 135 to demonstrate how sonnet 135 could have been written in a better way, or after having being "perused, corrected, and polished" (embellished, as Bate says) as Gullio/Florio would have done with Infegnoso/Nashe sonnets in the Parnassus. This is not surprising if we think that Shaksper studied with Florio, as T. S. Baynes wrote in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Again, as in the "tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hyde", here too we find the two souls of Shakespeare (Florio and Shaksper) at work.

In other works I am going to deep the reason why Florio is the author of great part of Shakespeare's sonnets.

But to give a hint on it, we can consider that one of the reasons is that at least the first seventeen sonnets of Shakespeare's collection were written between 1589 and 1590. In 1594 the composition of the first seventeen sonnets had no sense because it is between 1589 and 1590 that Lord Burghley insisted very much on Southampton's marriage. There are letters exchanged between Burghley and the young Earl's mother indicating that the "machine" to realize his marriage with Elizabeth De Vere, Lord Burghley's nephew, moved with great determination in those years, 1589/90, not between 1592/94.

But the young Southampton did not want to get married in those years, even if the pressure to make him married was really high. After that period (1590/91) Burghley lost his hope in convincing the young Earl to marriage. It is suggested that Burghley pressed Shakespeare to write "sonnets" to push somehow the Earl toward marriage, then the right time to do it was more or less 1589/90, but not later than that period. Bate does not agree (the Genius, pp. 47/54), for him the right timing is between 1592/94, because otherwise Shaksper is excluded at least as the author of the first seventeen sonnets of Shakespeare's collection, know as the "marriage sonnets".

Let us bear in mind that in this case 'Shaksper' is excluded, but not 'Shakespeare' because as already said 'Shaksper' and 'Shakespeare' are two different things. What it is interesting to note about this marriage is that we do not find Shaksper around Southampton's surroundings at that time, 1589/90, thus Bate excludesthat the first seventeen sonnets were written between 1589/90. We do not find him around the Earl in other periods either: we find Florio and Shakespeare moving around the Earl between 1589/90, but not Shaksper.

If I am wrong, documents should be provided to demonstrate it. All it is said by Stratfordians about Shaksper relationship with Southampton can not be confirmed by real documented facts: they only supposes it.

In Stope's biography on the Earl of Southampton we find this:

"I must confess that I did not start this work for his (Southampton) sake, but in the hope that I might find more about Shakespeare, which hope has not been satisfied". What Stope is saying here is that ransacking Southampton's life in search of Shakespeare she was not able to find Shaksper around him. What would Bate say about this? Some anecdote?

Stope would have been completely satisfied if she had looked to the relationship Southampton had with Florio, since she reported many evidences of it in her biography on Southampton. In fact we have a great amount of information about Florio and Southampton's relationship starting from 1585, even though Stope does not report all of them. That is why Shakespeare was around Southampton in 1590, the time the first seventeen sonnets of Shakespeare's sonnet collection were made. So, we find Florio and Shakespeare around Southampton in 1589/90 but we do not find Shaksper. We do not know if Shaksper ever met the Earl of Southampton. At this regard Darras would say that there are "no proof, no clue, no evidences". We do not need anecdotes to find Florio in Southampton's surroundings, we have proof for it.

But let us go on. If we think about what Gullio/Florio says to Ingegneso/Nashe in "the Return from Parnassus" (I will have thee, Ingenioso, to make them, and when thou hast done I will peruse, pollish, and correcte them), we could imagine what happened to sonnets 135 and 136: Gullio expressly asks Ingegneso to write some sonnets for his ladies, after that he will do the rest, as we have seen. This is the technic through which Florio "embellished" other authors' work, as Nashe says, and as we can find in his Montaigne's translation. This is the same technic that Bate reports Shakespeare applied to other authors' works. This may have also happened with sonnets 135 and 136.

Shaksper's ability in writing has to be further investigated. As far as sonnet 145 literary scarce value is concerned, (Serpieri, William Shskespeare Sonetti, 2007), scholars affirm that this sonnet "probably was written in his youth". For the Stratfordians this sonnet MUST BE written in Shakespeare's youth, when Shaksper was not living in London but in Stratford, where the environment was not filled with that cultural dimension he would have "breathed" in London. This because if this sonnet had been written around 1590 he would not be the only author of Shakespeare's sonnets collection, which for the Stratfordians would be a earthquake . In fact the style of the first seventeen sonnets do not match the style of sonnet 145 at all. But sonnet 145 IS NOT a sonnet Shaksper wrote in his youth: he wrote it around or even after 1590.

As reported in the critic to sonnet 145 in the "Amazing webside of Shakespeare's sonnets", if sonnet 145 belongs to Shaksper's youth this means that he anticipated Sidney's poetry conception and some of his composition technic of a great deal: which is practically impossible. Sydney composed "Astrophel and Stella" during the 1580s and published it in 1591. Florio knew this book very well since he was the overseer of the first edition of Sydney's "Arcadia", published in 1590, and had known Sydney since 1583 thanks to Giordano Bruno. Shaksper in 1585 was still in Stratford and we do not have evidence of him in London until 1591, if we agree that he wrote the sonnet of Phaeton, otherwise we have to wait 1592 and Greene's Groatworth to have some evidence of him. What we say about him before 1591, or 1592, is pure speculation since there are no evidences to support what we may say.

Nevertheless Don Paterson says about this sonnet: "The 1582 date refers to an isolated piece of juvenilia. Sonnet 145 is a sonnet so bad that only the likely youth of its author can be offered up as an excuse" (Don Paterson The Guardian, 2010). I am tempted to point out that the outcome of a "genius", as Stratfordians portray Shaksper, is present even when he is in his youth, but sonnet 145 does not indicate this.

Anyway, the sonnet of Phaeton is neatly superior to sonnet 145 of Shakespeare's collection where we can find a clear reference to Hanna Hathaway, Shaksper's wife. Being these the facts (only some of a great vastity of evidences available), we can say that a new literary and theatre organization was born out of the genius of Florio and Shaksper around 1590, and the London scene would have recognized "FS&Co." as "William Shakespeare". What I have written could be taken as a supposition if I did not give further proof for it, so let me give you other evidences.

Florio, Shaksper and Tarlton

I think Will Shaksper may have arrived in London from Stratford presumably in 1587 with the theatre company in which Richard Tarlton played, as J. Bate suggests (the Genius of Shakespeare, p.134). Tarlton can be a good connection between Florio and Shaksper. Also Richard Field, the publisher, is a good link between Shaksper and Florio since Richard Field and Florio knew each other, (the link is: Vautrollier, Field, Bruno, Florio). Shaksper and Field knew each other since Field came from Stratford.

Anyway considering or not Tarlton as the link between Shaksper and Florio (we can not subscribe it as a real fact, it is just another supposition) it is important to know that Tarlton, one of the most appreciated comedian of his time, was a close friend of Florio: we have evidences for it, this is not a supposition. In fact in the "First Fruits", published in 1578, Tarlton himself wrote a sonnet to Florio to thank him for the "great help" he gave to Tarlton's company in preparing their theatrical works.

After having seen two important dedications to Florio for his theatrical involvement, one by Richard Tarlton (1578) and the other by Ben Jonson (1607), I want to focus the attention on the fact that something like this never happened to Shaksper during his life. Is it strange? One could be tempted to say yes, but it is not so strange if we consider 'Shakespeare' as the name of a collaboration mainly between Florio and Shaksper where Florio had a major part on the literary side, as facts demonstrate, and Shaksper the role of making the works on stage as art director, since he spent a great amount of time physically in the theatre.

