

JOHN FLORIO – WAS HE SHAKESPEARE’S FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT COLLABORATOR?

“In Prayse of Florio – his Labour...

*If we at home, by Florios paynes may win,
To know the things, that travailes great would aske:
By openyng that, which heretofore hath bin
A daungerous journey, and a feareful taske.
Why then ech Reader that his Booke doe see,
Give Florio thanks, that tooke such paines for thee.”*

Richard Tarleton’s dedication in: ‘Florio, His Firste Fruites’

If you are familiar with the works of John Florio, his translation of Montaigne’s essays for example, it is hard to resist the notion that he and Shakespeare must have been close friends because his style, ideas and language leap from the pages of Shakespeare’s early plays in multitude. Literary evidence aside, I aim to show here that the historical record and contemporary writings confirm this relationship. Florio is the flamboyant Italian character ‘Gullio’ of the famous comedy sketch produced by Cambridge students in the early 1600s, “The News from Parnassus, Part Two” in which he cries “sweet Mr. Shakespeare, I will have his picture in my study at Court”.

In 1603, as James I came to the throne, Florio had just taken up his new post as a Royal tutor and certainly had a study at Court; he had also just published his translation of Montaigne’s essays. Florio had endured a spell in wilderness after the imprisonment of his patron, the Earl of Southampton for his part in the Essex rebellion against Queen Elizabeth, but he had not been forgotten and his new fame in Court circles revived interest in his fortunes and foibles. The crucial element in the ‘Parnassus’ sketch is that it reflects, line by line, a decade-long literary quarrel Florio had with Thomas Nashe, which can be traced from 1589 through to 1600 in almost everything the two men published.

It began in earnest but seems to have evolved into a stylish jape, a device to sell more books to the student population who revelled in such larks. The other character in the sketch, Nashe, is named “Ingenioso” and it was Florio himself who coined this nickname when he commented on the death of Nashe in his

Montaigne translation: “Ingeniose nequam”, adding that he had good wits but used them ill. Nashe’s famous quarrel with Gabriel Harvey has eclipsed this exchange but it is well worth the exploration I am about to undertake, if only to better enjoy their jokes at each others’ expense. I believe it to be one of the best and most extensive examples of grass-roots Elizabethan satire to have survived. It embraces other well-known texts from the period, such as the ‘Parnassus’ sketch, the ‘letter to the gentlemen playmakers’ from Greene’s “Groatsworth of Wit”, Thomas Chettle’s response in “Kind Heart’s Dream” and a less familiar publication, Humphrey King’s “Halfpenny worth of Wit in a Pennyworth of Paper”. This quarrel also confirms, not only that there was a working relationship between Shakespeare and Florio which was known about and commented on by their peers, but also reveals that Florio was responsible for brokering Shakespeare’s patronage with the Earl of Southampton, squeezing out Nashe’s bid in the process, for which Nashe never forgave him.

This new discovery opens the way to a more confident study of the interaction between Florio and Shakespeare that we see on the page. Let me begin by briefly outlining Florio’s career.

It begins for us in 1575 at Kenilworth Castle, the stately Warwickshire home of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, lifelong friend and hopeful suitor to Queen Elizabeth. There was a hum of activity everywhere, builders, carpenters, suppliers of every kind of luxury were in evidence because the Queen was coming to visit the Castle on a Royal Progress and would stay here for the best part of a fortnight. Gardens were being laid out, an aviary full of exotic birds was being constructed, a new block had been added to the building to provide apartments for the Queen’s exclusive use and preparations were being made for her vast entourage which would be camped out here, in some cases literally, for the duration. A fine new fountain was being constructed, later described in a Shakespeare play and there were plans for outdoor entertainments including a special welcome for Elizabeth from a ‘porter’ who looks remarkably like the porter in Shakespeare’s “Macbeth”. (1) We should not be surprised that these events turn up in plays written many years later, because, meanwhile somewhere within, the Earl’s company of theatrical players, “Leicester’s Men” were gathered for an Italian lesson. A very young John Florio, aged about 22 or 23 at the time, had been hired to teach the actors, a very mixed crew, to perform Italian comedies for the delight of the Queen and her guests. Some of her guests were foreign ambassadors who spoke almost no English, so Italian comedies would be just the thing to impress them, and Robert Dudley was very keen to impress foreign visitors, especially those who might form useful alliances when England was besieged by overseas Catholic plots and threats of war. He kept a fully staffed household in Holland and regularly took his players and musicians there to entertain his foreign guests. Dudley was, above all, a

loyal servant of the Protestant Crown. He spoke Italian already, as most of the nobility and the Queen herself did. He had been tutored, along with Lady Jane Grey and others of the Dudley faction, by John Florio's father Michelangelo in the years before Queen 'Bloody' Mary came to the throne. (2) Young John, born in London, had been whisked away with his parents to Soglio in Switzerland as the Dudley faction fell from grace and foreign Protestants were expelled from the country. He returned to England after his education at Tubingen University and found that memories of his father stood him in good stead when he set out to earn a living as a tutor in Elizabeth's reign.

The evidence for this scenario surfaces in the opening pages of Florio's earliest Language manual 'First Fruits' which is dedicated to the Earl of Leicester and even bears an imprint of the Earl's arms, that could only appear if the author was on the family payroll. He addresses him as his lord and seeks his protection from critics as a novice scholar just setting out on his career. Further clues come in the various little commendatory verses from friends that precede the text; four of them, grouped together, were penned by members of Leicester's company of players. They are Robert Wilson, Thomas Clarke, Richard Tarleton (see above) and a John B, who is most probably the actor John Bentley, famous for his tragic hero roles when a member of the Queen's Men in the 1580's. The Burbage family were involved in the company too. Several actors who would later recruit a young Shakespeare to join their company were therefore present at Kenilworth that summer.

Florio lists an interesting collection of both popular and rare Italian comedies in the bibliography to his dictionary "A World of Words" and it is often commented that Shakespeare seems to have drunk deeply from this well of literature in the composition of his own works for plots and characters, from the gender-bending farce of "Twelfth Night" to individual characters such as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, translated from the Italian character "Malvolte", (sick cheeks, or pox cheeks in "Sacrificio".) I would suggest it is likely that Florio acquired this interesting and expensive library while in the Earl's service and aiding "Leicester's Men" in their performance. (3).

Of the men Florio met during this period, it is the comedy actor and playwright Robert Wilson's career which clearly intertwines with both Florio and Shakespeare and it is reasonable to consider he may be the man most likely to have introduced them to each other with a view to re-styling those old Italian comedies for the London theatre audience.

Wilson was a comedy actor and playwright responsible for some of the so-called 'propaganda' plays performed by The Queen's Men in the early 1580's. He would have been a leading member of the theatrical group which hired

Shakespeare. William probably began his career under Wilson's wing, re-shaping old plays for new audiences. In his later years, Wilson was a key player in Henslowe's so-called 'stable' of playwrights where he organized writing partnerships and teams to produce an impressive collection of Jacobean city comedies. Henslowe's records (4) reveal that Wilson was a part of the writing team on sixteen plays over the course of just a couple of years which tells us much about the high demand for new, smart and witty stage plays in the early 1600's. Sadly little remains of his work beyond the list of titles, but we do have the text of "Two Ladies of London", an early propaganda play from his days with The Queen's Men. This tells the tale of a Jewish money-lender who is swindled by a Gentile debtor and was designed to give a sympathetic view at a time when Parliament was being asked to re-admit the Jewish bankers to England so that capital could be raised, even if interest payments were involved, to arm the country for war with Spain at a time when overseas borrowing, mostly from Italian and obviously Catholic bankers, was uncertain. The Queen's Men were hand-picked and financed by Frances Walsingham who poached at least half a dozen players from Leicester's Men, including Wilson and Tarleton.

We should also pay attention to what Florio had to say about the English language in his first book. 'It will do you no good past Dover' he observed and began to speculate as to how this cocktail of Nordic, Germanic and Latinate roots might be developed into something more elegant, with a wider vocabulary capable of more perfect expression and easier translation from the Latin languages of Europe. This mission became the focus of his work as he matured as a lexicographer. John Florio, it must be understood, did not simply teach foreign languages; he taught Language, as a subject in its own right and in his later years contributed some of the core essentials to the development of modern English.

The Earl of Leicester's ally Lord Burghley had helped Florio to attend Magdalen College, Oxford, where Leicester was then Chancellor, as a 'poor scholar', teaching as well as working for his MA. During this time Florio had worked with Richard Hakluyt on his collection of voyages and travels and had met and married the sister of the poet Samuel Daniel. (5) Burleigh found a new use for Florio when the new French Ambassador, Michel de Castelnau, was in need of a tutor for his gifted daughter Katherine Marie, John Florio was offered the job. His duties included working as an interpreter, translator and general secretary. It is commonly believed that he probably acted as a spy for Elizabeth's Court too, but the most interesting aspect of the job was that he and his wife and daughter lived under the Ambassador's roof alongside one of the most controversial scholars of the day, Giordano Bruno, who had been taken in as a kindness by the broad-minded representative of the French Court.

During the next couple of years Florio began to move in very interesting intellectual circles, associating with the likes of Sir Philip Sidney, Fulke Greville and Sir Walter Raleigh. Bruno never learned to speak much English and relied on Florio to interpret for him but during these years he produced some of his most exciting work, including his ideas about the expansion of the universe and the possibility of life on other planets. (6) His books were published by Vautrolier, whose business was later taken over by Shakespeare's Stratford friend and first publisher, Richard Field.

