

# Detobel's Collected Essays

## PART III – CHAPTER III - THE DEDICATION OF *STRANGE NEWS*

By Robert Detobel – copyright 2009

Early in 1593 Thomas Nashe publishes *Strange News* in reply to Gabriel Harvey's *Four Letters*. Anthony Burgess's dictum about *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit*<sup>1</sup> that the text "needs slow digestion" is partly also true for *Strange News*, especially the dedication, but whereas the former text, being about Shakespeare, has induced more overheated speculation than "slow digestion", the latter, apparently not being about Shakespeare, only about Thomas Nashe and some unidentifiable person nicknamed "Apis lapis" or "Maister William Beeston", has been the object of more sober examination. To begin with, we have McKerrow's landmark edition of Nashe's complete works (1904-1910) supplemented by F.P. Wilson in 1958. Then, we have Charles Nicholl's excellent study<sup>2</sup>, and numerous articles. Nevertheless, all of them leave us in the lurch with respect to the crucial question, the identity of Apis lapis. McKerrow notes:

"This evidently conceals the name 'Beeston', and from l. 7 we learn that the person's Christian name was William, but the only William Beeston known seems to be an actor who was alive as late as 1652 [authors' note: in fact as late as **1682**] and who is therefore out of question... From ll. 21-2 it would appear that the dedicatee was already a man of ripe age."<sup>3</sup> Nicholl simply collates the elements from Nashe's dedication but has nothing noteworthy to add about the identity of Apis lapis, William Beeston, Will. Monox, or Lord Vaux of Lambeth, all mysterious names which occur in Nashe's *Strange News* and all of them presumably real persons.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Burgess, Anthony. *Shakespeare*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1970, p. 108; quoted from Carroll, D.C., 1994, p. 131.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholl, Charles. *A Cup of News: the Life of Thomas Nashe*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Nashe, *Complete Works*, IV.154.

<sup>4</sup> Nicholl, *Cup of News*, p. 44-5.

Another author observes that Apis lapis must have taken issue with a passage in Nashe's dedication which was cancelled from the second edition, but fails to examine this passage.<sup>5</sup> It seems as if any interest in the identity of an Elizabethan literary life soon slackens when Shakespeare does not seem to be involved. Yet, at the end of the previous chapter we have identified Apis lapis as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, according to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the leading candidate for the authorship of the Shakespearean canon next to Shakspeare himself. This identification rests upon an alternative interpretation of the nonce pseudonym "Apis lapis" and Gabriel Harvey's confirmation of it by using the name Apis lapis in one place and Phull Bullochus, "full ox", in another. As seen, Harvey speaks in one context of five authors: Marlowe, Greene, Chettle, Nashe, and the mysterious Apis lapis; in the other context, speaking of authors still alive, which in September 1593 excludes Greene and Marlowe, he nicknames Chettle 'Lob-assar-duck,' Nashe 'Phul Assar,' and the mysterious man not Apis lapis, but 'Phul Bullochus.' The latter is the founding father of a "literary dynasty", Nashe's "father". It is difficult to conceive of of Shakspeare of Stratford, born in 1564, as the spiritual father of Thomas Nashe, born in 1567. It is nearly as difficult to visualize the 28-year-old William Shakspeare as William Beeston, being, as McKerrow notes, probably "a man of ripe age", which would set the mark from forty years upward. In 1592 the Earl of Oxford was 42 years old.

Nevertheless, it cannot completely be ruled out that Harvey meant two different persons by "Phull Bullochus" and "Apis lapis". Besides, it is also noteworthy that the first syllable of "Bee-stone" builds a link to the "honeycomb" or "honey-cutter", that is, Melicertus, the name given by Robert Greene to a concealed poet, taken over by Chettle for an unidentified court-poet about 1585 and, identifiably, for Shakespeare in 1603. But neither this Melicertus of 1585 nor the 'William Beeston' of 1592 has ever been identified. What can be confidently stated at this stage is that Apis lapis, alias M. William Beeston, is not

---

<sup>5</sup> Hilliard, Stephen S. *The singularity of Thomas Nashe*. Lincoln: Univ. Of Nebraska Press. 1986, p. 189.