I am sure Stratfordians have a completely different vision on what I have written, in this case they are invited to report their ideas only if they can support them with undeniable facts relevant to Shaksper/Shakespeare as I am doing with Florio/Shakespeare. If their approach must be "if we admit..., then...", I invite Stratfordians to give it up and I strongly suggest them to consider carefully the proof here reported on behalf of Florio and his collaboration with Shaksper. I am sure they will replay that since Shaksper and Shakespeare are the same person they do not need to demonstrate anything. But this would be a very easy way out to avoid any responsibility to bring evidences. Up to now they have not brought proof in a clear and fully acceptable way.

Giulia Harding has written a very good article on Tarlton and Florio, you can find her article in our website. Tarlton is a key factor in the genesis of Shakespeare because Florio around 1578 begin his theatrical apprentice under Tarlton's influence. Tarlton was one of the most influential comedian of the time. A sonnet written by him, as a dedication to Florio, is among the other dedicatory sonnets in Florio's First Fruits (1578) . This is not the occasion to deep the subject on Florio's theatrical apprentice, but in other writings I will be treating in details also the relationship between Florio and Giordano Bruno, who was in London from 1583 to 1585. Bruno was a very good playwright, as his Candelaio suggests. John Harding, Giulia Harding's father, proposed that Love Labour's Lost (LLL) was a work written by Bruno for Sir Philip Sidney, and successively rewritten by Florio after 1590. Giulia and I share this idea even if we think that Florio reworked it together with Will Shaksper.

As far as Florio's theatrical apprentice with Bruno is concerned, we have to consider what professor Lamberto Sacerdoti says about Florio and Bruno. Sacerdoti says that Florio was the herald of two vast continents: "Bruno and Montaigne". "Continents" in Sacerdoti's opinion is a term that convoys the towering importance both Montaigne and Bruno had for those times. The influence of Montaigne in Shakespeare's works is undeniable, at the point that in some work it is fundamental. Scholars say that Montaigne influence in Shakespeare started after Florio translated into English Montaigne essays, but I think this is partially correct, in fact I find that Richard the Third (1592/1594), mainly act one, scene one, lines 5/41, gravitates very much under Montaigne's influence, as happens in some terms in all Shakespeare's works before 1600.

The introspectiveness and that kind of stoic approach we find in the first seventeen sonnets (written in 1590, not in 1594) indicates that Shakespeare had a certain knowledge of Montaigne's essays in those years. Did Shaksper read Montaigne from the French before 1590 and transposed it in Shakespeare's

'Richard the Third'? Or, rather, Florio had an hand on it? If what I say about Montaigne and Richard the Third is correct, it could be appropriate to investigate more on the relationship between Shaksper and Florio. I think we should! Florio knew Montaigne, even around 1590/1595, here is why:

"Do you not educate youth at the charge-house on the top of the mountain?" Ask Don Armado to Holofernes, in *Love's Labour's Lost* (LLL). Are there mountains in Titchfield? It does not seem so! Can Don Armado be referring to Montaigne in this line?

Shakespeare's code (<http://theshakespearecode.wordpress.com>) proposes this line as a reference to Florio giving lessons about Montaigne at Titchfield. I share this idea. Does this imply I consider Holofernes as a parody of Florio? Yes, in the very same way Sogliardo is a parody of Shaksper in Ben Jonson's 'Every man in his Humor'. Both Florio and Shaksper were very self-mocking and playful people. I really think this is true and I can prove it: as far as Florio is concerned, the proof is in "La Cena delle Ceneri", written by Giordano Bruno; as far as Shaksper is concerned, we have to refer to Jonson's diary, where we find a playful and even self-mocking Shaksper that sometimes (Jonson writes) needs to be refrained from talking and joking being trapped in his fantasy.

If I am wrong and Shaksper was not a self-mocking and playful man then William, in "As You Like It", with his two-words vocabulary communication system is the clear representation of the ignorant bumpkin he really was, as described by Antistratfordians. Could such a man have penned anything? Then his only six blurred signatures testifies the reality of his ignorance, as described by Oxfordians. But what we find in Ben Jonson writings suggests something different from what Oxfordians recount.

As far as Florio self-mockery attitude is concerned, we have to read the way Bruno portrays him in "La Cena delle Ceneri" where Florio seems not to understand where he has to sit, once they have arrived at the appointment, and he ends up sitting where probably Philip Sidney had to. This is a comical cameo that describes Florio in a very embarrassing situation, one in which he is portrayed as a stupid (as William in 'As you like it') but it would be a big mistake if we thought that what Bruno describes in "La Cena" is the reality of facts. Bruno and Florio where very close friends, and Florio was one of the best ambassador of Bruno's philosophy in England.

Florio and Shaksper friendship

So, Florio and Shaksper were very cheering and playful people, and self-mocking is a distinctive sign of their wit. This sonnet written by Florio and dedicated to Shaksper demonstrates what I want to say about their friendship and cheerfulness:

*That I have lov'd, and most respected thee
True-honest Humphrey: I do heere protest,
And that the world shall witness it with me,
Embrace this sign of love amongst the rest
Will you have more? My world I will engage,
Nay further yet: I'll take a solemn oath,
By the Red-herring thy true Patronage
And famous Nash, so deere unto us both
By all the Bowers that we have reveld in
Our merry times that gallop hence so fast
By all the houres we have together bin,
By all the vowes of friendship that have past
By this I swear my love, and thy work graced,
On her Rich worth, and honor'd Titles placed.*

We can find this sonnet in "the Hermites Tale", (www.shakespeareandflorio.net), a book dedicated to the Countess of Sussex. The introduction, and the above cited sonnet, have been written by Florio, while the text has been written by Shaksper. This writing, as Florio says in the dedication, is a 'couvert barron' ("under this covert barron it shall march", Florio writes) which is the same as "in disguised array", as Nashe writes in the Menaphon. We can see that at the end of the Tale Shaksper writes:

*And for this homely Tale
And he that made the same
Hath neither learning, wealth, nor wit,
And scarce can write his name.*

Obviously, this is an ironical affirmation directed to Nashe and his friends. Florio used the same irony towards Nashe saying, in the introduction of the Hermites Tale, that he is not a scholar and so he is not even able to say "B to a Battledore". Anyway, the way Shaksper writes it recalls the epitaph in his grave:

*GOOD FRIEND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE
TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOSED HEARE
BLESTE BE YE MAN YT SPARES THES STONES
AND CURST BE HE IT MOVES MY BONES*

Thus the Hermites Tale is written in the same rhythm as Shakespeare's epitaph, which is known as Skeltonik. As far as "By the Red-herring thy true Patronage - And famous Nash, so deere unto us both" is concerned (lines 7/8 in the sonnet), this indicates the ongoing quarrel between Nashe, Florio and Shaksper. In fact, Nashe picked up the reference to him in the sonnet lines and answered to them in his Lenten Stuff. Here is the skirmish between them:

Florio, as already reported, writes in the introduction of Hermites Tale "I affirm that thus being no Scholler, but a simple Dunce, as I am, that can not say B to a Battledore...", while Shaksper at the end of the tale concludes "And for this homely Tale - And he that made the same - Hath neither learning, wealth, nor wit, And scarce can write his name". Nashe's reply to them is immediate in his Lenten Stuff: "Every man can say B to a Battledore, and write in praise of virtue and several liberal sciences...". The key-words to detect the quarrel here are "say B to a Battledore", used both by Florio and Nashe.

