EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES

Hero and Leander and Shakespeare's Rival Poet Sonnets

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Biographical readings of Shakespeare's sonnets have long been disreputable, associated with the ley-hunters and gossip-columnists of the literary world. Few scholars now venture into the unhallowed grounds where so many 'secrets of' and 'solutions to' the sonnets lie buried. As Stephen Booth notes, the facts are 'so few', the theories 'so many, so foolish'.[1] Perhaps only Oscar Wilde's 'The Portrait of Mr W. H.' has stayed in favour as a work that captures the fatal *jouissance* of literary obsession. A few biographers and editors still press the case for particular candidates as the Young Man, the Dark Lady and the Rival Poet, but many scholars concur with Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells that it 'is time for these three Shakespearean ghosts to be laid well and truly to rest'.[2] The current critical fashion is for pluralism, with the sonnet characters often seen as fictional composites, not to be tied to historical individuals.[3] Even those who consider the sonnets to be rooted in a genuine social matrix tend to avoid identifications. 'The search for proper names' is, suggests David Schalkwyk, 'entirely understandable, but… curiously misguided' since 'the autobiographical mode… renders proper names pragmatically redundant'; comparing the sonnet characters to unnamed figures in old snapshots, Schalkwyk contends that we should avoid 'tenuous speculation' and accept 'these sonnets' remarkable engagement with a world that is now irrecoverable'.[4]

[1] Stephen Booth (ed. by), *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 543.

[2] Paul Edmondson and Stanley Wells, 'The Plurality of Shakespeare's Sonnets', *Shakespeare Survey* 65 (2012), pp. 211-220 (219).

[3] See, for example, Jane Kingsley-Smith, *The Afterlife of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p.7n29: 'these fictional individuals probably contain multiple real-life addressees'.

[4] David Schalkwyk, *Speech and Performance in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002), pp. 25, 28, 156.

Warnings from exceptional scholars against wild-goose chases are not to be lightly dismissed, but is the private world of the sonnets entirely beyond our ken? Are the poems indeed 'a cunning sequence of beautiful locked boxes to which there are no keys', as Stephen Greenblatt suggests?[5] What if a 'key' turns up in the form of new historical evidence? In 2002 the Cobbe portrait of an effeminate, youthful Earl of Southampton was discovered. This apparent embodiment of a 'master-mistress' did not settle any biographical debates but it restored something of that 'irrecoverable' world to tangible life. I have something to say about portraiture in this essay, but what counts more is the literary evidence I put forward – evidence which will, I hope, provide some much-needed context for the sonnets in general and the Rival Poet sonnets in particular. I proceed in the belief that a better understanding of the milieu can lead to a greater aesthetic appreciation of the poems. Biographical readings have often been held as anti-art in formalist circles, yet deciphering codes is an essential element in the reception of various late-Elizabethan modes of art. As Patricia Fumerton observes in her classic essay on the era's parallel craze for sonnets and miniatures, we encounter 'the interface between private and public self, sincerity and game' in what are 'self-revealing, self-concealing' forms.[6] Working out who's who is part of the genre. True, there have been many over-eager identifications but that is no reason to place an injunction on biographical scholarship. My aim is to situate the Rival Poet sonnets in an era marked by romantic, political and artistic ferment, and this involves the use of proper names: Shakespeare as the Player-Poet, Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, as the Young Man and George Chapman as the Rival Poet. There is nothing new here – Southampton and Chapman have long been leading candidates – but if my arguments are accepted the case for each identification will be strengthened.

Despite the prevailing mistrust over biographical speculation, we have never been better placed to make judicious deductions about Shakespeare's sonnet-world. This is largely thanks to the pioneering work of various scholars on dating the poems. Studies of rare-word vocabulary have challenged the once commonly held view that the sonnets belong to a brief period in the early 1590s.[7] While the sequence was probably begun in 1592-3, Shakespeare added to it throughout the 1590s and on into the early seventeenth century.

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[5] Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (London: Pimlico, 2005), p. 249.

[6] Patricia Fumerton, '"Secret Arts": Elizabethan Miniatures and Sonnets', *Representations* 15 (1986), pp. 57-97 (68, 70).

[7] See A. Kent Hieatt, Charles W. Hieatt and Anne Lake Prescott, 'When Did Shakespeare Write *Sonnets* 1609?', *Studies in Philology* 88 (1991), pp. 69-109, and MacD. P. Jackson, 'Vocabulary and Chronology: The Case of Shakespeare's Sonnets', *The Review of English Studies* 52 (2001), pp. 59-75.

With regard to the Rival Poet sonnets, the best indicative evidence converges, according to MacDonald Jackson, on 1598-1600.[8] Further support for these dates is perhaps found in sonnet 76, a poem in which Shakespeare apologises for his tendency to 'keep invention in a noted weed' in an era of 'variation or quick change' and 'new-found methods'.[9] A vogue for sonnets followed the publication of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* in 1591, and from 1592-97 at least nineteen sonnet sequences appeared; the craze petered out, however, and by 1598 the writing of sonnets, however radical their approach to love-conventions, was becoming old hat. 'O know, sweet love, I always write of you, / And you and love are still my argument': the Young Man has grown accustomed, perhaps wearily so, to the poet 'still telling what is told', rehearsing the same argument in the same form. Shakespeare's apology only makes sense if the relationship is of some years' standing – time enough for the sonnet vogue to wax and wane.

Sonnet 76 just precedes the Rival Poet sonnets, a sequence which likewise suggests an established (albeit destabilised) patron-client relation. In terms of the dates, this scenario might support the identification of the Earl of Southampton with the Young Man. The arguments for his candidacy are well-known: not only did he become Shakespeare's patron in 1593, he was under pressure to marry, he was fatherless, and he was a noted beauty, seemingly prone to narcissism.[10] All of this accords with the early sonnets in ways that do not hold for the other main candidate, William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke.[11] Moreover, sonnet 107, a poem convincingly linked to the death of Queen Elizabeth and the succession of James I in 1603,[12] has been seen as celebrating Southampton's release from a 'confined doom' in the tower: John Klause states that it has 'no likelier purpose

[8] MacD. P. Jackson, 'Francis Meres and the Cultural Contexts of Shakespeare's Rival Poet Sonnets', *RES* 56 (2005), 224-246 (p. 225).

[9] William Shakespeare, *Complete Works* ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2007). All subsequent Shakespeare references are to this edition unless otherwise indicated.

[10] See Jonathan Bate, *The Genius of Shakespeare* (London and Basingstoke: Picador, 1997), pp. 46-54, for a more detailed account. Though Bate does not embrace a fully biographical approach, he states that 'the case for Southampton as the original patron/youth looks irrefutable', p. 49.

[11] Though Pembroke was under pressure to marry in the mid-1590s, he did not lose his father until 1601 and was not established at court until 1598 (and hence was not attracting attention as a remarkable beauty prior to this). He was only twelve when the sonnet vogue began and did not become a noted Maecenas before the Jacobean period. Jackson (2001), pp. 67, 70-71, 73-74, suggests that the 'marriage sonnets' (1-17) may have been composed in the second half of the 1590s, thus supporting a Pembroke hypothesis, but he acknowledges that the statistical support is slender. The most likely explanation for the occurrence of both 'early' and 'late' rare vocabulary in the first sixty sonnets generally is that they were written in the early 1590s then revised in the seventeenth century, as proposed in the Hieatt-Prescott study, pp. 73-4.

[12] See the excellent commentary on 107 in John Kerrigan (ed. by), *William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 313-320.

than to celebrate the earl of Southampton's release', calling it 'the poet's olive branch' after a period of estrangement from his patron.[13] Perhaps the Young Man is a composite but, to apply Occam's razor, if Southampton is the Young Man addressed in 1593 and the 'true love' addressed in 1603, then he is also probably the addressee in the intervening poems. This is not, I think, an unreasonable postulation – Shakespeare presents himself as 'to constancy confined' (S105), after all – even without the evidence offered here that potentially links Southampton to the Rival Poet sonnets.

Jackson's dating of these sonnets to 1598-1600 is also significant when it comes to identifying Shakespeare's rival. In an essay on the cultural contexts of the Rival Poet sonnets Jackson suggests that Shakespeare was responding to a new sense of poetic competitiveness fuelled by the 1598 publication of Frances Meres' *Palladis Tamia*, which, as well as famously alluding to the circulation of Shakespeare's 'sugred sonnets among his private friends', offered a survey of the best contemporary authors. Jackson also proposes that the publication in 1598 of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, followed later in the year by George Chapman's continuation, was another trigger (both poets were acclaimed by Meres for their joint rendering of the Greek poet Musaeus). Jackson contends that Marlowe and Chapman 'merged as Shakespeare's Rival' in 1598.[14] Amongst his supporting evidence, he notes the allusions to both Marlowe and the Hero and Leander legend in 1599's *As You Like It*. I agree with much in Jackson's argument, though I part company with him over the case he ultimately makes for the Rival Poet as a *constructed* figure incorporating the challenge presented by a range of poets, including Ben Jonson. Although Jackson suggests that 'personal rivalries and anxieties' doubtless came into play, he envisages Shakespeare 'with his sense of contrast and structural opportunity' deciding on aesthetic grounds to 'augment rivalry in love with rivalry in poetry'.[15] This makes the Rival Poet seem like the creative gambit of a wholly autonomous artist.[16] But we should not ignore the Young Man's 'dear-purchased right' (S117): Shakespeare, unlike Sir Philip Sidney, say, was probably writing for a coterie of 'private friends' centred on patron, not poet – a patron for whom, if Southampton is indeed the man, much was at stake in 1598-1600, embroiled as he was in the factionalism that led to the Essex rising of 1601. As Arthur Marotti argues in a fine essay on Elizabethan sonnet sequences, 'the coterie circumstances of sociopolitically encoded love poetry' need to be addressed, even where 'the precise social coordinates of the poems

[13] John Klause, *Shakespeare, the Earl, and the Jesuit* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008) pp. 201-2.

[14] Jackson (2005), p. 231.

[15] Ibid, pp. 244-5.

[16] Jackson is by no means alone in arguing for the rival as a literary construct; see also, for example, Rosalie L. Colie, *Shakespeare's Living Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 66-67.