The Earl of Leicester's circle was never far away. His nephew Sir Philip Sydney was enchanted with Bruno's scholarship and imagination giving him generous patronage to continue his work. Florio would later draw an affectionate picture of his old friend in one of the dialogues of "Second Fruits". 'Nolano' a nickname derived from Bruno's home village of Nola, is depicted lounging on a window-seat, leafing through a book and poking fun at his friend Florio for taking too much time over getting dressed in the morning.

The Florio family grew, a second daughter was born, sister to Aurelia who had been born at Oxford, but then a wind of change came which would be fateful for all. Ambassador Castelnau was recalled to France, to make way for a new man with stronger Catholic sympathies for the cause of Mary Queen of Scots. Bruno decided to return to France with the ambassador, beginning a train of events that would take him across Europe, back into Italy and finally deliver him to the flames of the Inquisition at Venice in 1600.

For Florio the wind blew more favourably and it is from this point in his life that my research has shed new light on his movements and connections.

In the autumn of 1585 England's Catholics still believed they might prevail and return their country to the fold of the Vatican if they could rid themselves of Elizabeth and bring Mary Queen of Scots to the throne. They sought support from abroad and there was pressure from the Pope to help. Thus in September of that year a new, hard-line Catholic ambassador was sent to London from the French court, Baron de Chasteuneauf. He was immediately suspicious of John Florio, he had no children in need of a tutor and did not want the prying eyes of Burghley's man looking over his correspondence and listening into his conversations. Although he offered him continued employment, it was in a lesser capacity and on condition that the Florio family (by now there were two daughters) should move out of the Embassy into a home of their own. Lord Burghley knew that Florio could be of little further use to him there and he had a new post in mind for his protégé. He needed a

tutor to accompany one of his wards to St. John's College at Cambridge, the 12 year old Earl of Southampton. The boy's father, Henry Wriothesly senior, had died four years earlier under a cloud of Catholic suspicion and left a complex and disputed will that ultimately led to Burghley taking over the wardship of the boy from Lord Howard of Effingham.

Two weeks after Chasteauneuf's offer of a lacklustre job at the Embassy there was an exchange of letters between Florio and Castelleau in which the latter happily provided references recommending Florio's skills as a tutor, with a second, 'fair' copy on fine parchment for presentation purposes. It is likely the 'fair' copy was intended for perusal by the Queen who took an interest in all the Court wards who would be her future Courtiers. The testimonial is dated September 28th and the young Earl arrived at St. John's (Burghley's old college) on October 16th in the company of his personal tutor according to college records. (6) Lord Burghley knew he could rely on John Florio to give the boy a good education and steer him on the right religious path too. The young Earl's estate was in ruins; his father had been a wastrel, but Burghley had plans for the son's future career and marriage prospects.

There is other evidence which points to Florio as the tutor in question. A three year gap between 1585 and 1589, in the sequence of births of Florio's four children, indicating a lengthy absence from his wife. At least five of Florio's known Italian language pupils were students at Cambridge at exactly this time including the Harvey brothers. (7) There is no evidence of his presence in London during these years. In a loving dedication to Southampton in his 1598 dictionary, Florio tells us not only that he has lived, as he says, "some years" in the pay and patronage of the Earl, but also that he regards him as the man "to whom I owe and vow the years I have to live." If Florio thought, at that time, that he had a job for life with Henry Wriothesly it suggests he had already been with him a good number of years and that their relationship was close and trusting. In the preface to his 'Second Fruites' in 1591 Florio refers to having recently spent three years in study at a university, a long time after he had left Oxford. England had only two universities at this time so the only other university he could be referring to is Cambridge. The best evidence comes, however, in a personal attack on Florio from a man who had become

his enemy, the writer Thomas Nashe.

Nashe had been a sizar scholar at St. John's, working in the college kitchens and dining hall to pay his way and never finished his MA degree course. He left sometime between 1588 and 1589, the same year Southampton left the college. (8) Nashe's father had died and his funds had dried up, but, as the quarrel with Florio reveals, he believed that he had won the Earl's patronage and could now strike out and earn a living as a creative writer. His hopes were dashed however, and he was horrified to subsequently discover an 'upstart' poet and player with no university background at all was boasting to the world that he, William Shakespeare, was the Earl of Southampton's literary protégé. Nashe blamed Southampton's meddling tutor John Florio for this disaster to his career as we shall see in all the exchanges and parodies of the quarrel that followed.

The young Earl had moved back to London in 1589 to begin his legal studies at Gray's Inn and the bright lights of the big city must have seemed marvellous to his teenage eyes. Masques were performed for the entertainment of the law students, plays could be seen in the open yards of London taverns and there were all kinds of sporting activities available. He became a fan of 'real tennis' among other entertainments. This was a dangerous world for a sixteen year old Nobleman with cash in his pockets and Florio, very much in loco parentis but also the Earl's servant and on Burghley's payroll must have found it difficult at times to guide his pupil's journey through life. At Cambridge, student and tutor had lived in adjacent rooms over the South gate (according to the College rent records) but back in the City, Florio rejoined his wife and family at the house he had bought for them in one of the merchant districts, at Shoe Lane. Parish records reveal the births of two more children in the following years. In guiding his pupil's enthusiasm for literature and the arts, Florio knew Nashe's pen could be dangerously caustic, even vulgar and politically volatile. Young William Shakespeare may simply have seemed a safer choice, easier to groom, as well as a bright and original talent. Nashe was enraged when he realised his potential patron had been snatched from him by a 'nobody'.

It was common practice for new publications to carry prefaces or letters which amounted to dialogues and arguments between rivals at this time, perhaps encouraged by publishers who believed hot gossip would increase sales. So when Nashe's friend Robert Greene brought out his play 'Menaphon', Nashe appended to it an "epistle to the gentlemen students of both Universities" which amounted to an outburst against his rivals. One in particular occupies most of his attention.

This "idiot art master" is described as an "intruder", as being among "those that never wear gown in the University" (i.e. not on the staff) and "deep read Grammarians" and as one who privately tutors an entourage of followers who "intermeddle with Italian translations". Nashe recalls the attack on the importation of Italian literature, manners and morals published nearly twenty years earlier in Ascham's 'The Schoolmaster' for authority to support his own attack.

In his opening salvo against students who follow the path of the translator/tutor he makes an immediate connection with the Drama. "I cannot so fully bequeath them to follow 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 a bragging blank verse." In praising Robert Greene he contrasts him with "the Italianate pen, that a packet of pilferies, affordeth the press a pamphlet or two in an age and then in disguised array, vaunts Ovid's and Plutarch's plumes as their own" and criticises expedient fluency and the quick phrases and pithy sayings of which Florio was so fond with these words, "was it not Maros twelve years of toil that so famed his twelve Aeneiads?". In Nashe's view, speed of literary production betrays plagiarism. This is a specific attack on an individual he associates with his own college, St. John's and it is necessary to quote from it extensively so that one can see, further down the line, that Florio recognised himself in this attack and replied point by point.

Nashe tells his student audience that they should read the output of such translators and filchers only to better appreciate the masters of literature. Instead, he says, they lack discernment and add “a tale of John a Brainford’s” to their libraries as eagerly as if it were a poem of Tasso’s. He goes on “which being the effect of an undiscerning judgement, makes dross as valuable as gold, and loss as welcome as gain, the glow-worm mentioned in Aesop’s fables, namely the ape’s folly, to be mistaken for fire, when as Got wot poor souls they have nought but their toil for their heat, their pains for their sweats and (to bring it to our English proverb) their labour for their travail.”

Nashe tells his readers “It is a common practice nowadays 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 endeavours of Art, that could scarcely latinize their neck-verse if they have need; yet English Seneca read by candle light 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. But oh grief! ‘tempus edax rerum’, what’s that will last always? The sea exhaled by drops will in continuance be dry, and Seneca let blood line by line and page by page, at length must needs die to our stage: which makes his famished followers to imitate the Kid in Aesop, who, enamoured with the Fox’s newfangles, forsook all hopes of life to leap into a new occupation; and these men renouncing all possibilities of credit or estimation, to intermeddle with Italian translations: wherein how poorly they have plodded, (as those that are neither provincial men nor are able to distinguish of articles,) let all indifferent gentlemen that have travelled in that tongue, discern by their twopenny pamphlets.”

The trade of ‘noverint’ is a dig at Florio’s involvement with the translation of newsletters, the pamphlets which kept Londoners informed of affairs abroad. Most of them probably ended up hanging from a nail on the privy door but some survive, including Florio’s translation of the story of the death of one Pope and the installation of the new preserved in Church records. Nashe had criticised the bookshops of St. Paul’s for trading in news pamphlets in his ‘Pierce Penniless’ as follows:

“Look to it, you booksellers and stationers, and let not your shops be infected

with any such goose giblets or stinking garbage as the jigs of newsmongers.” He goes on, “Not a base ink-dropper, or scurvy plodder at Noverint but nails his asses’ ears on every post, and comes off with a long circumquaque (discourse) to the gentlemen readers.”

It was suggested years ago that the reference to the ‘kid in Aesop’ might refer to Thomas Kydd but I doubt that. The reference to Hamlet is the first mention of it in literature but we know an early version of the play was in circulation from references by Henslowe in 1594 and Lodge in 1596.