Shakspere of Stratford. Despite all this, Penny McCarthy has recently claimed that *Apis lapis*, gentle Master William, is none other than William Shakspere of Stratford.<sup>6</sup>

***1. Apis lapis, William Beeston, gentle M. William.***

Nashe's dedication opens:

To the most copious carminist  
of our time, and famous persecutor of *Priscian*, his  
very friend, Master *Apis lapis*: *Thomas Nashe* wish-  
*eth new strings to his old tawny purse, and*  
*all honourable increase of acquaint-*  
*tance in the cellar.*

“*Gentle M. William, that learned writer, Rhenish wine & sugar, in the first book of his comment upon Red-noses, hath this saying, veterem ferendo iniuriam inuitas nouam, which is as much in English as, one cup of nippitate pulls on another. In moist consideration whereof, as also in zealous regard of that high countenance you show unto scholars, I am bold, instead of new wine, to carouse to you a cup of news, which, if your Worship (according to your wonted Chaucerism) shall accept in good part, I'll be your daily orator to pray that that pure sanguine complexion of yours may never be famished with pot-luck, that you may taste till your last gasp, and live to see the confusion of both your special enemies, small beer and grammar rules.*”

But what are we to make of “Gentle M. William, that learned writer Rhenish Wine & Sugar, in the first book of his Comment upon Red Noses”? McKerrow notes: “ I do not know whether anything is meant by this ‘learned writer’.”<sup>7</sup> Penny McCarthy, however, believes that

---

<sup>6</sup> McCarthy, Penny. “Some *quises* and *quems*: Shakespeare’s true debt to Nashe”, *Shakespeare Yearbook 2004*, Mellen Press, Lewiston, NY, pp. 175-192.

<sup>7</sup> Nashe, IV.154.

Nashe is referring to Falstaff's comments upon Bardolph's red nose in the first part of *Henry IV*, a play which according to orthodox chronology Shakespeare had still to write (1597/98):

“And what a sentence! The combination of ‘Rhenish wine & Sugar,’ ‘first book’ and ‘red noses’ is highly evocative of *Henry IV*, part 1 (i.e. first book), in which Sir John Sack and Sugar (Falstaff) comments on Bardolph's red nose. I suggest the syntactical false alley is deliberate: we are meant to hear M. William as addressee. But even disallowing that supposition, the notion that Apis lapis is Shakespeare becomes more plausible within a page of text.”<sup>8</sup>

From a rigid empirical position, this identification would have to be rejected. Falstaff is called “Jack Sack and Sugar” in *1 Henry IV* (I.ii.110), a scene from which Bardolph is absent, and Falstaff's comments in III.iii (ll. 1-49) are not only on Bardolph's red nose but, more generally, about his red face. But Nashe's text, veering between earnestness and jest, fact and encryption, is moving below the radar of strict empiricism. Sack and Rhenish wine being white wines, “William Rhenish Wine and Sugar” may be considered as a variant of “John Sack and Sugar”. Then, the contempt for “small beer”, a phrase also twice used by Prince Hal (II.ii.6 and 11), is evocative of Falstaff's creed in *2 Henry IV*, IV.iii.121-4: “If I had a thousand sons, the first human principle I would teach them should be to forswear thin potations, and to addict themselves to sack.” Such allusions from Nashe to Shakespeare (as in the case of Ben Jonson's early comedies) are anathema to the orthodox chronology. But it is an indisputable fact that both Nashe and Ben Jonson do refer bitwise to existing plays and other works, mainly to Shakespearean plays.

Nashe alludes to *Titus Andronicus* in *The Unfortunate Traveller* in 1594 and to *Romeo and Juliet* in *Have With You to Saffron Walden* in 1596, Ben Jonson to *Romeo and*

---

<sup>8</sup> McCarthy, pp. 186-7.

*Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* in *Poetaster* in 1601.<sup>9</sup> No problem exists for the orthodox chronology in these cases, as the publication and/or orthodox dating of these plays precede the Nashian and Jonsonian bits; but in several instances the very same kind of allusions precede the orthodox dates by many years. Thus our only option (if we insist on the orthodox dating scheme) is to chart the influence from the other direction, viewing Shakespeare as a cutter and paster of other writers' bits, gathering them together like a squirrel its nuts — truly a nutty idea of his creativity.