I am obviously synthesizing here the whole process of analysis of the quarrel between Florio and Nashe, but every one can deep the reading of it in the books I have cited and check if I am right. A part the quarrel with Nashe, I think that between the lines of the sonnet dedicated by Florio to Shaksper it is evident their friendship and the "merry times" they had had together.

Linguistic technic

Reading the Hermites Tale someone could say: "is this Shakespeare?", and my answer is "yes, as much as Shakespeare's epithaph and sonnets 135 and 145 of his collection", even if (a part sonnet 135) they are so difficult to be consider as something penned by him. As far as Florio, his style is that of Shakespeare, first of all we have Nashe saying that he wrote Shakespeare's writings, as we have seen up to now and as we will see further on. Then we have Professor Herman Haller, who writes in his introduction to Florio's *A World of Words* (2013):

"throughout [Florio's writings] he demonstrates a profound knowledge of different linguistic registers", which is what every scholar reports about Shakespeare, "while adopting rhetorical devices consistent with euphuistic fashion and his dedication to copia, the Renaissance ideal of copiousness". Again: this is something that belongs strictly to Shakespeare. To be clear, professor Haller does not say that Florio and Shakespeare write in the same way or they are the same person, this is a deduction I make from what professor Haller says.

What is interesting to note about Florio is that this concept of 'different linguistic registers' and 'rhetorical devices' are to be found even in his private documents. If we compare Florio's testament to that of Shaksper the difference is remarcable. Yates, in her 'Florio' (1934), observes that even in his testament he has a kind of musicality that pertains to a person enamoured of words and sounds: in a nutshell 'poetry'. So for him the concept of copia exists also in his private documents. Bate writes (1997, p. 4) that it is not necessary to find in Shaksper's private documents what 'does not pertain to them' (such as stylistic elaboration?). We should wonder why then we find in Florio's personal documents stylistic elaboration, infinite numbers of books listed (more or less 350 books), social contacts at high levels, such as the earls of Pembroke, and many other admirable things that seems to belong to Shakespeare from what appears in his works.

Anyway this is what Bate writes, in his 'Soul of the Age', about Shakespeare's knowledge of 'copia': "Beyond the schoolroom textbooks as such as the *Colloquia Familiaria*, *De conscribendis epistolis*, and *De copia*, Shakespeare was not widely or deeply read in Erasmus, but he did not need to be. Erasmus's ideas became so influential and widespread in the century between his work and the play that they permeated the intellectual and social air breathed by Shakespeare and his original audiences".

This is the theory of the genius that comes along, in fact Bate says "Shakespeare was not widely or deeply read in Erasmus, but he did not need to be" why? Simple: "Erasmus's ideas became so influential and widespread in the century between his work and the play that they permeated the intellectual and social air 'breathed' by Shakespeare". Fantastic!

Sharing what Bate says we can imagine Shaksper moving here and there from London "sniffing" culture and incorporating everything was needed in his time to become a genius through osmosis (French; Latin; Greek; Italian style, language and culture; writing light-speed technic; acting; theatre and general literature; linguistics; semantics; lexicography; geography; classical readings; history; medicine; horsemanship; magic; philosophy; ancient religions; music; every kind of social entertainment such as tennis, cards and dice; tons of books; enormous skills almost in everything and so on...) because the culture was 'in the air'. He did not need to be 'widely or deeply read in Erasmus', as in everything else we can find in Shakespeare's works, because he was a genius of infinite greatness and really good at "sniffing" culture.

Bate is talking about "Shakespeare", but Shaksper is something different from Shakespeare: obviously Florio and Shaksper together, FS&Co., but considering what Haller says about Florio it seems that he had in a much larger measure than Shaksper what Shakespeare had: 'Erasmus ideas' among other suitable things to be a literary genius. Florio got these capability ransacking "widely and deeply" everything he could study and read: he says it in his writings, as his 'World of Words' testifies.

Did Shaksper have the same capabilities? I am not able to say it, but if the answer is yes then the Stratfordians should demonstrate it through real facts, not through anecdotes. He was not an ignorant, as someone proposes, sonnet 145 and 135 indicates that he could write poetry, even if Scholars are surprised that Shakespeare could have written sonnet 145.

To avoid misunderstanding all I have said is not against Shaksper, in fact I appreciate him in the same way I appreciate Florio. I am only against a stereotyped conception of him that does not work. It is against the way Scholars like Bate propose him: an immense genius who did everything by divine infusion and osmosis.

The reality is different. To do what Shakespeare did everyone must have a "wide and deep" training in learning, and this is what Shaksper does not seem to have had. Ben Jonson reports it talking about Shaksper's "Small Latin and less Greek". Once again, the "two souls" of Shakespeare come out, as described by Ben Jonson praising Shakespeare in the Folio of 1623: one soul is the 'lance against the ignorance' and the other the soul whose 'Latin and Greek' are small. At that time you could not have been a "lance against the ignorance" having a "Small Latin and less Greek". But Shakespeare could be both because of his "two souls": Florio and Shaksper together. The theory of the 'genius', supported also by Darras in his attack to Tassinari, is a very easy trick to avoid any kind of answer to a very complicated problem.

This problem has a solution, anyway, as we have seen up to now: a collaboration between Florio and Shaksper, where each one of them had a specific role, and I think Shaksper's role was not primarily based on literature. This is what we find investigating the relationship between Florio and Nashe. Then referring to the 'FS&Co.', who is 'more' Shakespeare between Florio and Shaksper, since they were collaborators?

Probably Haller (2013) could help us in formulating some ideas on it, in fact he writes: "It is thought [Florio has] inspired Shakespeare, in particular in *Love's Labour's Lost*". Florio HAS inspired Shaksper because they worked together, as Thomas Spencer Baynes wrote about Shakespeare and Florio in the IX edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1875-1889) "Shakespeare goes to London..., Shakespeare Continues his Education. His Connection with Florio". Baynes is sure that Shaksper had been a Florio's student, and if we read his article we understand that he is sure about Shaksper and Florio being also "literary associate":

"We may be sure that, if Shakespeare knew Florio before he produced *Love's Labour's Lost*, it was not as a sport-maker to be mocked at, but as a friend and literary associate to whom he felt personally indebted". T. S. Baynes.

It is remarkable to note that T. S. Baynes has been one of the greatest Shakespeare's scholar ever; we can trust him when he says that Florio and Shaksper were "literary associate", since this is what Nashe says too. I think that Florio was the "main pen", in fact, citing Haller again, we have to know that "Shakespeare appears to have created similar neologism (as Florio) in his plays, including 'undivulged, to unmake, to unsex, to unspeak, and others.", Haller, 2013. Florio has been a great language constructor, and this is another thing that links him to Shakespeare. Was Florio also a creative writer? This is important because creativity is a key factor in a writer, and the question on Florio's creativity has a good answer, in fact Haller says;

"A World of Words is a work that bring together the author's (Florio) three major roles: Florio as the plurilingual reader and words collector; Florio as a teacher of Italian language and culture, as a grammarian and paroemiologist; and Florio as translator and creative writer", H. Haller, 2013. In terms of literary ability, this is all we need to know about Florio as being Shakespeare more than Shakeper is, and if I put together all that I can report about what Nashe says on Florio being the ghost-writer behind Shaksper then the picture is complete.

Again, this does not mean that Professor Haller shares my ideas on Florio and Shakespeare, it only means that as an expert philologist he reports that Florio was a creative writer. What he reports let us imagine that Florio had all it is needed to write as Shakespeare: technical competence and creativity. The quarrel between Nashe and Florio demonstrates the rest. Further more, Florio did not have all these capabilities because he 'sniffed' them in the air, but because he deeply studied them. There are evidences for this, differently from Shaksper.