Nashe frequently quoted Aesop and it is worth having a volume of the fables at one’s elbow when reading Nashe to pick up the often cryptic allusions to the morals he refers to. In the story of the fox and the kid it is the fox, not the kid, who is the butt of Nashe’s attack:

“A fox one day fell into a deep well and could find no means of escape. A goat, overcome with thirst, came to the same well, and seeing the fox, inquired if the water was good. Concealing his sad plight under a merry guise, the fox indulged in a lavish praise of the water, saying it was excellent beyond measure, and encouraging him to descend. The goat, mindful only of his thirst, thoughtlessly jumped down, but just as he drank, the fox informed him of the difficulty they were both in and suggested a scheme for their common escape. “If,” he said, “you will place your forefeet upon the wall and bend your head, I will run up your back and escape, and will help you out afterwards.” The goat readily assented and the fox leaped upon his back. Steadying himself with the goat’s horns he safely reached the mouth of the well and made off as fast as he could.”

Nashe is claiming the ‘fox’ draws his pupils into the well of his Italian studies only to serve his own interests.

By page fifteen of this diatribe Nashe is allowing for the use of strong drink to inspire his muse, which he says, might be excused by ‘tam martiquam mercurio’ (as much Mars as Mercury – a kind of literary fanfare which crops up occasionally in literature from the period, the poet Gascoine used it to herald his verses for example.) Nashe tells us “a pot of blue burning ale with a fiery flaming toast is as good as Pallas with the nine Muses on Parnassus top” to inspire a poet. He adds “let frugal scholars and fine fingered novices

take their drink by the ounce and their wine by the hap'sworth." Further on he adds "our English Italians, the finest wits our climate sends forth, are but dry-brained dolts."

Florio made frequent literary assaults on what he called the excessive "swilling and tipping" habits of the English.

We see now, how precisely Nashe has marked his target without actually naming him. Here is a man known to both universities, he is at St. John's as a private tutor, an 'art master' who specialises in Italian studies and translations and has a group of followers or private students. He has been involved in the publication of news pamphlets and teaches 'Seneca by candlelight'; Florio was an enthusiastic Stoic. He abhors drunkenness (as did Florio) and has an interest in 'grammar' and the drama. He is an 'English Italian' above all. There was only one man at St. John's at this time whose head the cap truly fits, John Florio.

If there is still room for doubt, it evaporates when one reads Florio's reply to this attack, covering every point just highlighted in the Menaphon letter. It would turn out to be longest, but only the first of many attacks Nashe made on Florio in the years to follow.

Before leaving the Cambridge years it is worth pausing to discover the strong impact of Stoic thought on Florio's life and consciousness, which seems to have really taken root in him during this period.

The favoured ancient philosopher at St. John's was Aristotle, it was his logic which students were set to learn, and yet the Stoics, perhaps through the interest generated from reading Seneca, Marcus Aurelius and commentators such as Cicero, were beginning to enjoy a revival. Marcus Aurelius' teacher Epictetus preached Stoic ethics as a way of life and in Renaissance Europe this thread was taken up by the famous Belgian philosopher Justus Lipsius. In

1584 he published 'De Constantia', (9) a twin-volume dialogue on the art of coping with life's ups and downs according to Stoic ideology, coupled with Christian values. It had particular impact in England, where the infant Anglican Church was still in search of a moral code to call its own and afford some social backbone to the faith. We can see that Florio embraced it as a recipe for living and drew from Lipsius' call to be 'guided in all things by reason' and live a life of 'constancy' when we look at the following extract. In this, Lipsius defines his picture of the 'constant' man:

"For the good part in a man may sometimes be pressed down, but never oppressed, and these fiery sparks may be covered, but not wholly extinguished. Those little coals do always shine and show forth themselves, lightening our darkness, purging our uncleanness, directing our doubtfulness, guiding us at the last to Constancy and Virtue. As the marigold and other flowers are by nature always inclined towards the sun, so has Reason a respect for God, and to the fountain from which it sprang. It is resolute and immoveable in a good purpose, not variable in judgement, ever shunning or seeking one and the self same thing: the fountain and lively spring of wholesome counsel and sound judgement. To obey is to bear rule, and to be subject to it is to have the sovereignty in all human affairs. Who so obeys her is lord of all lusts and rebellious affections, who so has this thread of Theseus may pass without straying through all the labyrinths of this life."

It is no surprise then to see that the young Earl of Southampton's Latin exercises, sent to Burghley and preserved in the record, often reflect a study of Stoic philosophy. Florio habitually signed himself 'Resolute Iohannes Florius' or 'Resolute John Florio' from the influence of Lipsius and chose 'a marigold with the sun in chief' as his personal emblem and coat of arms. Neo-stoicism would flourish in the seventeenth century, but Florio was among the first to embrace it and it is probably in that context that he went on to translate the essays of Lipsius' friend and colleague Michel de Montaigne and in later life found himself the dedicatee of the first English translation of Epictetus. (10) That Stoic interest would surface in Shakespeare's plays and it is worth studying 'De Constantia' to perceive the influence more clearly. Stoics prevail in Shakespeare's world, while those who fail to be guided by

reason, in the Stoic manner, and are instead governed by passions such as vanity, ambition and envy (Lear, Macbeth, Othello and Shylock for example) fall prey to the whim of fate. The repeated emphasis on Constancy, not just loyalty as we might use the word today, but the neo-Stoic interpretation of the word; single-minded adherence to reason, permeates the Sonnets with philosophical resonance and, once recognized, gives them a fresh nuance.

What followed from the 'Menaphon' attack would become a lengthy exchange with comments and asides in almost everything the two men wrote from then on. Others would comment on it culminating in that satirical sketch put on by St. John's students for the entertainment of the College which tells us in no uncertain terms that the central issue of the quarrel is Florio's relationship with "sweet Mr. Shakespeare". It makes best sense to follow the exchanges in more or less chronological order to see the 'tit for tat' nature of the dialogue. That brings us next to the Spring of 1591.

Florio took the publication of 'Second Fruits', a collection of dialogues with a particular focus on Italian proverbs and their use in colloquial speech, as an opportunity to strike back at his critic, and rather than dedicate this book to his Noble patron the Earl of Southampton, he chose instead to offer it to an old Oxford friend, Nicholas Saunder of Ewel. It was bound in company with his 'Garden of Recreation, yielding six thousand Italian proverbs.'

Florio begins by defending the trade of 'Noverint'. After all he had indeed been involved in publishing news pamphlets, of which 'A letter lately written from Rome' imparting news of the sudden death of Pope Gregory the thirteenth and the story of the election of his replacement, published in 1585, is still preserved.

When Florio addressed his friend in 'Second Fruits' it was Spring, a "stirring time, and pregnant prime of invention" in when he says every man is busy, "some delivering to the press the occurrences and accidents of the world, news from the mart or from the mint, and news are the credit of a traveller and first question of an Englishman." The recent literary output of Thomas Nashe recalls the jibe about the 'alchemist of eloquence' when Florio describes him thus, "Some like Alchemists distilling quintessence of wit, that melt gold to nothing, and yet would make gold of nothing" - "Some" he says, have been "putting on pied coats" and "taking the elevation of Pancridge Church, (their quotidian walks) prognosticate of fair, of foul and of smelling weather".

What does this mean? In the year or so following the 'Menaphon' incident, three satirical pamphlets were published by Nashe under the pseudonyms

'Frances Fairweather', 'Adam Foulweather' and 'Simon Smell-knave' (the 'Foulweather' pamphlet mentions St. Pancridge Church).

Florio has a few words to say about the outpouring of love sonnets at the time before returning to Nashe again. "Other some with new characterisings bepasting all the posts in London to the proof and fouling of paper, in twelve hours think to effect Calabrian wonders: is not the number twelve wonderful?" Florio had sub-titled his book: 'Second Fruits, to be gathered of twelve trees of diverse but delightful tastes'. Here the term 'Calabrian wonders' refers to John Doleta's tract 'Strange News out of Calabria' which in 1586 predicted 'wonders' in the shape of natural disasters. 'Is not the number twelve wonderful?' recalls Nashe's comments about 'Maros twelve years of toil'.

In the next line Florio has even more succulent material to savour - the Martin Marprelate controversy, a pamphlet war in which the self-styled 'Marprelate' attacked the bishops of the Church of England as "petty popes" and in which Nashe had taken part, replying in at least one pamphlet of his own 'An Almond for a Parrot'. "Some", says Florio "with Amadysing and Martinising a multitude of our libertine yonkers with trivial, frivolous and vain vain drolleries, set many minds a gadding; could a fool with a feather make men better sport?" By coining the phrase 'Amadysing and Martinising' Florio draws together Nashe and the group of University wits to attack the affected style of these pamphlets. (The French phrase in contemporary parlance "pinsegreneur d'Amadis" is defined in Cotgrave's French dictionary of 1611 as "A phrasemonger, spruce discourser, affecting speaker.") Florio's accusation here is of intellectual philandering to entertain the student body, the 'libertine yonkers' who must have regarded this pamphlet war as good entertainment.

Florio returns to the business of replying to the 'Menaphon' attack in his next paragraph. Referring to the usual period of study at the University, he thanks "the gracious soil where my endeavours are planted" and comments "many sow corn and reap thistles; bestow three years toil in manuring a barren plot, and have nothing for their labour but their travel" thus turning the tables on Nashe's "poor souls, they have nought but their toil for their eat, their pains for their sweats and their labour for their travail." Florio goes on to observe that some writers have little to show for their studies for they have spent their years attempting to scale the heights of classical scholarship and produce something new of their own by "digging for gold on top of the Alps" while Florio found more fertile ground among contemporary European literary studies. "I am none of their faction" he declares, and he cannot resist quoting Aesop back at Nashe, "Aesop's cock found a pearl in a lower place." This is the story of a lost pearl earring, the owner searches in all the obvious places

but the cockerel eventually finds it while scratching among the seed in the barnyard. Could this be a reference to William Shakespeare? It is tempting to think so as one reads on through this discourse.