[are] lost'.[17] Shakespeare 'entered into a patron-client relationship with undoubted socioeconomic aspirations' and, while he asserts independent moral authority at times in his *Sonnets*, 'sometimes with surprising forcefulness', he remains conscious of rank and obligation.[18] The Rival Poet sonnets see him responding in contingent fashion to the Young Man's weighty reproaches. I concur with Marotti's sense of this as 'the most serious crisis of the collection', one that 'strikes at the heart of a friendship in which affectionate love and beneficent patronage are inextricably linked'.[19]

While I align myself with those who consider the Rival Poet to be an authentic challenger, not a literary contrivance,[20] I follow Jackson in seeing the 1598 publication of *Hero and Leander* as a spur to the rivalry. My essay will corroborate the idea of a Marlowe-Chapman combination if I have correctly located a missing piece of the Rival Poet puzzle: the specific lines which stunned Shakespeare into silence, as referred to in the closing couplet of sonnet 86. These lines have never been convincingly identified and are usually assumed to be lost (or fictive); I propose, however, that they have been 'hidden in plain sight' and are to be found in Chapman's continuation of *Hero and Leander*.

Before I make my case, it is worth reminding ourselves of sonnet 86, the poem on which the Chapman-as-Rival identification largely rests:

> Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
> Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you,
> That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
> Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
> Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
> Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
> No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
> Giving him aid, my verse astonishèd.
> He, nor that affable familiar ghost
> Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
> As victors of my silence cannot boast.

[17] Arthur F. Marotti, '"Love is Not Love": Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order', *ELH* 49 (1982), pp. 396-428 (407, 418). While Marotti's focus here is the Sidney circle, the comments are relevant to his brief but perceptive discussion of Shakespeare. Marotti does not dwell on the identity of the Young Man, merely noting that he inclines towards Pembroke (note 46).

[18] Ibid., p. 410, 412.

[19] Ibid., pp. 411-12.

[20] Peter Robinson, for example, challenges the notion of the rival as a 'fictional convenience' in 'Pretended Speech Acts in Shakespeare's Sonnets', *Essays in Criticism* 51.3 (2001), pp. 283-307 (296).

I was not sick of any fear from thence,
But when your countenance filled up his line,
Then lacked I matter, that enfeebled mine.

We know from other sonnets that the rival is an erudite figure; here, the opening 'proud full sail' image is felt by some to suggest the fourteeners employed by Chapman in his translation of Homer's *Iliad*, seven books of which were published in 1598; phrases such as 'by spirits taught to write' and 'compeers by night' are thought to tie in with occultist aspects of various works by Chapman, such as *Hymnus in Noctem*, the first part of *The Shadow of Night* (1594), his Neoplatonic praise-song to the scholarly and poetic divinity of night.[21] Some scholars argue that the 'affable familiar ghost' is Homer's, given Chapman's claim in *The Teares of Peace* (1609) to have been visited by the spirit of Homer on Hitchin Hill.[22] Others suggest it is the ghost of Marlowe, pointing to a passage in Chapman's continuation of *Hero and Leander* (3.183ff) in which he summons the *furor poeticus* in order to commune with Marlowe, seeking his aid in the completion of his work.[23] The phrase 'gulls him with intelligence' has furthermore been seen as an allusion to Marlowe's role as a spy.[24] Chapman is deemed a rival then not only in vying with Shakespeare over patronage, but also because he 'proclaimed himself the heir of Marlowe's genius'.[25]

The Chapman identification has not gone unchallenged, of course. Various critics have pointed out that he is hardly known for encomiastic love poetry; Millar Maclure argues, for example, that with no evidence of 'that beloved countenance' in Chapman's oeuvre 'we are forced back upon hypothetical lost manuscripts, accepted at an unknown date by an unknown person, and that will not do'.[26] In the light of this, my claim that the lines which 'struck [Shakespeare] dead' are to be found in Chapman's *Hero and Leander* would not seem, at first glance, to bear much scrutiny: the work is dedicated not to any beauteous young nobleman but to Lady Walsingham, the wife of Marlowe's former patron, Sir Thomas Walsingham. How could it be perceived as a threat by Shakespeare,

[21] These arguments were first proposed by William Minto in *Characteristics of English Poetry from Chaucer to Shirley* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1874), pp. 290-2.

[22] See J. A. K. Thomson, *Shakespeare and the Classics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p. 169. Chapman's claim was not published until 1609 but may have been known in literary circles in the 1590s.

[23] See S. C. Campbell, *Only Begotten Sonnets: A Reconstruction of Shakespeare's Sonnet Sequence* (London: Bell & Hyman, 1978), p. 6.

[24] See Bate, p. 131, and Jackson (2005), p. 231.

[25] John Dover Wilson (ed. by), *The Sonnets* in *The Works of Shakespeare*, 2nd Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. lxix.

[26] Millar Maclure, *George Chapman: A Critical Study* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 11.

as ‘Bound for the prize of all-too-precious you’? My answer is that the ‘countenance’ (meaning both face and favour) of the Earl of Southampton was probably, for reasons both personal and political, in Chapman’s mind when he picked up where Marlowe left off. I use the word *probably* here to hedge what follows, where conviction sometimes outweighs caution. I know the inadmissibility of much literary evidence in epistemic terms, yet I consider such evidence, however equivocal, to be of historical and biographical value. Old alpine paintings help climatologists to understand the former extent of glaciers. Poems of the 1590s are less readily elucidated but I hope that readers will bear with me in my bid to reveal how Chapman’s poem might be seen as targeting Southampton. But before considering Chapman we need first to assess the other links in the *Hero and Leander* chain – Marlowe’s magnificent opening and Henry Petowe’s seemingly spurious sequel.

I: Marlowe

The male protagonist of *Hero and Leander*, the poem Marlowe was working on when he died in 1593, is famously androgynous. Leander is deemed ‘a maid in man’s attire’ (1.83),[27] and comparisons have often been made to the Adonis in Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* (1593) who is a ‘Stain to all nymphs, more lovely than a man’, having long hair, a ‘hairless face’ and a ‘mermaid’s voice’ (9, 487, 429). While literary antecedents to such ephebic beauty are not hard to find – Ovid’s Narcissus, for example – many have wondered if Shakespeare’s description is based on the young man to whom the poem is dedicated, Henry Wriothesley. With his long auburn hair and delicate beardless face, the Earl of Southampton cuts an epicene figure in early portraits. Strong parallels have also been noted with the Young Man of Shakespeare’s sonnets who has ‘A woman’s face’ and ‘steals men’s eyes and women’s souls amazeth’ (S20), and numerous commentators have argued that Southampton must be the youthful addressee. It has also often been pointed out that the Young Man of the first seventeen ‘procreation’ sonnets is indifferent at the prospect of sex or marriage, and that Shakespeare’s Adonis is far more resistant to Venus’s seductive strategies than in the source, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*; many link this to the fact that Southampton was under intense pressure to marry in the early 1590s – pressure exerted by his guardian William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who wanted the young earl to marry his grand-daughter, Elizabeth de Vere. Burghley used his role as Master of the Wards to ‘his considerable financial and political advantage’, and Shakespeare’s

[27] Christopher Marlowe, *The Complete Poems and Translations*, ed. by Stephen Orgel (London: Penguin, 2007). I also quote from the Petowe and Chapman continuations to *Hero and Leander* printed in this volume.

tragicomic epyllion has been read as an intervention in 'the politics of wardship', defending Southampton against Burghley's overbearing prescriptions.[28] Southampton refused the proposed match, declaring himself averse to marriage. Beyond its dedication, then, compelling reasons exist to link Shakespeare's epyllion to Southampton c.1593. But what of Marlowe's poem?

I propose that Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* contains another portrait of Southampton. I am not the first to make the suggestion: A.L. Rowse observed that Leander is, at first, a Southampton-like 'virginal young man, made for love but who has not yet made any move towards love', very much in the mould of Shakespeare's Adonis.[29] Rowse believed that Marlowe was in competition with Shakespeare for the young earl's patronage in 1593, and was therefore the Rival Poet. This theory has attracted little attention, perhaps because Rowse's overweening claim to have solved all the problems of the sonnets (he also identified Emilia Lanier as the Dark Lady) was roundly contested. Rowse should be approached with caution, yet as fine a critic as William Empson encouraged him, and some scholars have lent support to his Dark Lady identification.[30] There are pros and cons to his Rival Poet case. The notion that Marlowe was seeking Southampton's favour in 1593 is tenable – the plague-induced closure of the theatres may have prompted such a move – but he must be ruled out as the main rival if we accept Jackson's 1598-1600 dating of the Rival Poet sonnets. I agree, however, with Rowse's Leander-as-Southampton claim. Here is Marlowe's opening description of the youth:

> Amorous Leander, beautiful and young,
> (Whose tragedy divine Musaeus sung)
> Dwelt at Abydos; since him dwelt there none
> For whom succeeding times make greater moan.
> His dangling tresses that were never shorn,
> Had they been cut, and unto Colchos borne,
> Would have allured the vent'rous youth of Greece
> To hazard more than for the Golden Fleece.

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[28] Patrick M. Murphy, 'Wriothesley's Resistance: Wardship Practices and Ovidian Narratives in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*', in *Venus and Adonis: Critical Essays*, ed. by Philip C. Kolin (New York and London: Garland, 1997), pp. 323-40 (323, 326).

[29] A. L. Rowse, *Christopher Marlowe: A Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1964), p. 181.

[30] See Empson's letter to Rowse dated 27 May 1973, *Selected Letters of William Empson*, ed. by John Haffendon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 564-6. Empson sympathised with Rowse's 'dislike of aesthetic critics who reject history'. A case for Emilia Lanier as the Dark Lady is made in Part II of David Lasocki and Roger Prior, *The Bassanos: Venetian Musicians and Instrument Makers in England, 1531-1665* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1995).

Fair Cynthia wished his arms might be her sphere;
Grief makes her pale because she moves not there. (1.51-60)

The hair is the chief clue, according to Rowse, since 'uncut long tresses were a distinguishing feature of Southampton, by which all his portraits know him right up to the end of the Queen's reign'.[31] Southampton's wavy auburn locks were a veritable Golden Fleece. His androgynous beauty caused a stir in the early 1590s, with his first appearances in courtly pageants drawing admiration: 'There was present no one more comely, no young man more outstanding in learning, although his mouth scarcely yet blooms with tender down'.[32] The Cynthia-Endymion allusion goes unmentioned by Rowse but it may underline the contemporary resonance, slyly hinting at Queen Elizabeth with a crush on the latest court beauty.[33] More significantly, a topical meaning is probably sounded further on in an allusion to Narcissus (1.73-6), and in this tongue-in-cheek warning against self-love:

And such as knew he was a man would say,
"Leander, thou art made for amorous play:
Why art thou not in love, and loved of all?
Though thou be fair, yet be not thine own thrall." (1.87-90)

While such allusions were common in Renaissance literature, Marlowe's could well relate to Southampton, coming as it does in the wake of John Clapham's *Narcissus* (1591), a Neo-Latin poem that warns about the perils of libertine temptation and (above all) unfruitful self-love. Set in a fortunate isle ruled by a virgin queen, *Narcissus* is the first extant work dedicated to Southampton, and the first in which the earl is implicitly likened to a classical archetype of exceptional beauty. Burghley evidently attempted to influence his ward by commissioning his clerk, Clapham, to write this parable. Marlowe's epyllion riffs on it in an irreverent, erotic fashion, as does Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* which has been described as an 'emulous parody' of *Narcissus*.[34] Indeed, Shakespeare's Venus, inveighing against self-love, compares the frigid Adonis to Narcissus, though Shakespeare sidesteps earnest didacticism in a teasing, complex anatomy of eros. The theme is famously pursued in the sonnets, where the unmarried Young Man is wittily accused of being 'contracted to thine own bright eyes' (S1).