## 2. Correspondences between Nashe and Shakespeare

Parallels between Nashe and Shakespeare, especially the two *Henry IV* plays, have been the subject of various essays and notes. As in the majority of cases such parallels precede the dates of the orthodox chronology, the borrower, if borrowing there really is, must be Shakespeare. G. Harold Metz gives a short survey of the hunt for correspondences between Nashe's and Shakespeare's vocabulary. "Critics who believe that Shakespeare is the borrower place some reliance on similar possible borrowings from Nashe in other Shakespearean plays. York cites George C. Coffmann, who finds parallels in passages in *1 Henry IV* and *The Unfortunate Traveller* concerned with Pegasus and "estriches." Schrickx notes Dover Wilson's twenty parallels in his New Cambridge edition of the same play; his own *Shakespeare's Early Contemporaries* for a "further echo" from Nashe in *2 Henry IV*; Davenport's discovery of parallels in *Hamlet* from Nashe's *Pierce Penniless*; and Frank Bradbrook's possible Shakespearean borrowings from *Christ's Tears over Jerusalem* in

---

<sup>9</sup> In *Poetaster*, II.ii, the singer Hermogenes is urged on to sing and is at first reluctant; the passage (ll. 94-151) is a long drawn out imitation of a similar situation in *Much Ado About Nothing*, II.iii, where Balthasar is called upon to sing (ll.37-60); IV.x is an imitation of the balcony scene (II.ii) in *Romeo and Juliet*. The allusion to *Timon of Athens*, I.ii, in Jonson's *Poetaster*, II.ii, could not be clearer. The usual argument against such parallels that poets shared a common vocabulary and the direction of borrowing is often uncertain, however justified it might sometimes be, is wholly ineffectual here: Jonson adds that the quote is from a play. Jonson's play was written end 1601. The orthodox date for *Timon of Athens* is 1608!

*Antony and Cleopatra* and *The Tempest*.”<sup>10</sup> The strictest advocate of a unilateral axis of dependence from Nashe to Shakespeare is J.J.M. Tobin, who in a series of contributions, mostly to *Notes & Queries* between 1980 and 1992, finds Nashe’s influence on Shakespeare in nearly every play.

To vindicate the all-out validity of his thesis that Shakespeare systematically borrowed from Nashe’s works, Tobin has to recur to some ad hoc hypotheses. Particularly threatening to his thesis is *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, dated 1594, in which, according to Tobin, Shakespeare would have borrowed from Nashe’s *Have With You to Saffron Walden*, published late in 1596. Nashe can hardly have started writing *HWYSW* before finishing *The Unfortunate Traveller*, entered in the *Stationer’s Register* in September 1593 and published in 1594. Furthermore, Nashe’s pamphlet mentions the death of Anthony Chute, a minor author and literary foe of Nashe’s. Chute was still alive in May 1594. How could Shakespeare have borrowed in 1594 from a work which Nashe had probably not yet commenced? Tobin quickly dispenses with the chronological difficulty by postulating Shakespeare’s revision of the play after 1596.

Even if one is prepared to concede this ungainly makeshift, Tobin’s thesis, like so many other quests for verbal correspondences, suffers from overweight. Too many parallels are meaningless. Moreover, the underlying conception tends to substitute the zealous endeavours of the source-digger for the creative work of the author. One illustrative example is a passage in Nashe’s *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* from which, according to Tobin, Shakespeare would have borrowed three times in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* [emphases ours]:

“I should have believed, if, immediately upon the **nicke** of it, I had not seene him shrug his shoulders and talke of going to *Bathe*, and after, like a true Pandar (so much the fitter to be one of *Gabriel’s* Patrons), grew in commending to young gentlemen

---

<sup>10</sup> Metz, G.H. *Shakespeare’s Earliest Tragedy – Studies in Titus Andronicus*. London: Associated University Press. 1996, p. 251.

two or three of the most detested loathsome whores about *London* , for peereless beauous **paragons** & the pleasingest wenches in the world: whereby I guessed, his judgment might be infected as well as his body; & he that would not **sticke** so to extoll stale rotten lac'd mutton, will, like a true *Milanese* , suck figs out of an ass's fundament, or do anything."

The word "stick" occurs in *TGV*, I.i.101-2:

*Proteus*. Here's too small a pasture for such store of muttons.

*Speed*. If the ground be overcharg'd, you were best stick her.

The meaning is that if there is not enough pasture, the mutton should be "stabbed", "slaughtered". Shakespeare uses the word in the same sense in *As You Like It*, I.ii.242: "My father's rough and envious disposition/ Sticks me at heart" and in *Troilus and Cressida*, III.ii.195: "To stick the heart of falsehood."

This is not at all the sense in which Nashe uses it. In Nashe's phrase the meaning is "not hesitate" , as in Shakespeare elsewhere, for instance in *2 Henry IV*, I.ii.22, where Falstaff says of Prince Hal: "he will not stick to say his face is a face royal."