Florio then turns his attention to his own book and extols the virtues of learning and using a wide range of Italian-sourced proverbs, not merely to decorate a discourse, but to define a meaning with some eloquence. In recalling Nashe's love of flaming-ale he comments; "but if the palate of some ale or beer-mouths be out of taste that they cannot taste them, let them sport but not spew." A Latin proverb, familiar from Nashe's piece, recurs in a reference to Florio's patron Saunder, an upright man who needs no excuses: "who amongst many that bear their crests high, and mingle their titles with 'tam marti quam mercurio' are an unfeigned embracer of virtues and nourisher of knowledge and learning."

Florio's tone becomes much more barbed in the second address, to the reader. Those who wear "the badge of a Momus" (follow the God of Satire) come in for some harsh words. "I can wish no worse than they work themselves, though I should wish them blindness, deafness and dumbness: for blind they are (or worse) that see not their own vices, others virtues: deaf they are (or worse) that never could hear well of themselves, nor would hear well of others: and dumb they are (and worse) that speak not but behind mens' backs (whose books speak to all;) and speak naught but is naught like themselves, then who, what can be worse?"

Florio stands his ground against the learned mentor of Nashe, the venerated scholar Ascham by quoting from his 'Schoolmaster', which had been published after his death in 1570, verbatim. Florio says "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 throat, 'Un Inglese Italianato e un Diavolo incarnato' - now who the devil taught thee so much Italian?" Ascham used this proverb 'An Englishman in Italian is the Devil Incarnate' to attack the fashion, growing even in his day, for young English Nobles to travel in Italy and return not only well versed in the language and culture, but also in the vices and loose morals they had encountered by the way. It is in fact an Italian proverb, for the Italians felt these young Englishman were painting a derogatory picture of their motherland by their emulation of all that was worst of Italian life. Florio responds directly to Nashe here, "Mislike you the language? Why the best speak it best, and her Majesty none better" and recalls the great and the good from history who made the learning of languages a virtue "Mithridates was reported to have learned three and twenty several languages, and Ennius to have three hearts because three tongues, but it should seem thou hast not one sound heart, but such a one as is cankered with envy; nor any tongue, but a

forked tongue, thou hissest so like a snake."

Florio recalls Nashe's tale about the fox and the goat at the well when he reminds his readers of all the good literature to make its way in England through translators of the past: "Had they not known Italian, how had they translated it? Had they not translated it, where were now they reading? Rather drink at the well-head than sip at puddled streams". In the closing paragraphs he commends his proverbs to the generality of readers and ends by anticipating yet more criticism of his work to follow.

One particularly telling remark in all this is the very direct "Now, who the devil taught thee so much Italian?" which suggests Nashe may, at one time, have been among Florio's pupils at St. John's. Another Cambridge contemporary who certainly was among Florio's pupils was Gabriel Harvey who, together with his brother, waged a similar literary battle with Nashe. His personal copy of 'First Fruits' is still preserved with Harvey's student notes in the margins. (11) In his dispute with the Harvey brothers, Nashe had recently published the 'Anatomy of Absurdity' and commenting that "some men come into the ministry before their wits be staid" he added "This green fruit, being gathered before it be ripe, is rotten before it be mellow" - surely, thought Florio, a contradiction in terms? Is this the kind of attack he could expect of Nashe on his 'Second Fruits'? He tells his adversary "Aye but (peradventure) thou wilt say my fruits are Windy, I pray thee keep thy wind to cool thy pottage. Aye, but they are rotten: what, and so green? that's marvel; indeed I think the caterpillar hath newly caught them."

Florio is still 'resolute' in defence of his collection of proverbs: "To use them is a grace, to understand them a good, but to gather them a pain to me, though gain to thee. Aye but for all that, I must not scape without some new flout: now would I were by thee to give thee another, and surely I would give thee bread for cake. Farewell if thou mean well, else fare as ill as thou wishest me to fare." and he signs off :

"The last of April 1591. Resolute I. F."

Florio's 'Second Fruits' was primarily a comprehensive guide to Italian proverbs and their use in everyday conversation. He took pleasure in devising conversations which featured his friends among the cast of characters. The opening dialogue portrays a character called 'Nolano' exclusively the sobriquet of Giordano Bruno, in an amusing dialogue where Nolano patiently waits for his friend Torquato to take an eternity over getting dressed, perusing his extensive wardrobe and despairing that all his shirts are at the laundry. He considers wearing an embroidered satin suit, but it lacks buttons, his plain taffeta is crushed from lying at the bottom of the chest, finally he settles on the

cut fustian. The Bruno character cares little for clothes and comments that he prefers to dress like a man in a portrait "ever the same" and wonders "how many suits have you?" which prompts an inventory of his friends apparel: "I have of velvet, of satin, of damask, of grosgraine and of fustian" with the slightly shame-faced excuse: "I have to shift every day in the week." Throwing open various chests we find he possesses "a long gown furr'd with Martines, a furr'd gown, a night gown of chamlet, a rugge gowne, a cloake of fine cloth, a riding cloak of broad-cloth, two dublets" and so it goes on, many pairs of leather boots and spurs, a variety of shirts and linen. There is witty banter between master and servant as the dressing process continues: "Give me the shoing horne to pull on my shoes" and the servant asks "Shall I help you to pull them on?" to which Torquato replies "No, what thinkest thou me so idle?" and the servant mutters "What can I tell? It were no such wonder." Meanwhile the patient friend Nolano provides a Neapolitan posy of proverbs which may well have been Bruno's personal favourites, among them "Chi si contenta gode" which Florio freely translates as "who lives content hath all the world at will" and which he would later adopt as his own motto. Torquato completes his ensemble with an embroidered blue velvet belt and a rapier "made in Iremonger lane & tempred at leaden hall...a very fine one, and hath a very fair hilt." This magnificent dandy must comb his beard and pare his nails before he picks up his gloves to venture out. Naturally when Nashe wanted to refer to Florio, this snapshot was irresistible.

There is no doubt that Nashe read what Florio had written about him in 'Second Fruits', and looked over at least that first dialogue, about the hunt through the wardrobe, before scornfully tossing it aside. A couple of years later in his 'Terrors of the Night' Nashe ruefully reflected on his lack of a patron; "in a leaden standish (inkstand) I stand fishing all day, but have none of Saint Peter's luck to bring a fish to the hook that carries any silver in the mouth". He is immediately reminded of his silver-tongued old rival, still enjoying the comfortable patronage of the Earl of Southampton, advising this, and other pupils of the Nobility about which writers were worthy of their patronage, but failing on an apparent promise to put in any good word for Nashe: "there be of them that carry silver in the mouth too, but none in the hand; that is to say, are very bountiful and honourable in their words, but (except it be to swear indeed) no other good deeds come from them." Nashe goes on to draw an unmistakable caricature of both John Florio and his most recent book. "Filthy Italianate compliment-mongers they are who would fain be counted the Court's Gloriosos, and the refined judges of wit; when if their wardrobes and the withered bladders of their brains were well searched, they have nothing but a few moth-eaten cod-piece suits, made against the coming of Mounsier, in the one, and a few scraps of outlandish proverbs in the other, and these alone do buckler them from the name of beggars and idiots." He

recalls Florio's fondness for quoting Tasso: "Otherwise perhaps they may keep a coil (noisy discourse) with the spirit of Tasso, and then they fold their arms like braggarts, writhe their necks alla Neapolitano, and turn up their eye-balls like men entranced." What a picture of Florio, with his six thousand elegant proverbs and his chests full of fancy suits, furthermore it provides confirmation of a continuing quarrel. We also get a clear hint at the cause of Nashe's bitterness here, lost patronage.

There are further references to Florio in Nashe's 'The Unfortunate Traveller' but the quarrel becomes much more interesting when it crops up again in an exchange between the prefaces in Florio's dictionary and Nashe's subsequent and last work, 'Lenten Stuff.' It's an exchange that seems to recall the row about Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* and the publisher Chettle's subsequent comments that certain gentlemen believed Nashe had written that epistle to the play makers.

In 1598 Florio was finally able to unveil his comprehensive Italian-English dictionary 'A Worlde of Wordes' in which he had gathered tens of thousands of word definitions, many coined from Italian words previously incapable of translation for lack of an equivalent English word or a grammatical barrier. In his epistle to the readers, Florio returned to what he called an "old danger", the attacks of critics, and revealed that he had tracked down a man who had devised a scurrilous, Latinate nick-name from Florio's habitual signature 'Resolute I. F.' He then accuses his familiar adversary Nashe of using this name in print and calls up a reference to the Roman poet Martial to point a finger at one who adds something scurrilous to another man's book.

First Florio identified H. S. (the rival tutor Hugh Sandford) as the coiner of rude names: "This fellow, this H. S., reading (for I would have you know that he is 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. Now recte sit oculis magister tuis said an ancient writer to a much-like reading grammarian-pondant: God save your eye-sight, sir, or at least your in-sight." Florio determines to reply in similar vein, and make rude Latin nicknames of this man's initials, and demonstrate that he can do the same thing in several other languages too: "And might not a man that can do as much as you (that is, read) find as much matter out of H.S. as you did out of I. F.? As for example H. S. why may it not stand as well for Haeres Stultitiae, as for Homo Simplex? or for Hara Suillina, as for Hostis Studiosorum? or for Hircus Satiricus, as well as for any of them? And this in Latin, besides Hedera Seguace, Harpia Subata, Humore Superbo, Hipocrito Simulatore in Italian. And in English world without end. Huffe Snuffe, Horse Stealer, Hob Sowter, Hugh Sot, Humphrey Swineshead, Hodge Sowgelder. Now Master H. S. if

this do gall you, forbear kicking hereafter, and in the meantime you may make a plaister of your dried marjoram." After deriding H. S.'s lack of wit for a few sentences, Florio goes on to say that " had not H. S. so causelessly, so witlessly provoked me, I could not have been hired, or induced against my nature, against my manner thus far to have urged him; though happily hereafter I shall rather contempt him, than farther persue him. He is to blame (saith Martial, and further he brands him with a knavish name) that will be witty in another man's book."