[31] Rowse, p. 181.

[32] John Sanford, *Apollinus et Musarum* (1592), quoted and translated in G.P.V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1968), p. 36.

[33] Writers such as Lyly and Raleigh had recently characterised the queen as Cynthia.

[34] Charles Martindale and Colin Burrow, 'Clapham's *Narcissus*: A Pre-Text for Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*?', *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992), pp. 147-76 (153).

It might be objected that there must have been other vain, attractive young men about – why assume that Marlowe had Southampton (or any individual) in mind? My answer is that, while *Hero and Leander* cannot be considered an *allégorie à clef*, it contains a crypto-portrait that would have been unmistakeable in 1592-3. To portray a youth who is i) effeminate ii) possessed of long amber tresses iii) initially resistant to love iv) facing charges of narcissism and v) the darling of the age ('loved of all') – details not, by and large, found in Musaeus – only points in one direction. London was a city of some 200,000 at the time, huge compared to other English cities of the era, but hardly an atomized metropolis; with Southampton in their midst, cultivated readers would, I suggest, have soon located London's Leander.

Clapham seems to have been influential in unanticipated ways. Despite warning against narcissistic pride, he sets a precedent with statements such as 'similem tibi tempora nulla tulerunt' (143) – 'No times have produced anyone like you'.[35] Epicene figures abound in the poetry of the mid-1590s. In Thomas Edwards' *Narcissus* (1593) the protagonist is 'as nice as any she alive'; crowds flock to see his beauty; swooning women throw themselves at him, sending him jewels with which he adorns himself: 'So I a woman turned from boy'.[36] Bemoaning beauty as a curse, Edwards' cross-dressed Narcissus addresses both Adonis and Leander in intertextual nods to Shakespeare and Marlowe.[37] When Narcissus bends to kiss his reflection his loose tresses comically disturb the picture. Long amber locks became ubiquitous in poetry – Edwards' Cephalus, Richard Barnfield's Ganymede and Dunstan Gale's Pyramus are further examples. And then there is the youth in Shakespeare's retrospective *A Lover's Complaint* who is also sent gifts (jewels, locks of hair, sonnets) and whose 'browny locks did hang in crookèd curls' (85).[38] All of this could be merely generic – such hair was hardly new as a mark of beauty – but it is hard to see how an Elizabethan readership could avoid drawing parallels with the most conspicuous androgyne of the era. It is worth noting that the hair-colour of Shakespeare's Adonis is *not* described, yet John Weever, in his 1599 epigram to Shakespeare, writes of 'rose-

[35] Martindale and Burrow's translation, p. 167.

[36] Thomas Edwards, *Narcissus*, in *Poems by Thomas Edwards* ed. by W. E. Buckley (London: Nichols, 1882), pp. 39, 48 (edition without line numbering). *Narcissus* was published in 1595 but registered Oct. 1593.

[37] The writers are identified by the names *Adon* and *Leander* in Edwards' coda. (N.B. Marlowe's work was circulating in manuscript.)

[38] I quote from Kerrigan's edition – see note 12.

cheeked Adonis with his *amber* tresses'.[39] The assumption may occur because Weever, for reasons addressed later in this essay, visualises Southampton when writing of Adonis.

More portraits of Henry Wriothesley survive than of anyone else in the era apart from Queen Elizabeth. While the majority record him as an older man, his self-publicising proclivities were apparent in late adolescence. Miniatures of Southampton were produced in the early to mid-1590s by both Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver. The Oliver portrait is unfinished, prompting the theory that it was retained in the studio as a template for replicas,[40] which might suggest that pictures of Southampton were in demand, circulating beyond his intimate acquaintances. The earl's closest forebears in fashion seem to have been *les mignons* of Henri III's French court (1574-89),[41] young men whose effeminacy provoked widespread rumour and concern. The English ambassador to France informed Burghley that Henri was followed by 'monkyes and papagayes' (monkeys and popinjays).[42] Burghley was no doubt perturbed by his own ward's epicene tendencies – these were probably another factor behind his commissioning of Clapham's *Narcissus*. Lady Bridget Manners deemed Southampton too capricious, too 'fantasticall', when he was floated as a marriage prospect for her in 1594.[43] How, though, did others react to Southampton's style? In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Julia speaks up for long-haired young men adorned with 'odd-conceited true-love knots'; indeed, it is tempting to hear a defence of Southampton when Julia (about to don male attire) declares 'To be fantastic may become a youth / Of greater time [i.e. age] than I shall show to be' (2.7.46-8). Southampton wears an ostentatious double-knot earring in the Cobbe portrait; he sports a high fantastical quiff in the later Oliver miniature (c.1596).[44] Many were doubtless

[39] John Weever, '*Ad Gulielmum Shakespeare'*, in *Epigrammes in the oldest cut, and newest fashion* (London: Bushell, 1599). My emphasis. Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online*. 8 August 2021. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A68869.0001.001/1:19?rgn=div1;view=fulltext.

[40] An idea proposed in the 2019 exhibition *Elizabethan Treasures: Miniatures by Hilliard and Oliver* at the National Portrait Gallery.

[41] In Robert Greene's 1592 *A Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, ed. by Charles Hindley (London: Reeves AND Turner, 1872), a barber asks 'will you be Frenchified, with a love-lock down to your shoulders, in which you may weave your mistress's favour?' (p. 37).

[42] Quoted in Katherine Crawford, *The Sexual Culture of the French Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 219.

[43] Quoted in Charlotte Carmichael Stopes, *The Life of Henry, Third Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's Patron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), p. 66.

[44] Writing c.1600, the author of *The Newe Metamorphosis* mocks the fashion for tufts – a 'longe foretoppe standing bolt upright' – as devised by 'ffantasticks'. Quoted in John Henry Hobart Lyon, *A Study of* The Newe Metamorphosis *Written by J. M., Gent, 1600* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1919), pp.163-4.

troubled by such dandyism, but – if we take the verse identikit developed by a range of poets at face value, so to speak – it seems that others were captivated.

In the nineteenth century, people went wild for the flowing locks of Byron and Liszt. In the 1960s, the Beatles' moptops sparked a frenzy. Did Southampton's tresses have a similar impact? I posit a kind of Wriothesley-mania in the London of the early 1590s. As Park Honan observes, 'Southampton was becoming an exhibit'.[45] He was becoming, as Shakespeare records, 'the world's fresh ornament' (S1), the loveliness 'where every eye doth dwell' (S5). As a style icon, Southampton embodies an emergent sense of gender fluidity and provides a template for the burgeoning epyllion genre. Some of the early sonnets (e.g. 21, 32 and 38) suggest that various poets have already taken him for their muse. He stands as a figure of both comic and tragic potential, one who attracts a wave of sympathy and a wave of desire: 'he did in the general bosom reign / Of young, of old, and sexes both enchanted' (*A Lover's Complaint*, 127-8).[46] He is invited, like Shakespeare's Adonis and Marlowe's Leander, to 'feasts of love' (*ALC*, 181). Bertram in *All's Well that Ends Well*, a character often linked to Southampton and the Young Man of the sonnets, with 'His archèd brows, his hawking eye, his curls', is likewise the focus for 'a thousand loves' (1.1.78, 132); indeed, the play may recall the days of Wriothesley-mania, capturing Southampton as 'a bright particular star', a youth rechristened 'With a world / Of pretty, fond, adoptious christendoms [names] / That blinking Cupid gossips', even as he declares himself a 'hater of love' (1.1.70, 139-141; 3.3.14). In Francis Beaumont's *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*, the epicene hero has his golden locks pulled away by Diana's comically clamorous nymphs.[47] We might sense a kind of early modern pop idol 'assailed' (S41) by women who prize his 'painted counterfeit' (S16) and fantasise over his androgynous charms: 'Many there were that did his picture get / To serve their eyes, and in it put their mind' (*ALC*, 134-5).[48] There are ancient parallels too: Southampton appears an Elizabethan equivalent to the Athenian 'beautiful boy', that paradigmatic figure described by Camille Paglia as 'luminously masculine and feminine… desired but not desiring',[49] whose apparent indifference to sex only increases

[45] Park Honan, *Shakespeare: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 176.

[46] The inclusion of *A Lover's Complaint* in the 1609 edition of the sonnets may invite readers to draw parallels between or even conflate the young male protagonists. See Kerrigan, pp. 12-18.

[47] Beaumont's epyllion was published in 1602; born in 1584, he was too young to write at the height of any purported Wriothesley-mania, but not too young to have been aware of its cultural impact.

[48] See Camilla Caporicci, 'Wear this jewel for me: 'tis my picture': The Miniature in Shakespeare's Work', in Michelle Marrapodi (ed. by), *Shakespeare and the Visual Arts: The Italian Influence* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 159-77 on the miniature as fetish.

[49] Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New York: Vintage, 1991), pp. 110, 115.

his sexual magnetism. No-one captures this Alcibiades-like allure better than Marlowe. The collective 'moan' he registers in *Hero and Leander* is less a grief-stricken response to tragedy than the Dionysian swoon of an infatuated populace (1.54ff). The poet's introduction of Leander is a checklist of ambisexual icons: Adonis, Narcissus, Ganymede, Endymion, and Hippolytus, any one of which could serve as a 'pretty, fond, adoptious' moniker. Here, and in many of the works noted above, a bewitching ephebic archetype emerges out of antiquity. In poem after poem a remarkable frisson – part delectation, part agitation – is felt in this encounter with 'what beauty was of yore' (S68).

