

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 a 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" 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 on his ground against the learned mentor of Nashe, the venerated scholar Ascham by quoting 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 when he says: "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 St. John's 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. 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" Nashe says "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 shooing 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 is ruefully reflecting 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." This just has to be Florio, with his six thousand elegant proverbs and his chests full of fancy suits and for me it provides confirmation of a continuing quarrel. We also get a clear hint at the cause of Nashe's bitterness here, it's about patronage.

I believe 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 I believe recalls 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-pendant: 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?