There is a distinction to be drawn here between H. S. himself, identified as Hugh Sanford by the references to his coat of arms (a marjoram bush), who devised the provocative nick-name from the 'Second Fruits' signature, 'Resolute I. F.', and the man Florio identifies as the real author of the public mischief, "He that will be witty in another man's book", the latter having made use of it in print as described. Would Nashe make that distinction and recognise himself in this allusion to his involvement in the incident by rising to the bait?

Sure enough Nashe picked up on Florio's quarrel with H. S. at his next opportunity, in his publication the following year of 'Lenten Stuff'. Nashe had instantly identified with "he that will be witty in another man's book" and further acknowledged the fact by lighting upon Florio's reference to Martial. The "knavish name" the Roman writer devised for such a one was "putre halec" a rotten herring that spoils the rest of the barrel.

Nashe was then living in the town of Yarmouth, famous for its herring industry, having fled London in the wake of the row about the banned play 'Isle of Dogs' in which he'd had a hand. Students of Nashe's writing who may have wondered why he devoted so much energy in his last published work to praising the fine qualities of the Yarmouth herring may now see a mystery solved. Nashe jokes that Martial must surely have had a greasy Scottish herring in mind when he used the phrase putre halec; not a sound, long-keeping Yarmouth specimen.

Nashe's dedication suggests that Florio was somehow connected with a pamphlet entitled: 'An Halfpenny-worth of Wit in a Pennyworth of Paper' published as the work, indeed as far as we know the only work, of a certain 'Humphrey King' by Florio's regular publishing partners, Thomas Thorpe and Edward Blount.

Florio had opened the epistle to the reader in 'World of Words' with numerous nautical metaphors, likening his publication to another venture upon the high-seas, undertaken in a dangerously critical environment among "those pirates in this our paper sea, those sea-dogs, or land-critics, monsters of men, if not

beasts rather than men, whose teeth are canibals', their tongues adder-forks, their lips asps-poison, their eyes basilisks, their breath the breath of a grave, their words like the swords of Turks, that strive which shall dive deepest into a Christian lying bound before them."

Happy to play the part of a swash-buckling pirate and wholesome Yarmouth herring, Nashe gleefully runs up the Jolly Roger aboard his own vessel by opening 'Lenten Stuff' with an apt Latin proverb, 'Famam peto per undas' (I seek fame through the waves) and launches into a series of nick-names in a mock dedication of his work to 'Humphrey King' of whom we shall hear more in a moment.

The first paragraph of Nashe's letter begins in a vein reminiscent of his bogus dedication to Southampton in 'The Unfortunate Traveller', "Most courteous, unlearned lover of poetry, and yet a poet thyself, of no less price than H. S., that in honour of Maid Marian gives sweet Margaret (marjoram) for his Empress and puts the sow most saucily upon some great personage, whatever she be, bidding her (as it runs in the old song) 'Go from my garden, go, for there no flowers for thee doth grow': these be to notify to your Diminutive Excelsitude and Compendiate Greatness what my zeal is towards you, that in no straiter bonds would be pounded and enlisted, than in an Epistle Dedicatory."

This reaffirms the identification of H. S. as Hugh Sanford. This was the conclusion reached by the leading editor of Nashe's works Dr. R. B. McKerrow and affirmed by Florio's biographer Dame Frances Yates. Hugh Sanford's arms-device, a hog and a majoram bush, appear on the title page of the 1593 revised version of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. It follows that Nashe's "Maid Marian" is the Countess of Pembroke, who undertook the revision of her brother's work and employed her sons' tutor Sanford to edit the text. Yates hit on the likely cause of animosity between Florio and Sanford, pointing to their apparent involvement in the rival versions of Sidney's 'Arcadia', published respectively in 1590 and 1593.

The 'Arcadia' had been circulated in manuscript form only during Sidney's lifetime, but after his death, his lifelong friend Fulke Greville decided it would be a fitting posthumous tribute to publish the work. His problem was in deciding which version to proceed into print. Just before his death, Sidney had been working on the notion of revising the 'Arcadia'. It's widely believed now that Greville called on his former Italian tutor, Florio and his friend Matthew Gwinne to help with the task. (Gwinne and Florio later worked together on the translation of Montaigne's *Essays* too.) In later comments in the prefaces to the *Montaigne*, Florio betrayed an intimate knowledge of the

particular manuscript editions used in composing the first version of Sidney's *Arcadia* and stoutly defended it as preferable to the subsequent edition edited by Sanford. The 1593 version, commissioned by the Countess of Pembroke, who had apparently become convinced that a better job could be made of it, resorted to Sidney's revisions and altered the sequences to provide an 'ending' which the earlier version lacked. Sanford himself scorned the earlier version in his preface, protesting that its 'face' was 'disfigured' with errors, which he, Sanford, had corrected and improved.

Sharp glances at Florio pepper the text of 'Lenten Stuff'. Florio's 'Second Fruits' reference to his "medicinal simples" and praise of Mithridates' impressive command of more than twenty languages becomes, in Nashe's hands, an evil-smelling apothecary's collection of "their Mithridates forty several poisons"; another of Martial's epigrams tells how Mithridates took daily minute doses of poison to build up his immunity. Nashe dips into Florio's dictionary: "Noble Caesarian Charlemagne herring, Pliny and Gesner were to blame they slubbered thee over so negligently. I do not see why any man should envy thee, since thou art none of these lurcones or epulones, gluttons or fleshpots of Egypt (as one that writes of the Christians' captivity under the Turk enstyleth us English men)." This recalls Florio's bitter remark about critics and his regular comments about the dietary excesses of the English. Modern editions of 'Lenten Stuff' note that the meanings of the words 'lurcones' and 'epulones' are unknown, but in Florio's dictionary one finds the definitions necessary to comprehend their mysteries. A 'lurcone' is 'a glutton, a cormorant, an epicure, a gourmand' and an 'epulone' is defined as 'a glutton, a gourmand, a smell-feast, a tall trencher-man, a banquetter.' Nashe had plainly had some fun sifting through Florio's collection in search of appropriate Italian novelties of vocabulary and prepared his readers for them in his opening epistle: "Let me speak to you about my huge words which I use in this book, and then you are your own men to do what you list."

Nashe returns to Florio's 'Second Fruits' and the lengthy morning toilette described in the *Nolano* dialogue to draw a picture of his subject. Like Florio's character 'Torquato' he has heavily overslept after a night on the town and takes an age to prepare himself to meet the day.

He spends more in a day than he can earn from the "grazierly gentility thou followest" in a year, according to Nashe, and puts on a show of wealth with "all his trunks opened to show his rich suits". But Nashe adds that such a one is not so generous to his friends, that his learning of "the seven liberal sciences", the university courses of the Trivium and Quadrivium, has been turned to profit and self-indulgence. He adds that in the hands of this fellow, love poetry, of the sort Florio called "a pretty thing to give unto my Lady" in

'Second Fruits' is reduced to clownish sensuality: "if it were not a trick to please my Lady, (poetry) would be excluded out of Christian burial, and, instead of wreaths of laurel to crown it with, have a bell with a cock's-comb clapped on the crown of it by old Iohannes de Indagines and his choir of dorbellists." This is a reference to a fifteenth century monk and the followers of a contemporary scholar named Dorbellus, but the implication is that the Iohannes being described here has prostituted his learning to public entertainment.

What does Nashe seek from his 'patron' as recompense for his offering of 'Lenten Stuff'? "Give me good words I beseech thee," and goes on to relate Florio's explanation of his grammatical engineering in 'Worlde of Wordes' to another of Martial's epigrams. Florio had quoted an Italian proverb translated as: "words they are women, and deeds they are men" adding, "but let such know that Detti and fatti words and deeds with me are all of one gender." This reminded Nashe of one of Martial's epigrams, from Book 2, number 20:

"Carmina Paulus emit, recitat sua carmina Paulus,
nam quod emas possis iure vicare tuum"

This is James Michie's translation for the Penguin Classics series selection:

"He buys up poems for recital,
and then as 'author' reads.
Why not? The purchase proves the title
Our words become his 'deeds'."

So Martial's verse contains an inference about literary theft and plagiarism. In a complex sequence punning on words and deeds, this is how Nashe tied the two allusions together: "Give me good words I beseech thee, though thou givest me nothing else, and thy words shall stand for thy deeds; which I will take as well in worth, as if they were the deeds and evidences of all the land thou hast." It scarcely needs to be added at this point that Florio was no landowner, so such deeds would of course have been worthless. Then, recalling the 'Second Fruits' reference to "ale or beer mouth" critics Nashe thinks Florio might also at least stand him a draught of 'merry-go-round' (strong ale) for his pains.

In the 'Worlde of Wordes' dedication, Florio said no critic or jealous rival would prevent him from pursuing his work: "I were very weak-minded if they could anything move me. And that husbandman might be counted very simple, that for the ominous shrieks of an unlucky, hoarse-voiced, dead-devouring night-raven or two, or for fear of the malice of his worse conditioned neighbours, would neglect either to till and sow his ground, or

after in due time to reap and thresh out his harvest."