Florio and the theatre

But let us step back to Florio theatrical apprenticeship. Referring just a bit to Bruno and Florio in particular, since Florio and Bruno lived together for two years, we have to underline the capability Bruno had to transform everyone (that was minimally intelligent, as Bruno says) in a special human being with very specific capabilities, as the introduction of his *Umbris Idearum* suggests.

I think that the encounter with Bruno, in 1583, transformed Florio's life more than other: Bruno's memory technics were and still are astonishing, and just as Bruno says in his *Umbris Idearum* "this art not only helps in obtaining a simple mnemonic technic but it also opens the way and introduces to the discovery of numerous faculties". In fact Bruno writes that his methods help in developing what he calls "the inner writing", a way of thinking using images and visualization technics that can disclose "the secrets of the Universe" through a very powerful linguistic technic.

It is from 1585 on that Florio started moving on theatre scene with a more specific aim than before: becoming a playwright and a producer. This is what Nashe tells us in the *Menaphon* about Florio:

"It is a common practice now-a-days amongst a sort of shifting companions, that run through every art and thrive by none, to leave the trade of noverint whereto they were born and busy themselves with the endeavors of art, that could scarcely Latinize their neck-verse if they should have need; yet English Seneca read by candlelight yields many good sentences, as Blood is a beggar, and so forth, and if you entreat him fair in a frosty morning, he will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls, of tragical speeches". Here Nashe refers to Florio, not to Kyd, nor Shaksper.

So Florio entered into the theatre business. He could become a playwright because of his knowledge of the theatre environment and also for his acquaintances: he knew almost everyone who was authoritatively linked to the theatre, and the theatre at that time was to become a great business. But his purposes would not have been so simple to be realized, many things were against him: Nashe and Greene's envy for instance as we have seen in the *Menaphon*.

As Florio writes in his *Second Fruits* they "have a knife to my throat ready to use". They were not the only one, why? Because Florio was a foreign and foreigners were often considered a danger, consequently hated and despised. But compared to other foreigners Florio was a special one because, as we have already seen, he was not only Italian but also of Jewish origin. This was an explosive combination with serious negative implications for him: the *Merchant of Venice* can teach us something about these negative implications. The movie version of "the *Merchant of Venice*" starred by Al Pacino can give us a good image of the danger Florio could have run.

In fact as he writes in his "Second Fruits" English people thought that "an English Italianate is a devil incarnate". Further more he was of Jewish origin. His father, Michelangelo Florio, had always hidden himself to save his life both because he refused Catholicism to become a Protestant and mainly because of his Jewish origin. He writes about it in his *Apologia* where he tries to defend himself from the accusation of being of Jewish origin. "Hide thy live" in this case was a good advice and solution for John Florio to avoid serious problems since he "had a knife" to his throat "ready to be use". A shield would be really useful, and Shaksper was a very good shield, beyond being a very good friend.

Final countdown

So let us return to the collaboration Florio had with Shaksper, because this is the key factor to link Florio to Shakespeare. This collaboration was well known at that time, even though shielded, and created severe reactions of hate and resentment in already famous playwrights such Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe:

"Yet, trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feather, that with his 'Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide', supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute 'Johannes Factotum', is in his own conceit the only Shake- scene in a country". Robert Greene, *Groatsworth of Wit*, London 1592.

This is what Greene had to say about the collaboration between Florio and Shaksper in 1592, precisely in his *Groatsworth*. This attack is one of the major reasons for which Greene is remembered: perhaps if it were not for his *Groatsworth* and this famous critic to the 'only shake-scene in the country' probably he would not be so considered.

Anyway, not everyone agrees that this famous attack is referred to Shakespeare, in fact the Oxfordian Frank Davis writes (citing Erne Lukas): "The cumulative effect of the evidence against Shakespeare [as recipient of the Chettle apology] is such that it partakes of mythology, rather than biography, to keep drawing inferences about Shakespeare's early years in London from Chettle's apology." An industry in denial, Frank Davis, M.D., Past President, Shakespeare Oxford Society

I am afraid to say that also Frank Davis is not informed on Florio and Shaksper and their collaboration, otherwise he would have known that what Greene writes in the *Groatsworth* (or better Nashe, as Florio suspected) refers to William Shakespeare.

This is what Robert Detobel thinks too, but instead of Shakespeare as a collaboration between Florio and Shaksper, he proposes Shakespeare as the Earl of Oxford, since Detobel is an Oxfordian. Even though I donot share Detobel's vision, I really appreciate his works because I think he is really a very good researcher, as we can understand reading his article "Shakespeare's signatures analyzed". Nevertheless I exclude Oxford as the real author of Shakespeare's works, even though Oxford may have a part in all this, both directly and indirectly: after all John Lyly, Oxford protégée poet and writer, was a Florio acquaintance. This can be relevant concerning a possible collaboration between Oxford and Shakespeare.

Anyway, even Frank Davis admits that the citation of Shakespeare's "Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide" in the *Groatsworth* is a reference to a Shakespeare's play that we have to consider carefully. So when we find Greene writing, few lines forward, "the only shake-scene in a country" we can be sure that he is unequivocally referring to Shakespeare, as also J. Bate in his 'The genius of Shakespeare' subscribes (*The Genius of Shakespeare* p. 15). As we will see the final solution to this mystery is solved in Florio's 'World of Words'. This citation 'Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide' is really important in referring to what Chettle writes in his apology for having published Greene's *Groatsworth*:

"With neither of them that take offence was I acquainted, and with one of them I care not if I never be. The other, whom at that time I did not so much spare as since I wish I had, for that as I have moderated the heat of living writers, and might have used my own discretion (especially in such a case), the author being dead, that I did not, I am as sorry as if the original fault had been my fault, because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes. Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art." Henry Chettle, "Kind Heart" 1592.

What Chettle says in his famous 'Kind Heart' is that one of the two playmakers offended is not so worthy of being considered: "With neither of them..., and with one of them I care not if I never be.", but the other is worthy to be considered and even flattered: "The other..., because myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes. Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art".

Chettle here is not talking about Nashe, Marlowe or Peele, he is talking about Shakespeare, but it is interesting to note that 'Shakespeare' does not seem to be 'one person' but 'two': one is not worthy to be considered while the other is worthy of consideration because he must be a well introduced person in the high society, or a very high rank person as I think Detobel proposes. Was he Shaksper? No, he was Florio. How can we say it?

Greenblatt, in "Will in the world", writes that since Shaksper was a Southampton's friend, the Earl sent John Florio to intimidate Chettle and convince him to retreat what he had written about Shaksper in his Kind Heart. This is wrong! Greenblatt goes on saying that who went to Chettle to do the "dirty job" (Florio) had to be more powerful and intimidating than Shaksper. Greenblatt is right here, in fact Florio moved to defend himself, and consequently Shaksper, but mainly moved to defend himself. We find proof of what I am saying here just in the World of Words. The crow with a tiger's heart described in the Groatsworth was Florio not Shaksper, we will see why further on in this article.

But what is worthy to note about Greenblatt considerations on this matter is that he indirectly admits that Shaksper was almost nobody at that time, and furthermore we do not have evidences about any kind of relationship between he and Southampton. Could he have been the author of Shakespeare's sonnets and poems (such as Venus and Adonis) being them so full of those saucy facts about Southampton? John Florio was powerful and intimidating and he had a very close and good relationship with Southampton.