All of this feeds, as I hope to demonstrate, into the Rival Poet sequence, fuelling Shakespeare's sense that 'every alien pen hath got my use / And under thee their poesy disperse' (S78). The important plank in my argument for now is to view Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as one of a number of works that capture Southampton c.1593 as a cultural phenomenon, an object of fascination, the feminized 'beautiful boy', valued not just as a trend-setter but for his defiance of Burghley's self-serving designs. Shakespeare was not alone in wishing that the young earl's 'heart's content… may always answer to your own wish'.[50] Marlowe is not himself *the* Rival Poet, even if his epyllion is much the greatest of the Southampton-related narratives; his depiction of Leander might, though, have a significant bearing on identifying 'that able spirit' (S85), as we shall see. First, however, we must consider a decidedly less-than-able spirit, the much-maligned scrivener, Henry Petowe.

II Petowe

The publication dates of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and its continuations are crucial to my argument. Marlowe's epyllion was registered in 1593 but not printed until 1598, when we know that it must have appeared before 2 March.[51] Chapman's continuation was never registered but was published together with Marlowe's opening section in a single volume at some point before 7 September 1598, the date on which Meres' *Palladis Tamia* was registered. Meres praises Chapman's continuation but makes no mention of Henry Petowe's *The Second Part of Hero and Leander, Containing their Further Fortunes* which was registered in April, though it did not necessarily go to press at this point. That Petowe's decision to complete Marlowe's poem became public knowledge before

[50] *Venus and Adonis* dedication. See Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Much Ado with Red and White: The Earliest Readers of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593)', *The Review of English Studies* 44 (1993), 479-501, on the impact of Shakespeare's epyllion.

[51] See W. W. Greg 'The Copyright of *Hero and Leander*', *The Library* 4th series, 24 (1944), 165-74.

publication is clear from his dedicatory epistle to Sir Henry Guilford. Petowe records that the critical knives were out for him directly: 'that I being but a fly dare presume to soar with the eagle' (34-5). He seeks Guilford's protection from 'many dangers… being round beset with many enemies', the snarling 'ever meddling carpers' who question his temerity as a novice poet (8-10, 17). Modern critics have been no kinder. Maclure refers to 'the casual bumblings of Henry Petowe, one of the most minor of minor versifiers';[52] his continuation is, according to Stephen Orgel, 'unquestionably inept and silly, with a distinctly unearned happy ending'.[53]

Petowe replaces Musaeus's tragic denouement with a romance tale of sundered and reunited lovers. It is based, he claims, on an unidentified Italian source: 'I being enriched by a gentleman, a friend of mine, with the true Italian discourse of those lovers' further fortunes, have presumed to finish the history' (28-32). What is Petowe up to with this jarring, seemingly unaccountable switch of genre? His work is usually seen as an opportunistic attempt to capitalise on Marlowe's fame, though he freely acknowledges that he lacks the credentials for such an undertaking. He appeals in a preface to 'quick-sighted' gentlemen who 'will marvel what folly or rather fury enforced me to undertake such a weighty matter', asking forbearance not for his own undeserving sake but 'for the subject's sake, for Hero and Leander's sake' (55-7, 51-2). His 'poor harmless muse' will be cast into oblivion 'if neither of these purchase favor' (52-4). But who would endorse writing so confessedly bad? It seems to me that an altogether different claim on his readers' sympathies is implied. Petowe's cack-handed romance is, I propose, an analogue for events of 1598: he is driven to write out of 'fury' on behalf of a *contemporary* Hero and Leander.[54] The appeal to quick-sightedness signals an allegorical purport. And what 'weighty matter' is shadowed in the poem? Which real-life lovers might 'purchase favor'? Petowe's 'true Italian discourse' is, I suggest, a ruse – he is prompted to write by rumours emerging from court in early 1598 about the relationship of the Earl of Southampton and his mistress, Elizabeth Vernon, one of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour.

The relationship between Southampton and Vernon first became the subject of gossip in September 1595 when the courtier Rowland Whyte observed 'My Lord of Southampton doth with to[o] much Familiarity court the faire Mistress Vernon'.[55] (The 'desired but not desiring' phase does not seem to have long outlasted the earl's coming of age.) The

[52] Millar Maclure, *Christopher Marlowe: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 5.

[53] Orgel, p. xx.

[54] 'Fury' could perhaps refer to a poetical *furor* – but Petowe presents himself as anything but divinely inspired.

[55] Quoted in Akrigg, p. 48.

flirtation provoked the disapproval of Queen Elizabeth, who was perturbed by seemingly 'unprecedented sexual turmoil at court'.[56] There may also have been concerns over the liaison on financial grounds since Vernon could bring no dowry to speak of and Southampton had money troubles, Burghley having imposed an extraordinarily punitive fine on his ward following his refusal to marry Elizabeth de Vere.[57] Political concerns were probably a factor too given that Vernon was a cousin to the Earl of Essex whose ambitions and influence were becoming more apparent in 1595; an alliance between two powerful families may have been unwelcome to the queen and her counsellors at this juncture.

Vernon seems not to have been Southampton's only romantic or erotic interest,[58] but their liaison continued, emerging as a matter of political consequence three years on. In a letter dated January 14 1598, Whyte writes that Southampton is set to travel to France 'which course doth extremely grieve his mistress that passes her tyme in weeping and lamenting'. (Southampton planned to spend two years abroad, hoping to see military action and, with a smaller retinue, to ease his financial woes.) In a letter written five days later Whyte records:

> I heard of some unkindness should be between the Earl of Southampton and his mistress occasioned by some report of Ambrose Willoughby, the Earl of Southampton called him to account for it but the matter was made known to my Lord Essex and my Lord Chamberlain who had them in examination; what the cause is I cannot learn for it was new but I see my Lord Southampton full of discontentments.[59]

Quite what Willoughby, the Esquire of the Body, said to provoke the lovers is unknown but matters came to a head a couple of days later when he made a Malvolio-like attempt to quieten some rowdy courtiers in the presence chamber after the queen had gone to bed.

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[56] Paul E.J. Hammer, 'Sex and the Virgin Queen: Aristocratic Concupiscence and the Court of Elizabeth I', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31 (2000), 91. See also Chapter 1 of Johanna Rickman, *Love, Lust, and License in Early Modern England: Illicit Sex and the Nobility* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

[57] See Akrigg, pp. 38-40.

[58] See Hammer, 89, on Southampton's likely role in Lady Mary Howard's trouble with the queen in 1597; and Donald W. Foster, 'Against the perjured falsehood of your tongues': Frances Howard on the Course of Love', *ELR* 24 (1994), 72-103, for an account of Frances Prannell née Howard's obsession and possible involvement with Southampton c.1597-1601. The sonnets, of course, famously record a love triangle and some kind of sexual scandal.

[59] I quote here and below from Whyte's correspondence as set out in Arthur Acheson, *Shakespeare's Sonnet Story 1592-1598* (London: Quaritch, 1922), pp. 381-93.

Southampton defied him; a scuffle ensued in which Southampton struck Willoughby and Willoughby pulled out some of Southampton's famous locks. The Queen thanked Willoughby, telling him (as Whyte reports) 'he had done better if he had sent [Southampton] to the porter's lodge, to see who durst have fetcht hym out'. The 'who' here is undoubtedly a reference to Essex.

In 1598 the *modus vivendi* which allowed the Elizabethan government to function was under increasing strain. The hawkish Essex and a more circumspect Burghley were at loggerheads over foreign policy. In July 1598 a dispute in the presence chamber over whom to appoint as Lord Deputy for Ireland ended with the queen cuffing Essex's ear and Essex laying his hand on his sword in response. Southampton was Essex's highest profile friend and supporter by this time, though he was in France for much of 1598. Having been dismissed from court after the Willoughby fracas, he was given leave (after a wilful delay on the queen's part) to travel in early February. Whyte reports that before Southampton left he talked with Essex in private and 'is much troubled at her Majesties straungest Usage of hym'. Whyte's observation that 'Some Body hath plaied unfriendly Partes with him' underlines the sense of factionalism. Doubtless Southampton and Essex discussed matters of the heart as well as matters of state. Whyte comments repeatedly in his letters on how Mistress Vernon has 'almost wept out her fairest eyes', and mentions rumours that Southampton is about to marry her. Perhaps a trothplight engagement was made at this point. We know that the lovers consummated their relationship before Southampton's departure (if they had not done so before) because their first child was born in November 1598.

The simultaneity of the rancorous events at court and the publication of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* in early 1598 is, I suggest, what prompts Petowe to put himself on the line poetically and politically. As word of Vernon's distress emerges, Petowe makes a gallant protest on her behalf. He seizes on Marlowe's Southampton-as-Leander portrait, knowing that quick-sighted readers will now see Vernon as filling the Hero role. In Petowe's plot Leander is forced into exile, leading to protracted laments on Hero's part which mirror Vernon's deep unhappiness. Petowe does not, it seems, feel the need to provide specific markers that will identify Southampton – this is a continuation, and Marlowe has already done the job – but he reminds readers of the youth's striking looks and cultural impact: 'Harmless Leander whose all-smiling face / Graced with unspotted fair to all men's sight' (188-9). Hero shares in the celebrity glamour: crowds 'feed and gaze upon' her 'never-spotted hue' (494-5). She has 'amber hair' (112), which could, once more, be seen as generic, but accords with what we know of Vernon from portraits – she and Southampton clearly made for a golden couple. Petowe expressly links the risk he is taking to Hero's misfortune:

Bear with his rashness and he will amend;
His folly blame, but his good will commend.
Yet rather discommend what I entreat;
For if you like it, some will storm and fret;
And then insulting eagles soaring high
Will prey upon the silly harmless fly –
Nil refert; for I'll pawn my better part,
Ere sweet-faced Beauty lose her due desert. (97-104)

Petowe dismisses the danger as no matter ('*Nil refert*') since he is chivalrously obliged out of 'good will' to speak on behalf of 'sweet-faced Beauty'. Might the present-tense direct address to the readers suggest that he has in mind an *Elizabethan* Hero, one whose predicament is a live issue? Readers who appreciate his efforts should pretend otherwise if they wish to avoid censure. More than literary opprobrium is at stake here, it seems.

In transforming *Hero and Leander* into a romance Petowe introduces a villain, Lord Archilaüs, a lustful tyrant who preys on Hero. When she rejects him, he employs an underling to bring down Leander: 'another cur / Was forcèd from his den, that made much stir / And Treason he [Leander] was named' (191-3). This seems to me a possible allusion to the Willoughby incident, especially in light of the question that Essex put to the Privy Council in July 1599: 'Was it *treason* in my Lord of Southampton to marry my poor kinswoman…?'[60] Leander's ensuing exile may reflect how some people perceived Southampton's decision to go abroad. Archilaüs dies of a sudden apoplexy brought on by a rant against Hero; he is replaced as the chief villain by his brother, Euristippus, who accuses Hero of poisoning Archilaüs and sentences her to death. A rescue plot ensues with Leander returning in disguise to defeat Euristippus in a tournament. The lovers marry, untarnished by their pre-nuptial misdemeanour; after death, they are transformed into pine trees since 'the female pine will die / Unless the male be ever planted by' (625-6). Is this a coded message for Southampton, urging him to do the honourable thing – that is, to return from France and solemnize his union with Vernon?