From Nashe's point of view, it is not such a great triumph to compile a dictionary, and no great difficulty lies in reaping a good harvest where a man has the backing of a wealthy patron like the Earl of Southampton. However, to keep writing and publishing from patron-less poverty is a neat trick if you can do it: "Every man can say Bee to a Battledore, (quoting from the Humphrey King pamphlet) and write in praise of virtue and the seven liberal sciences, thresh corn out of the full sheaves and fetch water out of the Thames; but out of dry stubble, to make an after-harvest and a plentiful crop without sowing, and wring juice out of a flint, that's Pierce-a-God's name, and the right trick of a workman."

Once again the notion that Florio had used his influence to deny Nashe the benefit of the Earl of Southampton's patronage is implicit here.

Nashe died not long after the publication of 'Lenten Stuff' and although Florio appears to have made no further reference to him, his 'Worlde of Wordes' comments might make a suitable epitaph. Here are Florio's last words on Thomas Nashe:

"It is a foul blemish that Paterculus finds in the face of the Gracchi, they had good wits, but used them ill. But a fouler blot than a Jew's letter is it in the foreheads of Caelius and Curio that he sets, Ingeniose nequam, they were wittily wicked."

This leaves two mysteries still to solve - the identity of Humphrey King, NOT Florio but somebody close to him who felt that he, too, had been insulted in the 'Groatsworth' epistle. Then there is also that rude Latin nickname Hugh Sanford devised from 'Resolute I. F.' and Florio's assertion that Nashe had made use of it while adding something to another man's book. My belief is that Florio was one of the complaining gentlemen who suspected Nashe had added the 'Epistle to the gentlemen playmakers' to the end of Robert Greene's 'Groatsworth of Wit', in the same way that he had prefaced Greene's 'Menaphon' to the 'gentlemen students' and that the rude name in question was "Absolute Iohannes Factotum".

While Shakespeare scholars will probably never agree about who actually wrote that letter, it's easy to see why Florio of all people would have suspected Nashe. Greene's publisher Chettle is still believed by some to have penned the piece, others maintain as Chettle himself said "I protest it was all Greene's, not mine or Maister Nashe's". There is an arch exchange between

Chettle, in his apologetic 'Kind Heart's Dream' and Nashe's subsequent 'Terrors of the Night' which parodies Chettle's device of being visited by ghosts with messages.

Nashe denied any involvement in the Groatsworth incident, and yet Chettle's 'ghost of Robert Greene' does appear to point an accusing finger in Nashe's direction and invites us to look for something Nashe must have written, chronologically, between the death of Greene and Chettle's publication which according to this ghost 'fed his own envy' rather than attacking Greene's enemies, the Harveys. Nashe published nothing under his own name during that period, so what is Chettle referring to?

The Groatsworth of Wit is very familiar ground however there are certain similarities between the style and opinions expressed in 'Groats-worth' and contemporary books and pamphlets of Nashe's which should be acknowledged; this, for instance, is a snatch of Nashe's 'The Pride of the Learned' in his "Pierce Penniless" - "Hence atheists triumph and rejoice, and talk as profanely of the bible as of 'Bevis of Hampton', (*a popular novel*). I hear say there be mathematicians abroad that will prove men before Adam; (*i.e. by pre-biblical accounts of mankind*) and they are harboured in high places, who will maintain it to the death that there are no devils." Marlowe was widely reported to have said there was no such thing as the devil, indeed it was one of the eight charges laid against him and Groatsworth appears to address him in urging him against atheism.

If Nashe did write this epistle, his next paragraph must be based on what he imagined, or hoped, Greene might have said about himself, "young Juvenal, that biting satirist, that lastly together with me writ a comedy. Sweet boy, might I advise thee, be advised, and get not many enemies by bitter words: inveigh against vain men, for thou canst do it, no man better, no man so well: thou hast a liberty to reprove all and name none" - an apparently approving reference to Nashe's habit of pluralizing his attacks, as if he believed this gave him some sort of license to say whatever he pleased, even when the individual he targeted was easily identifiable. Was Greene really so naive on this point?

Compare the lines with Nashe's own estimation of his worth as a satirist in 'Lenten Stuff' when he says "I will make you laugh your hearts out. Take me at my word, for I am the man that will do it." Next comes the paragraph in 'Groats-worth' that has been quoted thousands of times in nearly every book about William Shakespeare. There can be no doubt that this refers to an actor who at least postures as a playwright. The paragraph begins with a

generality, "those puppets (I mean) that speak from our mouths, those Antics garnished in our colours" who are beholden to writers like Greene for their living. Far from helping Greene in the distress of his poverty and ill health, we are told that he had been forsaken by them. Players, it seems, cannot be trusted: "for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, 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 Iohannes fac totum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country. Oh that I might entreat your rare wits to be employed in more profitable courses, and let those Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions" and the paragraph concludes "it is a pity men of such rare wits, should be subject to the pleasure of such rude grooms."

There are two or three things here that are distinctly reminiscent of Nashe's earlier works. The derogatory term "buckram Gentlemen" is used to describe actors in 'Groats-worth', a reference to buckram effigies used in pageants like giant puppets; Nashe uses the identical image in 'Pierce Penniless' referring to clerical scholars, apparently another episode in the quarrel with the Harvey brothers this time, "my soul abhors these buckram giants, that having an outward face of honour set upon them by flatterers and parasites, have their inward thoughts stuffed with straw and feathers, if they were narrowly sifted." Compare also the line "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you" with Nashe's attack on the 'idiot art master' at St. John's who "thinks to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse." The "upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers" calls up one of Nashe's favourite devices, a fable from Aesop and indeed he had used this image in his 'Menaphon' diatribe attacking someone who: "vaunts Ovid's and Plutarchs plumes as their own". It comes from Aesop's story of the Jay and the Peacock, with its inherent moral "it is not only fine feathers that make fine birds":

"A Jay venturing into a yard where Peacocks used to walk found there a number of feathers which had fallen from the Peacocks when they were moulting. He tied them all to his tail and strutted down towards the Peacocks. When he came near them they soon discovered the cheat and striding up to him, pecked at him and plucked away his borrowed plumes. So the Jay could do no better than go back to the other Jays, who had watched his behaviour from a distance; but they were equally annoyed with him, and told him: it is not only fine feathers that make fine birds."

There may also be a glancing reference to Aesop's tale of 'The Crow and the Raven' enfolded in the phrase 'upstart Crow'. In this legend the crow is

envious of the raven's reputation as a bird of omen, so he hides in a tree and cries out like a raven, but when some travellers take a closer look they realise he's only a crow and pass on.. Aesop says:

"it is also like this with men: those who compete with rivals stronger than themselves will not only be unequal to them, but they will also become a laughing stock."

'Groatsworth' seems to suggest this player in posturing as a writer, is out of his depth. He "supposes" he can "bombast out a blank verse", the word 'supposes' could mean not only 'believes' but also 'purports' or 'pretends'. What is the nature of the "tiger's heart" wrapped in this player's hide? The phrase "Tiger's heart wrapped in a player's hide" is often regarded as a quotation from Henry VI, which is an attractive notion. Using this 'woolf in sheep's clothing' device to indicate some kind of duality in the nature of the player might well have appealed to one fond of quoting Aesop. Given their on-going quarrel and this Nashe-like language in the Groatsworth letter, one can readily see why Florio might have been one of Chettle's complaining gentlemen who believed he had detected a living hand behind the letter. The two complainers wanted to see the original manuscript, according to Chettle, and one may deduce that therefore at least one of them was able to recognize Nashe's handwriting.

Despite the denials it seems to me Florio never let go of the idea that Nashe had written that epistle and was still vexed about it years after the event. If I understand him correctly, he complained that Hugh Sanford had coined the name 'absolute Iohannes Factotum' in criticising Florio for tackling the editing of Sidney's 'Arcadia'. It translates as 'John Over-all' or as we would say today 'Jack of all trades'. If the name had been bandied about among the University wits in the aftermath of this episode, when it appeared in the 'Groatsworth' it would have identified Florio to these readers, after all, it would rather destroy the purpose of the exercise to use a nick-name to refer to someone if nobody recognised it. Looking again at the original sentence, we're told the player: "supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being *AN* absolute Iohannes fac totum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country." The sense of the remark now seems to be 'he's just as conceited and out of his league as his friend John Florio' - the man Nashe had called one of those "shifting companions that run through every art and thrive by none". There is a lively debate about various possible collaborations or reworkings relating to the three parts of "Henry The Sixth" and the Groatsworth letter openly accuses 'Shakescene' of stealing other writers' work. The vitriol would be understandable if a play

written, at least in part, by Nashe only became a success on the stage after Shakespeare had remodelled it. This authorship debate is thoroughly explored in the notes to the trilogy in the RSC edition of the complete works. (12)

This brings us at last to what may be the most interesting discovery of all in this quarrel - the pamphlet "An Half-penny worth of Wit in a Penny-worth of Paper, or The Hermits Tale" printed for Thomas Thorpe by the Assignment of Edward Blount under the obvious pseudonym Humphrey King. The author apologises to his patron, the Countess of Sussex, for addressing her under a 'covert barron' - a French legal term referring to a change of name, and the text of the poem reveals that indeed 'Lusty Humphrey' is a Skeltonic character. It seems to have been quite the fashion to borrow alter-egos from Skelton - Philip Sidney did it when he styled himself Philip Sparrow, as did Edmund Spenser when he adopted the Skeltonic name Colin Cloute, so we can see this author is following a known pattern. He tells us in his dedication that he has been accused of usury and dishonesty and his purpose is to deny the charges, adding "My book I entitle a halfpenny worth of wit in a pennyworth of paper whereby it draws somewhat near to the matter and the purpose" and goes on to tell us that whilst he freely admits he is no scholar, he justifies his right to, as he puts it, "shoulder in amongst them" because while they set their pens to showing off their wits and attacking one another in pamphlets, he deploys his wit to make his readers think about the issues of the day:

"I see my inferiors in the gifts of learning, wisdom and understanding torment the print daily with lighter trifles and jiggalarums than my russet Hermit is, which hath made me the bolder to shoulder in amongst them. They clap a pair of French spurs on the heels of vice to rowell ope the wombe of that resty jade iniquity and let all the loathsome guts and garbidge of his paunch issue out to putrifie and infect the fresh air of Pauls Churchyard - I curb sin with a double snaffle of reprehension and turn and wind him with my smart wand of correction to what virtuous manage I please."