The same applies for the word "nick". Shakespeare uses it in IV.ii.69-73 in the sense of "notch"; "out of all nick" means "without in the least calculating", "unconditionally":

*Julia*. I would always have one play but one thing.

But, Host, doth this Sir Proteus, that we talk on,

Often resort unto this gentlewoman?

*Host*. I tell you what Launce, his man, told me: he lov'd her out of all nick.

In Nashe's use "nick" means "instantaneous". As can hardly be expected otherwise, both Nashe and Shakespeare use the word "paragon" with the same meaning:

*Proteus.* Enough; I read your fortune in your eye.

Was this the idol that you worship so?

*Valentine.* Even she; and is she not a heavenly saint?

*Proteus.* No; but she is an earthly paragon. (II.ii.138-142)

Shakespeare's use of the word arises out of the context, as does Nashe's use of "stick" and "nick". The idea of borrowing in either direction is meaningless. It seems possible, however, that in the case of 'paragon,' there was borrowing, but by Nashe from Shakespeare. It is not the word "paragon" by itself that nurses this suspicion, though, it is the occurrence in Nashe's passage of the phrase "lac'd mutton" together with "Milanese".

Shakespeare's play is about Proteus and Valentine, two Veronese gentlemen, travelling to the court of the emperor in Milan. The phrase "laced mutton" is part and parcel of a long punning bout on the different meanings of "mutton" between Proteus and his servant Speed in I.i.89-97:

*Proteus.* The sheep for fodder follow the shepherd; the shepherd for food follows not the sheep: thou for wages followest thy master; thy master for wages follows not thee. Therefore, thou art a sheep.

*Speed.* Such another proof will make me cry 'baa.'

*Proteus.* But dost thou hear? Gav'st thou my letter to Julia?

*Speed.* Ay, sir; I, a lost mutton, gave your letter to her, a lac'd mutton; and she, a lac'd mutton, gave me, a lost mutton, nothing for my labour.

It is out-of-the-way to suppose that Shakespeare would have revised the whole passage after having read the phrase “lac’d mutton” in Nashe’s pamphlet. On the contrary, it is not improbable that Nashe would have had Shakespeare’s play in mind and that this engendered the subsequent association with Milan. Without the reference to the play, Nashe’s phrase about the “Milanese” looks out of joint with the the expression “lac’d mutton”. Because this example argues the opposite direction of borrowing, Tobin prefers to omit the only example in the passage which might suggest an actual influence.

Notwithstanding the fact that Tobin’s hunting for parallels between Nashe and Shakespeare overshoots the mark, a certain number of cases he submits are not so easy to dismiss. But here, too, the coherence of Nashe’s text is a derivative from the *ensemble* within which they occur in Shakespeare’s plays, some of which he would still have had to write if the orthodox chronology were reliable, which as a consequence, in some cases baffles any meaningful notion of creativity.

McCarthy demonstrates how outlandish such assumptions to save the orthodox dates are. One of her examples is particularly illustrative. Nashe describes Harvey’s voluminous pamphlet *Pierce’s Supererogation* in terms reminiscent of Falstaff’s vocabulary as “... an unconscionable vast gorbellied volume... far more boisterous and cumbersome than a pair of Swissers omnipotent galeaze breeches... You may believe me if you will, I was fain to lift my chamber door off the hinges, only to let it in, it was so fulsome a fat *Bonarobe* and terrible *Rouncevall*. Once I thought to have called in a cooper... and bid him hoop it about like the tree at *Gray’s Inn* gate...”<sup>11</sup>

“The parallels in Shakespeare are manifest”, McCarthy notes. In *1Henry IV*, I.ii, Falstaff uses the phrase “omnipotent villain” (l. 106), Poins speaks of Falstaff’s

---

<sup>11</sup> Nashe, III.35.6.