This is what we find in the World of Words. We will see that what I am going to report about Florio and Southampton's relationship is not fantasy but concrete evidence. That is why Chettle writes about Florio: "myself have seen his demeanour no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes. Besides, divers of worship have reported his uprightness of dealing, which argues his honesty, and his facetious grace in writing, that approves his art". What I say may appear mysterious: is there a solution to this mystery? Yes, there is!

The solution of this mystery is 'Absolute Johannes Factotum'. We have already seen that scholars have tried to solve the mystery of Johannes Factotum identity: in fact Bate says that he is the actor from Stratford William Shaksper. But Shaksper is not suitable for this role because he is not the 'Tiger', he is the 'Player' in which the Tiger hides himself. So 'Johannes Factotum' is the real Shakespeare as indicated by Greene, "the tiger's heart" that is "wrapped in a player's Hyde". Can we see Florio and Shaksper's relationship and collaboration in Greene's lines after having known all the facts I reported? We are not talking of a person here, but two: Florio the "Tiger" and "Shaksper" the Player. Once again comes out the Batillus: Shaksper the player that hides John Florio the Tiger, the "two souls of Shakespeare".

This can be rather confusing. In fact Frank Davis doubts, about Shakespeare being represented in the Groatsworth, are that the playmaker seems to be two persons, not one, and this confuses him: "how can it be?" seems to ask himself:

"Seldom mentioned is that the source of the identification of the "upstart crow" with William Shakespeare in Groatsworth is in the second of three parts of the pamphlet. But if we accept the identification of the crow with Stratford's Mr. Shaksper in the second part of Groatsworth, what do the first and third parts tell us? In Part One we find a "gentleman" whose character must also be a representative of the "upstart crow;" and in Part Three an "Aesope ant" also representing the "crow". An industry in denial, Frank Davis, M.D., Past President, Shakespeare Oxford Society.

So in the Groatsworth we have two entities that should be one, or better: in the Groatsworth we have an entity that should be 'one person' but it appears to be double. That is really confusing, and that is why Davis suspects that, in the Groatsworth, Greene is not talking about Shakespeare. And his confusion is justified by the fact that Shakespeare is not 'one person' but two: Florio and Shaksper together. What I have reported up to now about Johannes Factotum is not completely a proof, it gravitates half way between a proof and a supposition. So let get out the proof to be sure at cent per cent that "Johannes Factotum" in the Groatsworth is really John Florio.

Let us bear in our mind that Jonathan Bate affirms that Johannes Factotum, in the Groatsworth, refers to Shakespeare, and that Shakspeare is not one person but two: Florio and Shaksper together. Which one of the two is Johannes Factotum, and consequently "Shakespeare" according to Greene as intended in the Groatsworth? In this case Johannes Factotum refers only to Florio, let's see why.

First, the 'crow' mentioned at the beginning of the critic "for there is an upstart crow..." is a concept we have already met in Greene's critic to Florio, as we have seen in the Mourning Garments. 'Tiger' is a metaphor we encounter in the Menaphon, and it is used by Nashe to define Florio;

"Wherein I can but resemble them to the panther, who is so greedy of men's excrements that, if they be hanged up in a vessel higher than his reach, he sooner kills himself with the overstretching of his windless body than he will cease from his intended enterprise". Thomas Nashe, introduction to the Menaphon.

The player's Hyde inevitably refers to Shaksper. Shake-scene instead refers to Florio and Shaksper working together. But now let us analyze in depth the definition given in the Groatsworth of "absolute Johannes Factotum". This is a crucial and definitive argument to prove the identity of Shakespeare, as Jonathan Bate writes in the Groatsworth:

"There can be no doubt that this refers to Shakespeare (Bate here is referring to what Greene says in the Groatsworth), the player turned 'maker' who is here accused of borrowing the stylistic plumage of university-educated playwrights such as Greene himself. Shakespeare made his theatrical name with the barnstorming Henry VI plays, in one of which Queen Margaret places a paper crown on the head of Richard, duke of York, and is rewarded with a diatribe describing her as an 'Amazonian trull' with a 'tiger's heart wrapped in a woman's hide'. The quotation, with woman altered to player, is unmistakable. A Johannes fac totum was a jack-of-all-trades—English culture has a long history of men from the professions, armed with degrees from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, looking down their noses at hardworking men from a trade background who lack a degree (which in the Elizabethan age allowed you to call yourself a gentleman). Greene's Groatsworth of Wit goes on to call Shake-scene a 'rude groom' and a 'peasant'. This is the snobbery of the town sophisticate toward the country bumpkin as well as the professional toward the trader. We do not know whether the insult 'in his own conceit the only Shake-scene' indicates that Shakespeare played on his own name in a pun in one of his early plays or as a backstage or barroom joke. He certainly had a predilection for phrases such as 'shake my sword', 'shake his weapon', 'shake your shaking', 'shake his tail', and 'shake off these names'. There is little doubt that Shakespeare was provoked by Greene's Groatsworth of Wit". Bate, 'Soul of the Age'. Random House Publishing Group, 2009.

According to Bate thus there can be no doubt that in the Groatsworth "upstart crow" and "Johannes Factotum" refers to "Shakespeare": I agree, because Florio is Shakespeare. To clearly understand it we have to do a further step and see why Robert Greene was referring to Florio when he writes about the 'upstart crow', the "Tiger" and the 'Johannes Factotum', and that he is talking about Shaksper when he refers to the 'player'. So, let us skip to Florio's World of Words published in 1598. In it we find the evidence that the upstart crow, Johannes factotum and Florio are the same person, consequently the proof that Florio and Shakespeare are the same identity and Shaksper his collaborator, as indicated by the 'Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide'.

A World of Words

First of all, in the introduction we find something really interesting, in fact we have Florio saying: "This dedication (Right Honorable and that worthily) may haply make your Honors muse; wellfare that dedication, that may excite your muse. I am no auctoris'd Herauld to marshall your precedence. Private dutie might perhaps give one the priority, where publike respect should prefer another".

What does it mean "I am no auctoris'd Herauld to marshall your precedence. Private dutie might perhaps give one the prioritie, where publike respect should prefer another"? Simple: "my work as a secretary to your 'Excellence' (in this case the Earl of Southampton) does not allow me to expose too much myself to the public. I have important things (priority) to do for you that must be reserved and private, but to announce you to the public it is much better to use someone else". This is the meaning of this statement. So it is "Shakespeare", the literary fictional identity, that announces Southampton's name to the public as it happened with Venus and Adonis.

"Shakespeare" in this is case is the shield that allows Florio and Shaksper to move freely and in some case also independently, according to their tasks, duties and capabilities. We do not have to forget what Nashe said in the Menaphon: the writer (Florio) reposes eternity in the mouth of a player (Shaksper). These, according to Nashe were Florio and Shaksper roles: Florio wrote and Shaksper acted the writings on stage. This is confirmed also in the Groatsworth, where a writer is a 'Tiger' who 'wraps' in a 'player's hide'.

Florio, referring to Southampton, goes on writing: "In truth I acknowledge an entyre debt, not onely of my best knowledge, but of all, yea of more then I know or can, to your bounteous Lordship most noble, most vertuous, and most Honorable Earle of Southampton, in whose paie and patronage I have lived some yeeres; to whom I owe and vowe the yeeres I have to live. But as to me, and manie more the glorious and gracious sunne-shine of your Honor hath infused light and life: so may my lesser borrowed light, after a principall respect to your benigne aspect, and influence, affoorde some lustre to some others. In loyaltie I may averre (my needle toucht, and drawne, and held by such an adamant) what he in love assumed, that sawe the other stars, but bent his course by the Pole-starre, and two guardes, avowing, Aspicit unam One guideth me, though more I see".