The dedications run to an interesting six pages, followed by various commendatory or witty verses to the author. The third of these sonnets contains the lines Nashe referred to in Lenten stuff and appears to be the work of Florio. There is an ironic oath of friendship in the verse which runs 'By the red herring, thy true patronage, and famous Nashe so dear unto us both'. Then we come to the main body of the text, a lengthy poem, The Hermit's Tale - quite unlike anything of Shakespeare or his contemporaries in its antique style and rhythmic 'fourteeners':

“Walking by a forest side, an ancient hermit I espied, white was his head, old was his face, pale were his looks, obscure his place, and in his hand I might behold, a book all torn and very old...”

The meter contains an even number of vowel beats to each line - rising at times from as few as three beats all the way up to nine and back again. It's a style mediaeval literary students would recognise as essentially 'Skeltonic' - the style of John Skelton. Furthermore the hermit of the poem is almost certainly a representation of Skelton himself, who ended his days in religious seclusion. The hermit looks back on a life spent partly as a courtier and finally as a man of God, renouncing the vainglory of the Court and the ambition-led false piety of the Church. "The Hermit's Tale" appears to be a personal tribute to the inspirational force of Skelton. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare's fellow-player Will Kemp turns up as a character in the story.

As a pay-off to those university wits and critics - there is an interesting penultimate verse to the Hermit's tale:

“You poets all, and some that write of Aesop's fables, conceiting plots to please the world, notes from your book of tables, methinks that Ajax should you call to make waste paper of you all that spend your time to please the time, with fictions, tales and idle rhyme, leaving the mark that should be hit, to praise God's glory and your wit. Oxford and Cambridge were erected for Virtue not for vice protected.”

The reference to Ajax (Roman God of the privy) implies their pamphlets are best fit to be ripped up and used in the latrine. Sir John Harrington's discourse on water closets comes to mind. The poem closes:

“As for this homely tale, and he that made the same, hath neither learning, wealth nor wit and scarce can write his name.”

In conclusion we have a man here writing under a pseudonym, a poem designed to perfectly answer the 'Groatsworth' accusations of plagiarism and being an 'upstart' with humour, wisdom and purpose. He denies dishonesty and usury, he defends his right to 'shoulder in amongst' the university scholars as a writer, although he admits he is no scholar himself, and for some reason decides to publish a piece which could quite simply have been entitled 'The Hermit's Tale' under the banner 'An halfpenny worth of wit in a pennyworth of paper' because he says, it addresses the matter and the purpose of his publication. He refers to a rural childhood, he is irritated by somebody who quotes Aesop to slander him and Thomas Nashe is actually named in one of the dedicatory verses from 'Humphrey's friends' in the opening pages. It is

then published by Thomas Thorpe and Edward Blount, both significant names in Shakespeare studies, Thorpe published the sonnets and Blount the First Folio. One must also consider the context in which it turns up; the row between Nashe and Florio which apparently touches on Nashe's envy of Shakespeare. I think this warrants a closer study altogether for it is surely exciting to think it might be the work of William Shakespeare, heavily disguised in Skeltonic verse. I have only been able to find a copy of the third edition of 1613 which can be seen at the British library, proving at least that it went to three reprints. The only clue to the original publication date, obviously prior to Nashe's *Lenten Stuff*, comes in a reference in the dedication to the reader to 'Geronimo's' - which was a fencing school and popular social centre for young men in London in the late 1580's and early 1590's before it was displaced in around 1594 by Saviolo's school.

It is also worth comparing Nashe's sketch of Humphrey King with Ben Jonson's brief description of his comic character, Sogliardo. It is widely believed this was a satirical portrait of Shakespeare, but let us remember that Florio came from the town of Soglio and it was common for Italians to be named after their place of origin (remember Nolano, the nick-name for Bruno). At any rate, Nashe tells us: he is 'Honest Humphrey, as all his friends and acquaintances esteem him, King of Tobacconists, a singular Mecaenas to the pipe and the tabor' - while Sogliardo, Jonson tells us, in his list of characters at the start of *'Every Man Out of His Humour'*, "comes up every term to learn to take tobacco and see new motions. He is in his Kingdom when he can get himself into company where he may be well laughed at." That might be a reference to the *Parnassus* plays at St. John's.

John Davies' Epigram from *'The Scourge of Folly'*, published after Shakespeare's death, may shed some light:

"To our English Terence, Mr. Will Shake-speare,
Some say, good Will, (which I, in sport, to sing)
Had'st thou not played some Kingly parts in sport,
Thou had'st been a companion for a king;
and been a King among the meaner sort.
Some others rail, but rail as they think fit,
Thou hast no railing but a reigning Wit,
and Honesty thou sow'st, which they do reap,
So to increase their stock which they do keep."

All these Kingly references might perhaps refer to Humphrey King. Is this how Shakespeare 'played some kingly parts in sport' and marred his career

by offending the academic world?

I have devoted a lot of space to this quarrel because I think it tells us some important things. First that the world at large, certainly the Cambridge student body, was well aware that Florio and Shakespeare were a literary 'item' during the 1590s and that Nashe remained resentful of their success, especially in that it excluded him from Southampton's patronage, to the end of his life. It also suggests that the infamous 'Groatsworth Letter' was just one battle in an ongoing war of quills. The question of whether Humphrey might be Shakespeare is a tantalizing puzzle that may never be satisfactorily answered, but an expert textual analysis of that preface must be worthwhile. One is haunted by that line: "shoulder in amongst them" using the noun for a body part as a verb in a way that has been identified by David Crystal, an authority on Shakespeare's language usage, as typical of his word-coining style.

Florio's personal mission in life was to expand and improve the English language. As a foreign language tutor in the 1570s in 'First Fruites', we find him wrestling with translation because so many words he was familiar with in Italian or French were simply missing from the English vocabulary. He identified a barrier between nouns and verbs, primarily because the structure of English is so different from the Latinate languages, which defeated him in his early days, but which he resolved to conquer. In 'First Fruites' he speaks of the possibility of using the gerund form of any word as a means of breeding new words from it, using it as a root.

Shakespeare is of course credited with coining hundreds, if not thousands, of new words in the English language, (13) but the fundamental method for producing all this new vocabulary came from Florio. It was the quest for ease of translation which originally motivated his work but through his relationship with Shakespeare he was able to see if a theatre audience would readily understand new words and begin to use these tools of communication themselves in the streets, taverns and market places of London. It must have been most gratifying for him to find that this did indeed happen.

When Florio spoke, in 'First Fruites' of a form without gender called 'vario' in Italian he was referring to a form which was neither noun nor verb. In fact the name of a verb 'a hunting we will go' uses the gerund of the verb 'to hunt' and we can see that in his, renaissance Italian tradition, nouns are feminine and verbs are masculine when we read in his dictionary: 'words be

women and deeds be men'. He goes on to say that for him words and deeds are all of one gender and likens his invention to the transformation of Iphis from classical mythology, a girl magically turned into a boy by the Gods so she may enter the men-only temple. When Florio tells us we will find hundreds of new words in his dictionary he means hundreds of new English words, not Italian and one might properly regard "A World of Words" as a first English thesaurus laid out to an Italian key.

Florio found a way to cross the barrier between nouns and verbs and to use the root of any word to make it plastic, capable of variation and more freedom of expression. We should not forget he also sought to bring more harmony to the language and to produce words that could be readily understood. He appears to have used the syllogisms of Stoic logic as his foundation to progress from one form of a word to another, new one. (14) In the dedication to his dictionary he speaks a great deal about grammar and talks of 'virtue' and 'following nature' – both concepts which come straight from Stoic philosophy.

Here is an example of the structure. A accuses B. Therefore A is 'the accuser'. B is accused by A. Therefore B is 'The accused'.

This is how Shakespeare's play Richard II opens, where the King is attempting to resolve a dispute between two of his Nobles and has them summoned before him with these words:

"ourselves will hear the accuser and the accused freely speak."

At this point in linguistic history it would have been normal practise to use the past participle of the verb, "the man who accuses" and "the man who has been accused" but we see here two new nouns, both derived from the gerund of the same verb. Were theatre audiences baffled by these new words? Not at all, their structure matched existing language; they could be readily understood and immediately used without fear of misapprehension.

To make nouns from verbs is clever, but it is slightly more difficult to apply the same technique to make verbs from nouns, yet both Florio and Shakespeare apparently did it all the time. Frank Kermode in his "Shakespeare's Language" makes a particular point of showing how Shakespeare used nouns as verbs, initially in fairly simple ways. 'To Trash' in "The Tempest", 'Goddeed' in "Coriolanus" and 'he words me' in "Antony and Cleopatra" are some of the examples he gives.

There are many more instances of Shakespeare using nouns as verbs in the action of his plays for the very first time. All of these verbs, as far as can be ascertained, make their debut in Shakespeare. From my point of view, their specific originality is perhaps not as important as the fact that their frequent

use conveys the notion that Shakespeare was manipulating ‘words and deeds’ after Florio’s manner on a regular basis.