If I am correct, Petowe can be seen as somewhat prescient, assuming his hastily conceived poem was more or less complete when it was registered. 1598 was a turbulent year for Southampton and Vernon,[61] and some of their actions would not be out of place in a romance. In a bid to conceal her pregnancy, Vernon stayed with Essex, feigning illness.

[60] Quoted in Rickman, p. 66. My italics.

[61] See Akrigg, Chap. VII and Rickman, Chap. 1.

Informed of her condition, Southampton returned to England in secret – presumably in disguise like Petowe's Leander – and married Vernon on 30 August, before departing again for France a few days later. Their secret was short-lived, however; word of the match reached Queen Elizabeth who was characteristically enraged, threatening her lady-in-waiting with imprisonment. The new Countess of Southampton avoided this punishment but never regained the queen's favour. Southampton was summoned back to court but provocatively delayed his return, remaining in Paris another two months where he lost vast sums in gambling at tennis, adding to his financial plight. On top of this, Southampton was preoccupied with matters of conscience: some commentators believe that he converted from Catholicism to Protestantism at this point, while coming increasingly under Essex's political sway (Essex sent the scholar Henry Cuffe to Paris with the intention, it seems, of educating Southampton in a kind of patrician republicanism).[62] When Southampton belatedly returned to England in November he was incarcerated in Fleet prison for some weeks, the queen proving deaf to appeals for forgiveness. This is the fraught and factious context of the *Hero and Leander* continuations and the Rival Poet sonnets.

To express sympathy for the plight of Southampton and Vernon in 1598 can be seen as partisan, but beyond the possible allusion to Willoughby does anything expressly *textual* justify Petowe's sense of danger? The main villains are staple figures with few distinguishing features; little about them suggests personalised allegorical attacks. The romance plot is generic and perfunctory, a vehicle by which Petowe can bestow a happy ending on the lovers. One passage stands out, however, as possible evidence of Petowe's 'folly' and 'fury', a Spenserian portrait of a wicked queen, Cambarina:

> The virgin princess of the western isle,
> Fair Cambarina of the golden soil –
> And yet not fair, but of a swarthy hue,
> For by her gold her beauty did renew:
> Renew as thus, that having gold to spare,
> Men held it duty to protest and swear
> Her fair was such as all the world admired it,
> Her blushing beauty such, all men desired it.
> The scornful queen made proud with fainèd praises,
> Her black-framed soul to a higher rate she raises,
> That men bewitchèd with her gold, not beauty,

[62] See Akrigg, Chap. XVI, and Alexandra Gajda, *The Earl of Essex and Late Elizabethan Culture* (Oxford: oxford University Press, 2012), p. 56.

A thousand knights as homage proffer duty.
If such a base deformèd lump of clay,
In whom no sweet content had any stay…
If such a she so many suitors had…
How much more love merits so sweet a queen,
Whose like no outworn world hath ever seen. (123-46)

The comparison in the final couplet is with Hero, who stands as a regal beauty entirely deserving of love-suits. Cambarina has no influence on the plot, and it is not clear which 'western isle' she rules – an Aegean island, presumably. But Petowe, summoning no little poetic power, surely has the ageing, endlessly flattered virgin princess of another 'western isle' in mind, despite masking her with a 'swarthy hue'. To my knowledge no-one has commented on this passage, yet it seems to me one of the most vituperative attacks on Queen Elizabeth published during her reign. Admittedly, the savagery is difficult to square with Petowe's respectful elegy for the queen in 1603, but the allegiances of many were tested or reshaped by the Essex rising; also, Spenser offers precedence as a poet who alternates between honey and gall in portraying his sovereign. If the Cambarina passage does indeed target the queen, no wonder Petowe felt in need of protection.[63]

Petowe's minor work might just provide a major key to the Rival Poet sonnets, demonstrating that a poem *not* dedicated to Southampton could still be aimed at him (and his lover), offering public (albeit allegorical) support at a time of great difficulty. Petowe's possible protest on behalf of persecuted lovers chimes with the times. Cultural and political battle lines were drawn up in the late Elizabethan era regarding romantic self-determination, the theme of countless poems and plays, both comic and tragic. According to Paul Hammer, the *fin-de-siècle* mood of the younger aristocracy 'represented a genuine and insidious challenge to Elizabeth's control of the court and, ultimately, to her princely authority'.[64] Hammer writes of Essex 'playing a dangerous game' in his 1596-98 dalliances at court, most notably with Burghley's granddaughter,

[63] Would Sir Henry Guilford have been willing to oblige? Perhaps not, given that Queen Elizabeth became godmother to his first child in May 1598 (Guilford's wife, Elizabeth Somerset, had been a Lady of the Privy Chamber). Then again, Guilford may have been sympathetic to Southampton; both had been Burghley's wards, both were from Catholic families regarded with suspicion, and both had strong ties to Essex. Guilford and Essex were tutored together, and Essex hosted Guilford's marriage in 1596, an occasion celebrated in Spenser's *Prothalamion*, a poem which also lauds Essex's victory at Cadiz. Guilford appears to have avoided overt factionalism, but the fact that King James rewarded him in 1603 suggests that he was supportive of Essex's cause (many Catholics were drawn to the earl's doctrine of religious tolerance).

[64] Hammer (2000), p. 91.

Elizabeth Stanley, née de Vere.[65] Various authors responded to the late-reign disquietude. John Lyly's *Gallathea*, performed before the queen in 1588, addresses the tension between Diana and Venus at court in a light-hearted but subtly provocative manner. In *Philippes Venus*, a 1591 prose pamphlet by 'Jo. M.', Venus is banished from the court of the gods but a new Venus is soon chosen from among Diana's amorous nymphs.[66] Queen Elizabeth was not the sole figure seen as standing in the way of love; Spenser presents Burghley, for example, as an enemy to love in the Proem to Book 4 of the 1596 *Faerie Queene*.[67] Not all poets were critical of the court's hard-line stance, however. In *Hymnus in Cynthiam* (1594), Chapman approves of the queen's god-like power to 'cut of[f] all desire / Of fleshly sports, and quench of Cupids fire' (27-8) – though, as we shall see, his attitude was more equivocal by 1598.[68] The debate is felt again in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), which sees Cupid welcomed to a chaste court when disguised as Anteros (Love's Enemy), only to be unmasked and banished. Jonson ingratiatingly defends the Queen from those who attack her as 'too severe and sour' (5.5.96).[69]

Southampton's disputes over matrimonial matters at each end of the 1590s seem to have been significant in the development of the minor epic. Petowe was not alone, I believe, in penning an allegorical response to the love trials of Southampton and Vernon. John Weever called on Shakespeare in 1599 to supply new love-themed verses for an adoring, near-cultish readership,[70] then seemingly took it upon himself to fulfil the order. His sylvan epyllion *Faunus and Melliflora* (1599, pub. 1600) tells of a beautiful, princely boy of Latium with 'amber-stragling haires' (29) and femininized apparel (the fastener of his robe depicts Hercules in drag), who attracts the adoring attention of Diana's 'gamesome Nimphs' (417).[71] He is a novice in love but is soon captivated by Melliflora, 'Whose Jacinth love-lockes hanged out so faire' (135). Amber and jacinth tresses are, I submit,

[65] Ibid., p. 89. Elizabeth de Vere married William Stanley, the Earl of Derby, after the proposed match with Southampton fell through.

[66] Since the nymphs compete to win the love of the preternaturally beautiful Ganymede, this work quite possibly reflects Henry Wriothesley's initial impact at court.

[67] See Bruce Danner, *Edmund Spenser's War on Lord Burghley* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 17-21.

[68] George Chapman, *Hymnus in Cynthium* in *The Poems of George Chapman*, ed. by Phyllis Brooks Bartlett (Menasha: Banta, 1941). All subsequent Chapman references are to this edition unless otherwise indicated.

[69] Ben Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels* in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, Vol. 1, ed. by David Bevington, Martin Butler and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[70] See note 38.

[71] John Weever, *Faunus and Melliflora* in *Elizabethan Minor Epics*, ed. by Elizabeth Story Donno (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

part of a Southampton and Vernon double portrait in Weever's invented narrative.[72] 'Faunus', as Jim Ellis (in a non-biographical reading) observes, 'is the successful version of Adonis, Leander, Narcissus, and all the other youths in the genre who fail to metamorphose into adult (heterosexual) men'.[73] In my reading, Faunus is Southampton five or six years on, entering marriage. The lovers play some decidedly English country games before making a bid for romantic freedom; they are separated when Faunus is attacked by a boar, an incident which parallels, I suspect, the Willoughby affray. In detailing this attack, Weever alludes overtly to Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*, underscoring the Southampton connection. Venus is introduced as a character and the identities of Faunus and Adonis are repeatedly blurred in farcical fashion (472ff); here, though, Faunus slays rather than is slain by the boar. Southampton – a poetic locus once more – re-emerges as the hero who triumphs over adversity.

I am not the first to make the case for *Faunus and Melliflora* as a topical allegory. Describing the poem as an 'eccentric epithalamion', William Collins Watterson also identifies Southampton and Vernon as the lovers.[74] If this reading is correct, the epyllion offers a startling commentary on romantic disputation at court. An anti-eros stance is voiced by Pycus, Faunus's father, who decries love-matches and suggests that money is the basis for marriage, attitudes which Watterson links to Lord Burghley. Pycus observes that Diana's nymphs do not bring wealth, which was certainly true of Vernon. Diana, to whom Melliflora has made a vow of chastity, stands, unsurprisingly, for Queen Elizabeth. When the lovers are reunited, they reject the teachings of the older generation: a clandestine marriage, sexual union and pregnancy ensue, all of which corresponds to the experience of Southampton and Vernon in 1598 (the *à clef* mode is more overt than in the epyllia of the early 1590s). The correlation is driven home with the rage of Diana-Elizabeth when she finds out what has happened; her concern is to preserve the cult of chastity at court, even though this, Weever suggests, has all but disintegrated, being rooted in a monstrous repression of natural desire. Diana punishes the lovers by turning their first child into a satyr which breeds in turn (in the poem's peculiar aetiological ending) the new strain of anti-romantic, bitter satire in English poetry. Faunus and Melliflora are placed, however, at the head of a royal line which leads, via their second child, to the foundation of Britain in the legendary person of Brutus of Troy.