Prof. MacCrea can not denie that in this passage we find a testimony of an intimate relationship between Florio and the Earl of Southampton to which Shakespeare dedicated so many sonnets. Can MacCrea find, in Shaksper's papers, something that equals this testimony of love and friendship between Florio and Southampton? If yes, then MacCrea should show it to us, and please, let us avoid suppositions and anecdotes. This is really important because Stratfordians boast a close relationship between Shaksper and Southampton, but they have no evidences to support it, as Stope suggests. Nor the can bring undeniable evidences that Shaksper was acquainted with Pembroke, Essex, or as many other nobles as Florio was.

Thus in the epistle to the reader of the World of Words we find out the arcanum: who really is 'Johannes Factotum', and this is important to solve the problem of Shakespeare's identity. In between the lines of this Epistle to the reader are explained the reasons why Florio preferred to work in "disguised array" as Thomas Nashe says in the Menaphon:

"the Italianate pen that, of a packet of pilferies, affords the press a pamphlet or two in an age, and then, 'in disguised array', vaunts Ovid's and Plutarch's plumes as their own".

Even if everybody knew about his literary and theatrical activities, as Nashe indicates, it was better for him not to be too much 'in the sun' (as Hamlet would say) because, as already seen, Florio says to Southampton: "I am no auctoris'd Herauld to marshall your precedence. Private dutie might perhaps give one the priority, where publike respect should prefer another".

But there is a more specific reason why Florio wanted to "shied" his activities, and that is because when he presented his Second Fruits to the public, in 1591, the outcomes were disastrous: "I knowe not how I may again adventure an Epistle to the Reader, so are the times or readers in theses times, (...) So should I fear the fire who have felt the flame so lately, and flie from the sea, that have yet a vow to pay for escaping my last ship wracke".

I think we do not need to comment this excerpt, it is clear that what he published in 1591 had a disastrous consequence for him, in fact Florio defines it a "ship wracke". Then he goes on saying..

"Then what will the world say for ventring againe? (...). Good counsel! Indeede, but who followeth it? Doe we not daily see the contrarie in practise? Who loves to be more on the sea, than they that have bin most on it?"

What kind of sea Florio is talking about? Let us see: "And here might I begin with those notable Pirates on this our paper-sea".

This is the sea Florio is talking about: a 'sea of paper'. And whom is he referring to? He is referring to: "those sea-dogs, or lande-Critickes, monsters of men, if not beastes rather than men; whose teeth are Canibals, their toongs adder-forkes, their lips aspes-poyson, their eies basiliskes, their breath the breath of a grave, their wordes the swordes of Turkes, that strive which shall dive deepest into a Christian lying bound before them".

Florio is referring to a lot of people here, but in particular in this passage he refers to John Eliot and his *Orthoepia Gallica* in which he attacked Florio in 1593 saying he was a dangerous foreigner: " lande-Critickes" defines Eliot and his writings. Florio in his critics explains the reasons of his purpose, that is "the purpose of my new voyage" so as to "give me leave a little to please my selfe, and refresh thee with the discourse of my olde danger". Is it enough clear? He wants to dig in some facts that happened in the past, and this facts are related to that "sea-paper" he has already mentioned.

It is interesting to know that John Eliot was really close to Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe. So Eliot, Greene and Nashe are Florio's specific targets in his attack to those "notable Pirates on this our paper-sea". The parts are inverted since Florio has the perception that THEY are the pirates, not him as they (Greene and Thomas Nashe) had accused. Why? It is useful to remember the discussion on "speed composition technics and theatre representations": that is the problem! In "the Return from Parnasuss" we have seen further answers to this problem, we understand it when we read the dialogue between Gullio and Ingegno about Shakespeare and we find Gullio who will "peruse, correct and polish" Nashe's writings and specifically extolled Shakespeare's style.

Florio in his Second Fruits is targeting Thomas Nashe when he writes "who the devil taught thee so much Italian?" and if we read carefully the 'Epistle to the reader' of the Second Fruits we understand that Nashe studied Italian with Florio when they were both at the Saint John College. In Florio's opinion Nashe is a thief of language, and consequently a 'pirate' on this 'sea-paper': "They snuff our lampes perhaps, but sure they add no oyle", this is what he writes about Nashe and his friends.

The key factor here to better understand the quarrel between Florio and Nashe is "Anatomy of absurdity" written by Nashe (1589) and the "Epistle to the reader" of Florio's Second Fruits (1591). To follow the thread of this dynamic, the key-word to look for is "rotten" both in "Anatomy" (Nashe) and in the "Epistle" (Florio), here are Nashe's words: "This green fruit, being gathered before it be ripe, is rotten (you see: ROTTEN) before it be mellow, and infected with schisms before they have learned to bridle their affections, affecting innovations as newfangled, and enterprising alterations whereby the church is mangled". *Anatomy of absurdity*, Thomas Nashe, 1589.

Nashe here is criticizing Florio's Second Fruits, in fact (always following the key-word 'rotten') we have in Florio's 'Epistle': "I, but (peradventure), thou wilt say my frutes are wyndie, I pray thee keepe thy winde to coole thy potage. I, but they are rotten (again: ROTTEN): what, and so greene? that's a

marwell; indeede I thinke the caterpillar hath newly caught them". Epistle to the reader, Florio's Second Fruits, 1591. So Nashe knew very well Florio's Second Fruits even before their publication: this mean that he read them when he was at Cambridge with Florio who at that time was preparing them.

Now it is clear why Florio says "who the devil taught thee so much Italian" in his Second Fruits, and why he has the neat sensation that the robber was Nashe: because Nashe stole "linguistic and cultural knowledge" from Florio's lessons and surely used it to write his works. Florio did the same thing with Tarlton in 1578, in fact he taught him Italian language and culture so that Tarlton and his theatrical company could perform works from the repertoire of the famous "Commedia dell'Arte Italiana", works represented with great success in England by the Italian Company "L'Accademia degli Intronati". But the relationship between Florio and Tarlton had a completely different path from that Florio had with Nashe: Florio and Tarlton had always been close friend, while Florio and Nashe became deeply enemies. In fact, Nashe and his friends Greene pushed Florio to declare:

"As for me, for it is I, and I am an Englishman in italian; I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate Un Inglese Italianato, è un Diavolo incarnato. Now, who the Divell taught thee so much Italian? Speake me as much more, and take all".

As we can see the thief in this case was Nashe, since he learned "so much Italian" during the lesson he had with Florio. In the way Florio writes, and in the resentment that comes out from his words, it seems that in Florio's opinion Nashe took advantage of this without being grateful to him. This is the sign of a quarrel which has been going on. When did this quarrel start?

This is really important when we admit that Shakespeare had to be in Cambridge before 1590, in fact Nashe was at Cambridge between 1585 and 1588/9, and he and Florio had not met each other before 1585. In 1589 Nashe was already attacking Florio. So, where could he (Nashe) have studied Italian with Florio if not at Cambridge between 1585 and 1588? I think it will be really difficult to find Shaksper in Cambridge between 1585 and 1589, mainly at the university. So, was Shakespeare at Cambridge as Sams reports? If yes, once again, Florio is the man we are looking for to solve the problem of Shakespeare's identity, because it is sure that it is not possible to refer this facts to Shaksper.