‘Their blood is cak’d’ says Timon of Athens, using the noun ‘cake’ as a verb. The servant Adam in “As You Like It” tells Orlando: ‘he that doth the ravens feed, yea, providently caters for the sparrow’, using the noun cater, (meaning one who buys provisions) as a verb. Macbeth makes first use of the word ‘champion’ as a verb rather than a noun when he cries: ‘come fate into the list, and champion me to th’ utterance!’.

Here are some examples of nouns drawn from verbs, all obeying the apparent rules of Florio’s system. Shakespeare takes a 14th century verb ‘to excite’ and devises the noun ‘excitement’, using it in both “Hamlet” and “Troilus and Cressida”. From the verb ‘to employ’, Shakespeare devises the noun ‘employer’ in “Much Ado About Nothing” and in this context would have understood the concept of ‘employment’ too for he takes the verb ‘to engage’ and twists it around so that Brutus can tell his wife ‘all my engagements I will construe to thee.’

In “I Henry IV” using the verb ‘to retire’ the Earl of Douglas says ‘a comfort of retirement lives in this’ and Prince Hal remarks: ‘lest your retirement do amaze your friends.’ A similar trick in “Troilus and Cressida” produces, ‘haste we, Diomed, to reinforcement, or we perish all’ taken from the verb ‘to reinforce’. Families of verbs and nouns can now share their flowering stem with other blossoms, all related and obeying interactive rules to take their place in Shakespeare’s new train of words. Thus from the noun describing a worn out horse ‘a jade’, Shakespeare devises the adjective ‘jaded’ in “II Henry IV”; ‘traditional’ from the noun ‘tradition’ in “Richard III”; the adverb ‘tightly’ from the adjective ‘tight’ in “Merry Wives” and ‘stealthy’ from the noun ‘stealth’ in “Macbeth”. These are just a few of many hundreds of new words forged in similar fashion in Shakespeare’s works and it can readily be seen that they all begin from the quest to break down the barrier between nouns and verbs. This course of action must have been informed by the teaching of John Florio, who devised the system and whose own work, especially his dictionary, is constantly peppered with identical or similar examples. A great many of the commonalities noted between Florio’s translation of Montaigne’s essays and Shakespeare’s plays cover this same ground.

My father’s (note a.) generation grew up with a matchstick man version of Shakespeare, an imaginative biography by Sidney Lee based on fewer than a

dozen facts, mostly boring legal documents about sales, purchases, loans, a misdemeanour with regard to grain hoarding and a Will almost certainly written by his greedy children. The sisters seem to have stripped his estate of all the real valuables as he lay dying and one wonders which of them was sleeping in the mysteriously missing 'best' bed as they made this sad little list of unwanted leftovers for the notary to sign. It reads more like the contents of a lumber room than the sum of a successful man's life.

Not much to go on then and not a very convincing picture of the man behind the likes of 'Hamlet' or 'Lear'. No wonder there has been a fashion among the intelligentsia for doubting William's authorship of the plays. How could a provincial grammar school boy have attained such an astounding grasp of everything from philosophy, law, rhetoric, linguistics, continental culture and literature? Surely, they surmise, the author of these plays must have been somebody higher up the social and educational scale. This is not just intellectual snobbery; there are genuine and difficult questions to be answered here. The works of Shakespeare reveal exposure to the kind of 'modern European studies' which were only available as a supplement to a university education for those who could afford foreign travel and expensive private tutors. So how did a merchant's son from Warwickshire attain all this? Every time the literary establishment fudges these questions it only serves to fuel the authorship debate, so a proper response is clearly needed.

It is my belief that today, research using speedy modern tools and techniques can tell us very much more, enlighten us about Shakespeare's significant relationships and open our eyes to a three-dimensional human being with a rare talent and a hunger for knowledge and material to create his own stage-world. In this context his important friend John Florio is crucial and lifts the lid from the box of Shakespeare's learning. Little by little, one can follow each skein of the spider's web of access to literature and inter-connecting relationships, from Nicholas Saunderson with his magnificent scientific library (15) to Saviolo the fencing master, (16) until it is possible to track many hundreds of the threads of stories and ideas he wove from these resources into his own plays. Discovering his social network leads us to the intellectual and literary sources which shaped his view of mankind, from the Christian-based philosophies of Ficino's Platonism and Lipsius' neo-Stoicism at one end of the scale, to the daringly enquiring mind of Giordano Bruno and the

satires of Aretino at the other.

John Florio was an Aretino fan, judging by the documented contents of his Italian library shelves and he must have made quite a role-model for Shakespeare. (17) His parody of 'Courtly Life', essentially an alternative view from the servants' hall, is priceless and prompts one to consider the awful notion that Shakespeare didn't really 'invent' the human after all, Aretino was a century ahead of him with his startling and often gritty realism and witty literary cartoons of his contemporary masters. It also persuades us to take our Renaissance studies with the occasional pinch of salt. Aretino's life reveals a man willing to go to the edge of acceptability with his writing, while somehow staying out of trouble because of his political astuteness and the cultivation of powerful patrons. Useful lessons to be learned there. I believe the influence of authors like Aretino and the English Tudor poet and commentator John Skelton were crucial to Shakespeare's view of his purpose as a writer. These were people he admired because they had fearlessly brought their critical faculties to the Humanism of the age and genuinely made a difference within the societies they inhabited. All three men show us that it is not just the accidents, opportunities and misfortunes which befall us, but how tragically or sometimes hilariously badly we handle them that can cause our downfall. William's debt to Skelton is well documented, however the parallels between Pietro Aretino and Shakespeare are less familiar but so numerous and crystal clear as to be beyond dispute. Aretino wrote about real contemporaries, but Shakespeare was free to turn some of these portraits into safely fictional personalities. After all, what's not to love about a man who harried the corrupt, embarrassed the pompous, was curiously greedy, dishonest, shallow and vain one moment and incredibly profound the next. He lived a Bohemian, self-indulgent life and famously died of a heart attack in a tavern from laughing too heartily at one of his own jokes. No wonder Shakespeare dipped into Aretino, the original 'warts and all' merchant of the 16th century. When you look at this Maverick clown's fragile friendships with those in power, such as Charles V, who embraced him for years and then shunned him as an embarrassment, there is something of the fractured relationship between Henry V and Falstaff about it, and the real story which, in my view inspired the later fictional version, was all there in Aretino's collected letters for Shakespeare to explore. They were sitting conveniently

on Florio's library shelves.

Shakespeare built his own view of humanity, so chillingly realistic at times that it still makes us catch our breath as we see how easily, with such simple human errors, the mightiest can fall. Aretino reached the top of the literary tree from far more humble beginnings than Shakespeare and both remind us that while cleverness can and must be learned, observant, native intelligence and worldly wisdom come from another place. They share an uninhibited edginess in their work which one might almost recognize as a hallmark of the mind cultivated outside the parameters of a formal establishment. Both of these men beach-combed their way through the intellectual concepts of their respective ages, driven by a preoccupation with the question, 'what makes us tick?' Both were willing to break the conventions of classicism to embrace the brave new thinking of the renaissance age – they were, each in their own time, entirely modern.

John Florio went on to become a senior Courtier in the service of Queen Anne, to whom he dedicated the second edition of his dictionary. Internal, textual evidence in Shakespeare's plays suggests to my mind that the close association they enjoyed in the first decade of Shakespeare's career was cut short by the imprisonment of their joint patron, the Earl of Southampton for his part in the Essex rebellion in 1601. Evidence of Florio's hand in the plays evaporates half way through "Twelfth Night" and the distinctive 'Florioisms' one can learn to recognize never reappear until we encounter the character of Prospero in "The Tempest". It could have been a last collaboration but I suspect it was simply that Shakespeare had his old friend in mind as he created the character and the 'Florioisms' may just as well have entered the text subconsciously as deliberately. By 1611 Florio, widowed and left with only one surviving daughter was a key player at court. The magically wise old man surrounded by books, cherishing his only daughter and pulling strings to effect an outcome that would bury the past and give the next generation a liberated future is a fictional concept which neatly mirrors the reality of the older Florio.

In the early 1620s, after the death of Queen Anne, Florio retired to Fulham, struggled with debts and was left penniless by a Court which could not afford to pay his promised pension. He worked harder than ever, translating the first

English edition of Boccaccio's "Decameron", (18) and was very likely the man who edited the first folio of Shakespeare's plays. He lived just around the corner from the retired members of The King's Men who had hoarded the manuscripts; he had contacts with the publishers with whom he had worked before and the Herbert brothers who financed both the 'Decameron' and the 'First Folio'. In a letter appealing for funds from the Court in lieu of his missing pension less than a year before the Folio was published, Florio wrote of "my great and laborious work, for which my country and posterity, (yea, happily your children) so long as English is spoken, shall have cause to thank". This may well be a reference to Shakespeare's collected plays as Florio published nothing else of his own between this date and his death.

Florio cleared his debts before he died and left his magnificent collection of foreign books to William Herbert in his will. His legacy to English language and literature is far greater than has ever been properly appreciated and his relationship with William Shakespeare is sufficiently clear from these contemporary records as to be impossible to ignore. It is high time for this valuable new line of enquiry into Shakespeare's career to be given the attention it deserves.

UCL CHAPTER/FLORIO AND SHAKESPEARE – NOTES.

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Note a. My father John Harding, (1919 – 1999) began this study of Florio and Shakespeare in the 1970s and provoked a flurry in interest in the press and media at the time.