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[72] Faunus is found in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* but Weever's romantic plot is original (though he incorporates elements of Ovid's legend of Picus).

[73] Jim Ellis, *Sexuality and Citizenship: Metamorphosis in Elizabethan Erotic Verse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 136.

[74] William Collins Watterson, '*Faunus and Melliflora* Revisited, or, A Pastoral Knot Untied', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 8.1 (1982), 107-14 (113).

Weever's crypto-portraits seem almost to hint at an alternative royal presence in the land. Petowe also emphasises the regal natures of both Hero and Leander – indeed the latter is 'made the heir of Sestos' (552) after his victory. Do the poets indulge in dangerous fantasies over the succession?[75] Their anger at the queen's heartlessness is palpable: these are precisely the kind of attacks on Elizabeth as 'too severe and sour' that Jonson has in mind in *Cynthia's Revels*. In a further address to 'quick-sighted Readers' the following year, Petowe looks to 'shun the pit I late was in / The sinke of misconceite, and errors Cell', words which suggest that some *interpretative* controversy attended his continuation of Marlowe.[76] These works by Petowe and Weever coincide with Jackson's 1598-1600 dating of the Rival Poet sonnets, sonnets in which it is implied that more than one writer is competing for the Young Man's favour. Where does that leave the Player-Poet who professes undying love for his young friend yet confesses to having 'slept in your report' (S83)? He stands accused: 'This silence for my sin you did impute' (S83). Shakespeare offers various defences, but concludes in sonnet 86 that one thing alone has stopped his voice: a copious, arresting verse-portrait of the Young Man. And it is to the gauntlet thrown down by the chief rival that I now turn.

III Chapman

As noted above, Chapman dedicated his 1598 continuation of *Hero and Leander* to Lady Walsingham. His translations of Homer (*Seven Bookes of the Iliades* and *Achilles' Shield*) were dedicated to the Earl of Essex in the same year. Chapman does not address Southampton in verse until his 1608 edition of Homer. Indeed, there are reasons to see him as a highly *unlikely* Rival Poet if Southampton is the Young Man. Chapman's swipe at Shakespeare as a vulgar sensualist in *Hymnus in Cynthiam* (1594), one of the 'flesh confounded soules / That cannot beare the full Castalian bowles' (162-3),[77] could be taken as an implicit criticism of Shakespeare's patron too, as someone unable to distinguish true poetry. His critique of 'selfe-lov's paramores' (*Hymnus In Noctem*, 83) and his advice to Ganymedes (*Hymnus in Cynthiam*, 462ff) to rise above ephemeral earthly delights and devote themselves to wisdom may well have been heard as admonitions with Southampton in mind. Chapman offers a further neoplatonic corrective to the prevailing

[75] The swansong conceit of Michael Drayton's dedicatory sonnet might hint at Weever's peril: 'Yet heavens forbid he should be neare his death'. Watterson suggests that the poem would have courted trouble, p. 108.

[76] Henry Petowe, *Philochasander and Elanira* (London, 1599). Text Creation Partnership digital edition. *Early English Books Online*. 12 September 2018. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A09529.0001.001/1:5?c=eebo;c=eebo2;g=eebogroup;rgn=div1;view=fulltext;xc=1;q1=henry+petowe.

[77] These lines echo the epigraph to *Venus and Adonis*.

amatory mode in *Ovid's Banquet of Sense* (1595).[78] How did Shakespeare and Southampton respond? One does not need to embrace all the extravagant theories about *Love's Labour's Lost* to suspect that it was with laughter. That play's satire on 'leaden contemplation' is generalised, but the farcical vow 'to sleep but three hours in the night' in order to produce 'fiery numbers' takes specific aim at Chapman's studious nocturnalism and poetical raptures (1.1.42; 4.3.323-4). And Chapman's 'No pen can anything eternall wright / That is not steept in humor of the Night' (*HIN*, 376-7) draws a direct look-into-your-heart-and-write riposte from Shakespeare: 'Never durst poet touch a pen to write / Until his ink were tempered with love's sighs' (*LLL*, 4.3.348-9).[79] There is a strong sense that Chapman comes off worse in an *Il Penseroso* versus *L'Allegro* spat. He shores himself against a lack of patronage or public acclaim by claiming to write for an elect, a coterie initiated in divine mystery.[80] He defies the frivolous in-crowd. Why would he risk further humiliation by seeking out Southampton's patronage only three years later?

Furthermore, the sole contemporary figure named by Chapman in *Hero and Leander* is not Southampton but Essex. The latter was, as Alexandra Gajda demonstrates, the great hope of 'scholars and martialists' for whom virtue was rooted in a 'congruence of skill in arms and letters'.[81] Chapman (who had it seems served as a soldier) describes Essex in his 1598 Homer dedication as a near-godlike figure, 'the most Honoured now living Instance of the Achilleian virtues, eternized by divine Homere', and as the embodiment of 'royall humanitie' (61).[82] Such phrases were risky given the power struggles of 1598 which saw suspicion growing over Essex's personal ambition, and Burghley castigating the earl as a bloodthirsty warmonger who stood in the way of a negotiated peace with Spain.[83] Chapman's selections from Homer 'highlight the story of Achilles in a way which amplifies its applicability to Essex in 1598'[84] – England needs him as the Greeks

[78] See Daniel Moss, 'The Second Master of Love: George Chapman and the Shadow of Ovid', *Modern Philology* 111 (2014), 457-84.

[79] This point was first made in Arthur Acheson's over-zealous but sometimes astute *Shakespeare and the Rival Poet* (London and New York: John Lane, 1903).

[80] See John Huntington, 'Furious Insolence: The Social Meaning of Poetic Inspiration in the 1590s', *Modern Philology* 94 (1997), pp. 305-26.

[81] Gajda, p. 219. Essex became the chancellor of Cambridge University in 1598.

[82] *Chapman's Homer Vol. I: The Iliad*, ed. by Allardyce Nicholl (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

[83] See Gajda, pp. 46-8. Essex's concern that the Cecils were plotting a Spanish succession stems from this period; when this accusation was levelled at Essex's trial, Robert Cecil countered that Essex had his own designs on the throne.

[84] John Channing Briggs, 'Chapman's *Seaven Bookes of the Iliades*: Mirror for Essex', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 21 (1991), pp. 59-73 (66). Briggs highlights various topical and partisan aspects of Chapman's 1598 translation which were largely expunged in later editions.

needed their hero. The poet's admiration is also evident in *Hero and Leander* where, in an extended analogy, he compares Leander's seduction of Hero to the 'princely' Essex's capture of Cadiz in 1596 (3.205). The political impertinence of this overdetermined passage has never been fully acknowledged. Essex's popularity soared in the wake of his triumph but he faced an inquisition from the queen and the Privy Council over his self-aggrandizing conduct and the division of spoils. Cadiz became 'a political football of the first order' and accounts of the action were suppressed, seemingly on pain of death; the injunction was still in force by the end of 1598 when a new edition of Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* was recalled and the author was forced to 'delete a lengthy narrative of the Cadiz expedition and remove all reference to it from his title page'.[85] Chapman got away with his own laudatory sex-as-plunder metaphor but it may well have raised eyebrows. In the light of this, should we be equating Chapman's male protagonist with Essex, a model of assertive masculinity, rather than Southampton, a feminized figure who took no part in the Cadiz expedition?

That, I contend, would be to miss the covert strategy adopted to 'use [Southampton's] name' (S80) by developing Marlowe's portrait of Leander. The earl was a tricky proposition; as touched on above, he seems to have previously rebuffed Chapman's neoplatonic counsel. But Chapman would have found much to admire in Southampton by 1598, politically and militarily. Southampton was, after all, increasingly close to Essex; indeed, he had been desperate to serve on the Cadiz expedition, only to be prevented by the queen at the last moment. He participated regularly in the Accession Day tilts – those parades of chivalric manhood – and had seen military action on the 1597 Azores voyage, where he was one of the few to distinguish himself.[86] Furthermore, while Southampton's sexual propriety was still open to question, he had proved himself more of a Leander than a Narcissus or Ganymede in his relations with women. He could, then, be seen as a figure of greater masculine prowess by 1598 and fairly described as 'our Leander, that made Mars his Cupid' (3.211). That said, his physical loveliness remains crucial to Chapman's bid for patronage, a bid which only becomes apparent when the poet, following Marlowe with far greater sophistication than Petowe, turns his attention to 'the logic of Leander's beauty' (3.389).

Much has been written about Marlowe's homoerotic descriptions of Leander, but Chapman's focus on male beauty has received little attention. Chapman describes how the force of Leander's beauty 'fired with sense things mere insensual' (3.90). Every

[85] Paul. E. J. Hammer, 'Myth-making: Politics, Propaganda and the Capture of Cadiz in 1596', *The Historical Journal* 40 (1997), pp. 621-642 (629, 632).

[86] See Akrigg, Chap. VI. (Cf. the nautical imagery of sonnets 80 and 86.)

insensate thing he touches is imbued with 'soul' and 'love' (3.78, 84); the foam that drips from him as he emerges from the sea is so amorously charged that wherever it falls the 'first white roses spring' (3.79).[87] In the Fourth Sestiad, Hero makes sacrifices at Venus' altar and is answered with tragic portents – 'virgin tapers… burned as red as blood' (4.128-9) – but then she gazes on a portrait of Leander and her fears are allayed. And this, I suggest, is where we encounter the hymn to male beauty that so confounds Shakespeare. I quote it in full because it is so unfamiliar – having, as noted, been 'hidden in plain sight' for so long – and to convey how amply it justifies the notion of being 'richly compiled', or of 'fill[ing] up' the line (S85, S86):

> Then Hero wept; but her affrighted eyes
> She quickly wrested from the sacrifice,
> Shut them, and inwards for Leander looked,
> Searched her soft bosom, and from thence she plucked
> His lovely picture, which when she had viewed,
> Her beauties were with all love's joys renewed.
> The odors sweetened, and the fires burned clear,
> Leander's form left no ill object there.
> Such was his beauty that the force of light,
> Whose knowledge teacheth wonders infinite,
> The strength of number and proportion,
> Nature had placed in it to make it known
> Art was her daughter, and what human wits
> For study lost, entombed in drossy spirits.
> After this accident (which for her glory
> Hero could not but make a history)
> Th' inhabitants of Sestos and Abydos
> Did every year with feasts propitious,
> To fair Leander's picture sacrifice;
> And they were persons of especial prize
> That were allowed it, as an ornament
> T' enrich their houses, for the continent
> Of the strange virtues all approved it held;

[87] An Ovidian aetiological flourish that may play on the possible pronunciation of Wriothesely as Rose-ley. The case has often been made that Shakespeare does likewise in his praise of 'beauty's rose' (S1). Various pronunciations of Wriothesley have been suggested, with the firmest evidence perhaps found in the baptism record of the Southamptons' second son, which seems to offer two phonetic alternatives: '1607. Thos Wryosley S. Henry and Eliz. Wroseley, Erle and Countess of Southampton, baptized 2nd April' (see Stopes, p. 313).