According to Giulia Harding, when Florio and Nashe met at Cambridge they considered the possibility that Southampton could become Nashe's patron, or at least Nashe thought so, but as the facts indicate this did not happen. This is evident from certain passages in Nashe's writings, as in the "Unfortunate Traveller", where he proposes to Southampton his services but, as the story goes, he did not succeeded in obtaining it. Nashe seems to insinuate, in his Lenten Stuff too, that the plan failed because Florio did not helped him. Surely Florio thought that Shaksper would be better than Nashe as collaborator. This is something that we can understand reading Florio's Second Fruits. Nashe's bitterness in the dedication of the "Unfortunate Traveller" to Southampton gives room to consider it. In fact in Florio's Second Fruits dedication to Sanders it seems that what Florio promised to Nashe (or what Nashe thought Florio had promised) had ended up being a privilege for Shaksper:

"Manie sowe come, and reape thistles; bestow three yeares toyle in manuring a barraine plot, and have nothing for their labor but their travel: the reason why, because they leave the lowe dales, to seeke thrift in the hill countries; and dig for gold on the top of the Alpes, when Esops cock found a pearle in a lower place". Shaksper was not the "top of the alpes" compared to Nashe and Greene, he was not a "Laureate", so he was a "lower place". I can understand why Nashe was furious with Florio!

In the "Unfortunate Traveller", 1594, (just the title of this book is a good indication of the distress Nashe proved at that time) Nashe, upset that Florio was under Southampton's protection, writes at the end of his introduction to Southampton:

"it resteth you (Southampton) either scornfully shake them off as worm-eaten & worthless, or in pity preserve them and cherish them for some little summer fruit you hope to find amongst them".

Here there are some precious hints, I think, that refers to "Shakespeare" (intended as Florio and Shaksper together). "Shake them off" seems a sneaky suggestion to invite Southampton to "send Florio and Shaksper away" (shake them off, with a so subtle stress on 'Shake', and a strong stress on 'them off'), because they are "worm-eaten" (an image Nashe had already used in 'Anatomy of Absurdity' referring to the 'rotten' fruits of Florio), so again this 'Fruits' are not to be praised. Instead, Southampton should "scornfully" shake them off as worm-eaten & worthless, and prefers him (Nashe) who is a better "fruit" to be preserved and cherished.

Now we can understand much better the meaning of Phaeton, where Shaksper writes: "Sutch frutes, sutch flowrets of moralities, Were never before brought out of Italy":

Phaeton to his friend Florio.

*Sweet friend whose name agrees with thy increase,
how fit a rivall art thou of the Spring?
For when each branch hath left his flourishing,
And green-locked Summer's shadie pleasures cease:
She makes the Winters stormes repose in peace,
And spends her franchise on each living thing:
The dazies sprout, the little birds doo sing,
Hearbs, gummes, and plants doo vaunt of their release.
So when that all our English witts lay dead,
(Exept the Laurell that is ever greene,)
Thou with thy frutes our barrennes o're-spread,
And set thy flowerie pleasant to be seene.
Sutch frutes, sutch flowrets of moralities,
Were never before brought out of Italy.*

In particular we can understand the meaning of: "So when that all our English witts lay dead,'(Exept the Laurell that is ever greene,)" . The reference to Greene and in particular to the "wits" is undeniable. Nashe knew it and again in the 'Unfortunate Traveller' takes the opportunity to quarrel about it and in a scornful way, that is the distinctive Nashe's trademark, invites Southampton to prefer him to them (Florio and Shaksper). We have to consider very carefully that, as Florio reports in his World of Words, it is sure that Florio was under Southampton's patronage at that time(1594), while we do not have evidences that it was the same for Shaksper as Stope reports.

Knowing what was going on between Florio and Nashe, and the references to Florio's Fruits, it is certain that Florio is among those 'worthless' people Nashe is attacking.

As we have seen, going back and forth from the Menaphon introduction and the Second Fruits (dedication and Epistle to the reader) we can detect the quarrel between Florio and Nashe, that involves Shaksper too. In the "Unfortunate Traveller" this quarrel is still going on. In this case the sonnet of Phaeton/Shaksper dedicated to Florio is strategic in understanding these dynamics because, containing a critic to Greene, we understand for sure that Shaksper was already working side by side with Florio in 1591/92, as represented in the Groatsworth: "the Tiger's hearth in a player's hyde". But why Shaksper used a pseudonym in this sonnet? Could he not use his name? Yes, he could but this way of 'acting' was more 'theatrically' intriguing. Everybody knew it, as everybody knew that A. B. was the pseudonym Essex used for his writing productions.

A part from that, Florio had to respect a formal behavior, being the children's tutor of important noble families. Further more the envy of the English people who did not succeed in doing what he did (as we saw) was really dangerous, as indicated in the quarrel between Eliot and Florio in the Otho-epia Gallica. Those times were not very easy for people like florio, we have to remember the case of Lopez, the Queen personal Jewish physician who was sent to dead for nothing. A formal protection was preferable rather than not.

At this regard it is extremely important to note what Florio says about his condition: "I know they have a knife at command to cut my throate Un Inglese Italianato, è un Diavolo incarnato". This is the key to understand why it was preferable (not indispensable, but just preferable) for him, as Thomas Nashe says in the Menaphon, to move "in disguised array": because since he had "mounted on the stage of arrogance", he could have been exposed to a disastrous criticism. As Florio imagined, his literary and theatrical activity really brought him a kind of disaster, a shipwreck, as he well specified in the letter to the reader of Florio's World of Words, and as we are going to see in Greene's Groatsworth. So, let us go on to find out about Johannes factotum.

After the critics to "Nashe & company" in the World of Words Epistle to the Reader, Florio goes on quarreling with someone who seems to have really annoyed him: "There is another [...] of leering curs that rather snarle then bite, whereof I coulde instance in one, who lighting upon a good sonnet of a gentlemans, a friend of mine, that loved better to be a poet, than to be counted so, called the auctor a rymer, notwithstanding he had more skill in good Poetrie, then my slie gentleman seemed to have in good manners or humanitie". I suspect that Florio is referring to Nashe and his biting satire, because Nashe used 'scornful' terms to define Florio's friends and student, among which there was also Shaksper, as I propose in the analysis of Unfortunate Traveller: "scornfully 'shake' them off as worm-eaten & worthless"

Who is the "gentlemans, a friend of mine, that loved better to be a poet, than to be counted so" Florio is talking about? We have to consider that Florio in this excerpt is referring to what happened in his last publication, so the "Second Fruits" that, as stated in the introduction of the Epistle, had been a "Shipwreck".

Consequently the sonnet in question has to be found in the Second Fruits: and in the Second Fruits we find the sonnet of Phaeton. We understand that Florio considers Phaeton "a good sonnet", in fact it is much better than sonnet 145 of Shakespeare's collection, and we understand this friend of his is a 'gentleman'. Was he Shaksper?

I think so! First because Shaksper had become a Gentleman in 1596, two years before the publication of the World of Words, and second because in Phaeton we find the ongoing quarrel between Florio and Greene that involved also Shaksper, as we have seen.

The definitive proof

What matters now is that we are close to the solution of the mystery: is Florio that "Johannes Factotum" cited in the Groatsworth? I mean, is Greene referring to Florio when he talks about 'Johannes Factotum' in his Groatsworth? According to Stratfordian critics and scholars, Greene is referring to Shakespeare, and considering the reference to Shakespeare's line "tiger's hearth wrapped in a player's hide" I agree with them. In the World of Words we can discover who is that "Johannes Factotum" cited by Greene in his Groatsworth, so we have the key to understand who is Shakespeare.