For even the very look of it repelled
All blastings, witchcrafts, and the strifes of nature
In those diseases that no herbs could cure.
The wolfy sting of Avarice it would pull,
And make the rankest miser bountiful.
It killed the fear of thunder and of death;
The discords that conceits engendereth
'Twixt man and wife it for the time would cease;
The flames of love it quenched, and would increase;
Held in a prince's hand it would put out
The dreadful'st comet; it would ease all doubt
Of threatened mischiefs; it would bring asleep
Such as were mad; it would enforce to weep
Most barbarous eyes; and many more effects
This picture wrought, and sprung Leandrian sects,
Of which was Hero first, for he whose form
(Held in her hand) cleared such a fatal storm,
From hell she thought his person would defend her,
Which night and Hellespont would quickly send her.
With this confirmed, she vowed to banish quite
All thought of any check to her delight;
And in contempt of silly bashfulness,
She would the faith of her desires profess:
Where her religion should be policy,
To follow love with zeal her piety;
Her chamber her cathedral church should be,
And her Leander her chief deity. (4.132-81)

Why might this stop Shakespeare in his tracks? One of the objections to viewing Chapman as the Rival Poet is that Shakespeare would hardly be threatened by such a fustian philosopher, and some of the lines here – particularly those on Art, Nature and the 'force of light' – are tricksy to say the least. But what claims are made for Leander's beauty! As I understand it, the harmonious radiance of his face is Nature's means of engendering Art, of teaching the 'number and proportion' on which poetry and painting depend. Hero's adoration of Leander's portrait is the start of a desire-driven cult. He becomes an icon, his beauty held to possess such 'strange virtues' that it heals disease and madness, restores matrimonial harmony, redeems the sinful and corrupt, moves the barbarous to tears, and generally serves towards a civil and peaceable society. It is a protective charm against the forces of hell; Hero later clasps Leander's picture as a

'Persean shield' (4.346). We might suspect Chapman of satirising the cult of beauty, the founding of idolatrous 'Leandrian sects'; as D.J. Gordon argues, Hero is, after all, deluded: 'The fire may burn clear, but heaven is not appeased'.[88] But in his ardently Neoplatonic poems of 1594-5, Chapman is quite serious about the transcendent potential of the erotic, and about beauty as the wellspring of art, and his interpolated 'little myth about the power of Leander's pictured image' is, as Gordon also observes, Chapman's 'strongest statement on the power of the image'.[89] With its grounding in aesthetic theory, this audacious passage fits the Rival Poet bill, I contend, substantiating Shakespeare's claims that the Young Man's beauty has 'added feathers to the learnèd's wing', has inspired 'precious phrase by all the Muses filed' (S78, S85).

As in Petowe, no particularized markers are supplied – readers of this continuation already have Marlowe's 'maid in man's attire' in mind. A Leander-Southampton identification might be accentuated, however, by Hero's wearing of a miniature portrait in 'her soft bosom'.[90] The classical setting of the poem takes on a distinctly Elizabethan hue, reflecting the aristocratic taste for the 'secret art of limning' that reached its height in the 1590s.[91] Miniatures were exclusive gifts, associated with lovers and intimate friends; unlike larger portraits for public display, they were kept in the most private part of the house and seen by a privileged few – or, if worn, they were concealed within the 'soft bosom'. In describing how the 'Leandrian sects' take off, Chapman – ever conscious of the wealth and privilege from which he was excluded – points out that only 'persons of especial prize' are allowed to 'enrich their houses' with Leander's portrait. Sonnets 46 and 47 suggest that Shakespeare himself received such a gift from the Young Man, one that becomes an object of passionate fixation. That portraiture is a key trope of the sonnets has often been held to support the 'Southampton hypothesis', given the earl's fondness for sitting as a subject.[92] Chapman's claims for 'fair Leander's picture' tap, I suggest, into the same taste for iconographic self-fashioning. Again, if the early 1590s had indeed seen a spell of Wriothesley-mania, the earl may well have crossed the minds of culturally attuned readers here. It would not, I propose, take a great leap of imagination for Shakespeare to see Chapman's game.

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[88] D. J. Gordon, 'The Renaissance Poet as Classicist: Chapman's *Hero and Leander*' in *The Renaissance Imagination, Essays and Lectures by D. J. Gordon* ed. by Stephen Orgel (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1975), pp. 102-133 (124).

[89] Ibid., p. 122. Gordon addresses the Neoplatonism that underpins the passage.

[90] The phrase 'inwards for Leander looked' could suggest a vision held in the mind but we learn that this is a tangible portrait 'Held in her hand'.

[91] Fumerton, p. 66. The 1590s saw increasing commercialization but Hilliard (quoted by Fumerton) still describes limning as 'for the service of noble persons very meet, in small volumes, in private manner'.

[92] See Caporicci, p. 167.

Why might Shakespeare, confronted with this passage, feel trumped? After all, he himself had averred that all famous beauties, including Adonis and Helen, were but 'strange shadows' cast by his quintessentially lovely muse (S53). But Chapman lauds such beauty in a near-epic context, placing Southampton (by implication) at the heart of 'the incomparable Love-Poem of the world'.[93] His praise has yet more resonance when we consider that Musaeus's *Hero and Leander* was erroneously believed to be the earliest Greek poem, predating Homer. In claiming Leander-Southampton as a vitalizing, ameliorative icon, Chapman parks his tanks ostentatiously on Shakespeare's lawn. The Rival Poet sonnets delineate the artistic quandary that results: a conflicted Shakespeare denigrates his rival – setting the latter's 'gross painting' and 'strainèd touches' of rhetoric against his own 'true plain words' (S82) – but also feels obliged to 'cry "Amen" / To every hymn that able spirit affords' (S85).[94] This seconding of Chapman is even more necessary if *Hero and Leander* can indeed be seen as a political intervention. Consider, for example, the implications of 'Held in a prince's hand it [Leander's portrait] would put out / The dreadful'st comet; it would ease all doubt / Of threatened mischiefs'. Could this be a message to the queen in the disputatious days of 1598: whatever your fears over the Essex faction, only look on Southampton's graces to know that no harm can arise?[95]

The title-page emblem to the Marlowe-Chapman *Hero and Leander* shows a double-headed marigold with one flower open beneath the sun and the other closed beneath the stars (and what appear to be torch or candle flames). Marigolds figure in the poem as stars, 'Phoebus's celestial flowers' (5.465), and seem to be associated by Chapman with nocturnal inspiration. The motto 'Non Licet Exiguis' placed above the closed flower means something like 'not permitted to the inadequate or uninitiated'. This might suggest that the poem has one meaning 'open' to all – the legend of the lovers – and another 'closed' meaning available only to the elect. Chapman professed support for Queen Elizabeth in curbing amorous passion in *Hymnus in Cynthiam*, but his treatment of the theme in *Hero and Leander* is more ambiguous. While Venus is portrayed in unflattering terms – the lovers are ruled by 'their saint, / The devil Venus' (6.289-90) – she is provoked by a 'spiteful Diana' (4.322), which might glance at the increasingly embittered queen. Perhaps there is also a sly allusion to Burghley in the ekphrasis of Hero's scarf, one section of which shows a 'country virgin' (4.96) so absorbed in designing traps for grasshoppers that she does not see two foxes ransacking her vines or stealing her lunch.

[93] Chapman's epithet for Musaeus's poem in 'To the Commune Reader', *The divine poem of Musaeus. First of all bookes. Translated according to the originall, by Geo: Chapman* (London, 1616), A8v.

[94] Perhaps 'hymn' is another link to Chapman, given his *Two Poeticall Hymnes* of 1594.

[95] Cf. Petowe's 'Harmless Leander'.

Any mention of wily, grasping foxes would probably conjure for the cognoscenti Spenser's depiction of Burghley as a 'malicious, Machiavellian fox' in *Mother Hubberds Tale*.[96] Chapman offers a warning about Hero's uncontrolled passion – she is absorbed in embroidering a naked Leander – but perhaps the vulnerable position of Elizabeth Vernon at court in early 1598 is also in play.[97] This possibility is strengthened when the poet breaks into present tense as if addressing a *living* 'priest' of Venus: 'O lovely Hero, nothing is thy sin, / Weighed with those foul thoughts other priests are in' (4.210-11). Chapman recognises Hero's actions as sinful but counts her youth and beauty as mitigating factors, arguing forcefully that her transgression is slight when measured against the hypocrisy of puritan divines in his own day.

Does Chapman respond, like Petowe, to stories of Southampton and Vernon emerging from court? As previously noted, he was willing to embellish Homer to reflect the contemporary moment. It is tempting to see his addition of the goddess Ceremony to Musaeus's tale as an attempt to press the claims of marriage on Southampton. Chapman himself never married but he argues for 'civil forms confirmed and bounded' (3.151) as integral to social cohesion. In *De Guiana* (1596) he envisages a colonial utopia free of sexual disorder and disease, in which 'all our Youth take *Hymens* lightes in hand' (173). The Fifth Sestiad of *Hero and Leander* includes a lengthy pro-matrimonial digression on the union of Hymen and Eucharis. Chapman draws on classical sources for his tale of a young man who, 'so sweet of face, / That many thought him of the female race' (5.93-4), cross-dresses to join a party of maidens to be close to the woman he loves.[98] The sources may be ancient, but Chapman's elaboration on Hymen's ephebic qualities – 'For only now his chin's first down consorted / His head's rich fleece, in golden curls contorted' (5.115-16) – have a familiar contemporary ring. As Gerald Snare observes, 'Hymen is Marlowe's Leander redone'.[99] This also makes him, in my view, Southampton redone. As with Weever's Faunus, identifying tags are newly required, and Chapman opts for an idealised variation on the 'beautiful boy' theme: Hymen is for the people of Athens such a template of beauty that 'even the chastest mind / He moved to join in joys of sacred kind' (5.113-14). The youth's pervasive allure signals a reprised Wriothesley-mania, where the besotted observers crucially now seek erotic fulfilment through *marriage*. The choice of narrative can be seen as doubly appropriate to Chapman's concept of an exemplary Southampton: Hymen begins as an androgyne but proves his manhood by

[96] Danner, p. 1.

[97] In the source for this passage, Theocritus's first *Idyll*, the victim of the foxes is male rather than female.

[98] See Gordon, p. 103, on the sources.

[99] Gerald Snare, *The Mystification of George Chapman* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), p. 60.

slaying a gang of brigands who capture the maidens. Chapman's lengthy paean on the 'sweet concord' (5.111) of Hymen's face is, I propose, another passage to give Shakespeare pause. Hero and Leander could, but for one pre-nuptial mistake, have been another Hymen and Eucharis. That Southampton and Vernon still could be is, perhaps, Chapman's message – assuming, of course, that the earl does the right thing and marries his mistress, providing the profitable example expected from 'persons full of note' (5.12).

We do not know when Chapman started to work on *Hero and Leander*; it could have been at any point after Marlowe's death, and the only thing we know for sure is that one passage post-dates Cadiz. But it may be that much if not all was composed in 1598 as part of a two-pronged bid for patronage on Chapman's part, his attempt to seize the main chance in times of political flux. He writes *Sestiads* for Southampton to set alongside *Iliads* for Essex.[100] If Essex is the new Achilles, Southampton is the new Leander, first of lovers, or even the new Hymen, god of marriage. What a prospect the two earls hold for the nation and (in his dreams!) the penurious Chapman. Not only would they support scholarship and inspire art, but they would also secure a favourable succession (in the figure of James VI of Scotland), increase martial glory, and boost social stability – particularly if they could be persuaded to repudiate libertinism and set a matrimonial example. Essex is worthy of *Achilles' Shield*; Southampton's portrait could, like Leander's, serve as a 'Persean shield' to vanquish the gorgons of philistinism and hypocrisy. Chapman politicizes Southampton's peerless beauty, I suggest, making it a force for social good. The inspiration drives him, as the Rival Poet sonnets acknowledge, to new poetic heights. This is Chapman's Cadiz, his bid to send a verse-fleet in 'proud full sail… bound for the prize' of Southampton's patronage.[101]

There is a difficulty for Chapman, of course. He would, presumably, prefer to present Southampton as less the tragicomic victim, more the victorious hero: hence his Hymen kills the brigands, just as Petowe's 'romance' Leander overthrows his enemy and Weever's Faunus slays the boar. Yet, to stay true to Musaeus, *Hero and Leander* must end in tragedy; not only that, if Chapman is to censure 'love's stol'n sports' (3.16), the moral must be pointed. Thus, despite Leander's belated commitment to Ceremony, the lovers' marriage provokes cosmic discord in the final Sestiad. The tragic denouement is, however, shot through less with condemnation than pity or even admiration. Having already all but excused Hero's free-thinking Marlovian sensuality, the poet emphasizes

[100] Briggs, 66, observes of the Homer that 'Chapman worked quickly early in 1598 to ride the Essex crest'. I suggest this momentum probably carried over into his Marlowe continuation in the spring of 1598.

[101] Chapman was, I believe, banking on the future, and indeed Southampton's support for the Stuart succession saw the earl handsomely rewarded in the Jacobean era.

her ‘love and virtues’ (6.87). He then *apologizes* to Leander for his fate in what I consider to be a direct, present-tense address to Southampton:

> O sweet Leander, thy large worth I hide
> In a short grave; ill-favoured storms must chide
> Thy sacred favour: I in floods of ink
> Must drown thy graces (6.137-40).

The lovers are victims of ‘the cruel Fates’ (6.178). At their death they are transformed, in a touching metamorphosis, to goldfinches, ‘sweet birds… Which we call thistle-warps’ (6.276-7), emblems of sorrow but also of beauty and truth. There is no outright didacticism; as John Huntingdon observes, ‘The ambivalences of Marlowe’s poem have infiltrated Chapman’s’.[102] Most significantly, the poem concludes: ‘And this true honor from their love-deaths sprung, / They were the first that ever poet sung.’ This hardly sounds like censure, especially when it comes from a proselytizer for poetry. The legend of Hero and Leander is, for Chapman, a fountainhead of art, and in his amplification the ‘sacred favour’ of Leander – the countenance of *his* Rival Poet’s ‘all-too-precious’ patron – is exalted as a cultural icon.

Conclusion

The case I have made is intricate, but *Hero and Leander* provides a central thread, with Marlowe’s playful portrait of Southampton being put to allegorical use by Petowe and Chapman. Chapman’s focus on the earl’s transfigurative beauty then triggers the Rival Poet sonnets. The latter have long been understood as a complex blend of apologia and *mea culpa*, with the Player-Poet under fire from the Young Man for his silence. What has never emerged, I contend, is their political undersong. In the prior argument I envisage, Southampton complains (probably in late 1598 or early 1599) that Shakespeare offers no overt epideictic allegiance, nothing to match the encomium produced by a rival writing ‘Above a mortal pitch’ (S86). Southampton was clearly ‘fond on praise’ (S84) but this was not, I suggest, a simple matter of personal vanity; his androgynous beauty and fashion had created a buzz in the early 1590s but events a few years later saw him become, alongside Essex, an important social and political figurehead. Essex was the polestar for military and political aspirations, but Southampton came to the fore in other respects, most notably – as my discussions of Chapman, Petowe and Weever suggest – in highly

[102] John Huntington, ‘Condemnation and Pity in Chapman’s *Hero and Leander*’, *ELR* 7 (1977), pp. 307-323 (308).

politicized, intergenerational battles over love and liberty, as the ageing queen and her (largely) gerontocratic advisors struggled to exert moral authority at court.[103] These were dangerous times in which a clandestine aristocratic marriage could be framed as a near-treasonable offence.[104] Essex went to the block after the 1601 rising; Southampton narrowly avoided the same fate. Among those executed was Henry Cuffe, Essex's forthright scholarly advocate. The altogether more cautious Shakespeare seems to have waited, notably, for the passing of the queen in 1603 before penning his most partisan sonnet, 107, celebrating Southampton's release from the tower and the dawn of a new era.

But was Shakespeare entirely silent as Southampton gambled with ever higher stakes? No new epyllion was forthcoming, but what of his drama? This is not the place for a detailed consideration of how the estrangement of poet and patron – so movingly captured in the 'farewell' sonnet (87) that immediately follows the Rival Poet sequence – affected Shakespeare as a playwright. Various ensuing works (*Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *As You Like It*, *Hamlet*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *All's Well That Ends Well*) have been linked to Essex or Southampton or both. I will draw to a close by addressing a small but pertinent moment in *Henry V*. James Bednarz has outlined the ways in which 'from around 1597 to 1599, the history plays of Shakespeare's second tetralogy… became topically charged in a manner that delighted Essex and Southampton'.[105] Their delight was largely over how Lord Cobham, one of Essex's chief political enemies, became identified with Falstaff. *Henry V*, first performed in the summer of 1599, contains a famous reference – well-wishing, if somewhat equivocal – to Essex on the Ireland campaign (5.0.29-34). I believe that the play also contains a more coded allusion to Southampton. When the Dauphin sends a provocative gift of tennis balls, a seething Henry responds with a string of tennis-as-war analogies before acknowledging the gift as a slur on his former character:

> Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler
> That all the courts of France will be disturbed
> With chaces. And we understand him well,
> How he comes o'er us with our wilder days,

[103] See Hammer (2000), pp. 92-4 on the intergenerational tensions.

[104] In December 1598, coinciding with Southampton's imprisonment for marrying Elizabeth Vernon, another prisoner, Sir Walter Leveson, appealed to Essex for help, claiming that his marriage to Elizabeth's sister, Susan Vernon, had likewise provoked factional reprisals; Leveson's financial and familial dealings were very murky, and his hold on reality has been questioned, but his appeal reinforces the idea that marital alliance with Essex's family might have been seen as a political provocation.

[105] James Bednarz, *Shakespeare and the Truth of Love: The Mystery of 'The Phoenix and the Turtle'* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.50-1.

> Not measuring what use we made of them.
> We never valued this poor seat of England,
> And therefore, living hence, did give ourself
> To barbarous licence, as 'tis ever common
> That men are merriest when they are from home.
> (1.2.269-73)

The tennis-ball gift and Henry's anger are detailed in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, but the suggestion that a seemingly unpatriotic prince enjoyed a profligate life *abroad* fits neither the historical record nor Shakespeare's history cycle thus far.[106] Shakespeare, I propose, is thinking of the notorious wagers made by Southampton in Paris just a few months earlier. The earl's huge losses as a 'wrangler' at tennis were the subject of gossip in England; one of Robert Cecil's spies reported that he had become a laughing-stock at the French court and was close to ruin.[107] But just as Henry rises above his impetuous youth to disturb 'all the courts of France', Southampton will also, by implication, come good one day, proving the mockers wrong. I do not argue that Henry is modelled on Southampton per se, only that Shakespeare seizes opportunistically on the tennis-ball anecdote. The passage stands as a subtle acknowledgement of support from a Player-Poet looking, after the Rival Poet disjuncture, to re-establish himself as the Young Man's most loyal and loving advocate.

Small though this moment is, it may be indicative of something momentous in the life of Shakespeare. If Southampton is the Young Man he describes as 'A god in love, to whom I am confined' (S110) – and many remain open to this idea, despite the anti-biographical turn – and if the Rival Poet sonnets do indeed belong to 1598-1600, we should certainly address the turbulent contexts of those years when considering why the poet's silence was counted such a 'sin'. James Shapiro has surmised that Shakespeare was so prolific in 1599 (the year in which the Chamberlain's Men transferred to the Globe) that he can have had no time for romantic love: 'If Shakespeare was in love in 1599, it was with words'.[108] This may be so, but it seems to me that a tongue-tied-by-authority crisis of *love* – however we choose to define love within so singular a patron-client relationship – could well have prompted the Rival Poet sonnets and fed into the linguistic profusion of the plays that followed. There is more to say on this, but for now I leave readers to consider whether

[106] Some scholars argue that 'living hence' refers to abandoning the court in favour of Eastcheap, which makes sense but does not negate the connotation of being away from England – indeed, the need to gloss the passage reinforces this as the primary, immediate connotation.

[107] See Rickman, p. 42n67.

[108] James Shapiro, *1599: A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Faber, 2005), p. xxiii.

such a crisis was provoked when George Chapman, following Marlowe's suit, expatiated for reasons both personal and political on the miraculous beauty of Shakespeare's muse.