We have to skip other considerations, such as why Florio and H. S. (Hugh Sanford, Pembroke's family secretary) are quarreling, it is important but not relevant now. I am preparing a book in which I am going to explain (I hope) as much as possible about Shakespeare and Florio, but here is not the case to deep the subject. So let us Florio speak:

"But my quarrell is to a rooth-lesse dog that hateth where he cannot hurt, and would faine bite, when he hath no teeth, His name is H. S. Doe not take it for the Romane H. S. for he his not of so much worth, unlesse it be as H.S. is twice as much and a halfe, as halfe an As. But value him how you will, I am sure he highly value himselfe. This fellow, this H. S. reading (for I would you should knowe he his a reader and a writer too), under my last epistle to the reader I. F. made as familiar a word of F. as if I had been his brother..."

And further on in the same Epistle to the reader we find:

"Yet had not H.S. so causelessly so witlesly provoked me, I coulde not have bin hired or induced against my nature, my manner thus far to have urged him: though happily heereafter, I shall rather contemne him, then farther pursue him. He is to blame saith Martial and further he brandes him with a knavish name that will be wittie in another man's booke. How then will scoffing readers scape this marke of a maledizant? Whose wits have no other worke, nor better worth then to flout, and fall our? It is foule blemish that Paterculus findes in the face of the Gracchi. They had good wits, but use them ill".

This is the solution of the mystery if only we look at it carefully, I mean if we read carefully the lines that says "This fellow, this H.S. reading (for I would you should knowe he his a reader and a writer too), under my last epistle to the reader I.F. made as familiar a word of F. as if I had been his brother..."

Florio says that this H. S. has read under his last "epistle to the reader I. F.", (Second Fruits), and made "as a familiar a word of F. as if I had been his brother". Before giving the solution, let us see what we find if we go and read under Florio's last "epistle to the reader": we find exactly "Resolute J. F.". Greene says that the upstart crow is an "Absolute Johannes Factotum" and H. S., in 1591, made a "familiar word of F." as Florio had been his brother.

That is the key: as I wrote in my book (2008) the word H. S. made out of F. is "Factotum". But a clearer definition of the "familiar" word made out by H. S. from F., and its definitive explanation, has been given by Massimo Oro Nobili in one of his exceptional articles. Nobili says that "familiar", in this case, is a term that refers to the Latin word "famiglio". "Famiglio", Nobili reports, in ancient Rome, was the "factotum" who helped the noble classes to attend to their duties: in practice what John Florio had always done for some noble families in England.

Therefore, thanks to Nobili, now we know for sure that Florio in 1591, after the publication of his Second Fruits, was named Johannes Factotum by H. S., since having H. S. read "Resolute J. F.", which is the way Florio signed his Epistle to the Reader in the Second Fruits, transformed the letter F. (Florio) in a 'familiar' word: that is "Factotum".

Greene (or Nashe?) having noticed these, transformed 'Resolute' in 'Absolute' and used this 'knavish name' (Johannes Factotum) in his book (Groatsworth) to portray exactly John Florio saying, among the rest, that he was "an absolute Johannes factotum", that is: the most despised, envied and feared upstart

crow in London in 1591 by scholars such as Nashe, Greene, Eliot and company. Referring to this world (factotum) Florio says also how he could have avoided this mark: "How then will scoffing readers scape this marke of a maledizant?". He was prophetic, even though up to now nobody knew that this name (Absolute Johannes Factotum) referred to him in Greene's Groatsworth, not to Mr. Shaksper.

The question now is: is Florio really referring to Greene's Groatsworth in relation to the word "Factotum" that, according to what Florio writes in the Epistle to the Reader, "will be witty in another man's book"? Who is the man, and which is the book? Greene and the Groatsworth? If yes, the coincidence of these facts reveals that he is the real Shakespeare, the 'Tiger's heart' and the 'Absolute Johannes Factotum' reported by Greene in his Groatsworth. So let us give the final proof: to do this we have to go to the last Nashe's book, Lenten Stuff.

This book was published in 1599 and it is the last Nashe's answer to Florio and the last time we will hear Nashe's voice. In it there are a lot of worthy things to be analyzed, but to save time let us directly skip to the "problem solving key-word" to identify the ongoing quarrel between Florio and Nashe. So, the key-word we have to look for is "Martial". How did Nashe reply to Florio's accusation about 'Martial' and the 'Knavish name' (Factotum) that "will be witty in another man's book"?

If we find hints of an answer from Nashe to Florio the game is over, because this confirms Florio's suspect that Nashe had something to do with the Groatsworth critics to the crow, or at least he had a connection to it. This may be true also from a stylometric analysis, in fact scholars think that Nashe may have adulterated Greene's Groatsworth. What Greene says in his Groatsworth is the same Nashe had written in the introduction of Greene's Menaphon, so Florio's suspects are comprehensible. Anyway, this is Florio:

"He is to blame saith Martial and further he brandes him with a knavish name that will be wittie in another man's booke", World of Words, 1598.

And this is Nashe's answer to Florio:

"So I could pluck a crow with poet Martial for calling it putre halec, the scald rotten herring, but he meant that of the fat [...] Scottish herrings, which will endure no salt (...)". Nashe, 'Lenten Stuff' 1599.

Florio was right: Nashe got Florio's reference to him in the World of Words and answered, bitterly and hopelessly. In fact Nashe picks up Florio's reference to 'Martial' and again insults Florio calling him a crow that he (Nashe) may have plucked "with poet Martial calling him (Florio) putre halec" that is, as Nashe says, "the scald rotten herring" that "corrupts everything". We are now definitively sure about who is the 'absolute Johannes Factotum' cited by Greene in his Groatsworth: he is undeniably John Florio. Consequently he is Shakespeare, the 'upstart crow' whose 'tiger's heart' is 'wrapped in Shaksper's hide'.

This is the end of Florio and Nashe's quarrel because in 1600 Nashe died. Thus the thread which leads to solve the problem of Shakespeare's identity has been hereby exposed through an analysis of the quarrel between Nashe and Florio. This is the only way we have to solve this problem. Did Florio reply to this last Nashe's attack? Yes, he did!

In "Hamlet" (1601), that according to Nashe was known by Florio in 1589 as reported in the Menaphon, we have Polonio saying, reading Hamlet's letter to Ophelia, that "beautified is a vile word". Strats critics have thought this line, and in particular the word "beautified", to be a reference to Greene's Groatsworth line "beautified with our feathers" but they have never understood why Shakespeare had waited so long to reply. Well, now we know the reason of this "apparent" delay.

Having analyzed all these facts, does it become clearer why, for instance, we find so much Montaigne and Bruno in Shakespeare's works, among other things? And what about sonnet 33 of Shakespeare's sonnets collection? Does it represent Stratford in England or Soglio in the Swiss alps where Florio

spent his youth? And what about the deep knowledge Shakespeare shows to have about Italy? And what about all the other extraordinary things we find in Shakespeare's works? I have got the answer: all this happens because Florio and Shakespeare are the same person. What about Shaksper then? Well, let us leave to the Stratfordians the task to find out a suitable role for him, since he had an important role in the construction of "Shakespeare", everybody can understand it reading Florio's writings. It is not necessarily my task to find out everything about him, I have already done my best.

I would like to conclude using Erne Lukas words, suitably transformed, in inviting you to consider Florio as Shakespeare: "The cumulative effect of the evidences in favor of John Florio, as being the true Shakespeare, is such to be undeniable because it is grounded in detectable facts and well known books of Shakespeare's time".

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