"incomprehensible lies" (I. 181), Falstaff describes himself as "corpulent" (II.iv.416), addresses some travellers as "gorbellied knaves" (II.ii.84) and in *2 Henry IV* Justice Shallow remembers his youth at the Inns of Court when he knew where to find the bonarobes (III.ii.23) and fought with one Samson Stockfish behind Gray's Inn (III.ii.31-2).<sup>12</sup> But she rejects James M. Tobin's thesis that Shakespeare created the Fat Knight on the outlines of Nashe's description of a bulky pamphlet.<sup>13</sup>

### ***3. The old and the lusty lad of the castle***

When in *1 Henry IV*, I.ii.41, Prince Hal addresses Falstaff as "my old lad of the castle," he is punning on Falstaff's former name Sir John Oldcastle. Orthodox chronology ignores that the same allusion is made by Harvey in September 1592. In his *Four Letters* he utters his contempt about the "rapping bable of some old lads of the castle."<sup>14</sup> One year later, in his *New Letter of Notable Contents* he levels at "the long tongues of the Steelyard."<sup>15</sup> He surely aims at the same literary duo, Nashe and his fellow-author Apis lapis, possibly also at John Lyly.

The Steelyard was a place on the north bank of the Thames inhabited by German merchants and associated with Rhenish wine in Thomas Dekker's *Westward Ho!* and Barnaby Barnes' *The Devil's Charter*. The Steelyard is mentioned as "one of the four houses in London that do sell Rhenish wine."<sup>16</sup> The German Hanse merchants had been granted the right to delegate an alderman, who was a citizen of London, into the London Council. In his dedication to Apis lapis, Nashe jokes that Apis lapis will "be called shortly upon to be the Alderman of the Steelyard,"<sup>17</sup> which suggests that Nashe and Apis lapis were regular

---

<sup>12</sup> McCarthy, p. 180.

<sup>13</sup> Tobin, J.J.M. "Texture as Well as Structure: More Sources for Riverside Shakespeare" in Thomas Moisan and Douglas Bruster, eds. *In the Company of Shakespeare: Essays on English Renaissance Literature in Honor of G. Blakemore Evans*. London: Associated University Presses, 2002, p.102.

<sup>14</sup> I.225.

<sup>15</sup> I.283.

<sup>16</sup> Mc Kerrow's annotation in Nashe, IV.132.

<sup>17</sup> Nashe, I.256.

consumers of Rhenish wine there. So, Harvey's "long tongues of the Steelyard" include *Apis lapis*, alias "William Rhenish Wine and Sugar". In using the expression "old lads of the castle", however, Harvey more specifically refers to scene I.ii in *1 Henry IV* in which both phrases "old lad of the castle" and "John Sack and Sugar" occur.

Another reference by Harvey to the play seems probable. Harvey entreats Nashe "to keep the huge main shot of his rattling babies for buckram giants."<sup>18</sup> Eight instances of "buckram" are found in Shakespeare, seven of them in one single scene (II.iv) of *1 Henry IV*, where Falstaff reports his fight with the two "buckram rogues", who in the course of his tale increase their number successively to four, seven, nine and eleven. By urging Nashe to reserve his railing for buckram giants, Harvey hints at the Falstaffian character of that railing and, besides, expresses in other words the advice given in the letter *Greene's Groatsworth of Wit* to "young Juvenal" not "to inveigh against vain men."

#### **4. *Old and young Apuleius***

Occasionally Nashe's prose comes fairly close to Falstaff's satirical comments, both in style and content. In the play *Will Summer's Last Will and Testament*, published in 1600 but written in 1592/3, the Roman god Bacchus, mythological inventor of the wine (his Greek name *Dionysos* means 'god of wine') reproves the personified Summer in the following terms:

"Never cup of *Nipitaty* [strong ale] in London come near thy niggardly habitation. I beseech the gods of good fellowship, thou may'st fall into a consumption with drinking small beer. Every day may'st thou eat fish, and let it stick in the mid'st of thy maw, for want of a cup of wine to swim away in... And to conclude, pine away in melancholy and sorrow, before thou hast the fourth part of a dram of my juice to cheer up thy

---

<sup>18</sup> Harvey, I.205.

spirits.”<sup>19</sup>

Compare this with Falstaff’s soliloquy in defiance of the Duke of Lancaster’s chill rebuttal of his request to speak in his favour at Court (IV.iii.84-91):

“I would you had but the wit; 'twere better than your dukedom. Good faith, this same young sober-blooded boy doth not love me; nor a man cannot make him laugh- but that's no marvel; he drinks no wine. There's never none of these demure boys come to any proof; for thin drink doth so over-cool their blood, and making many fish-meals, that they fall into a kind of male green-sickness; and then, when they marry, they get wenches.”

But who emulates whom? In one of the more elegant allegories, of which he was sometimes able, suggesting how excellent an author he could have been had he freed himself from the pressure of overcompensating for his low origin (which often caused his powers of introspection to extrovert and evaporate into the very thin air of grandiloquence), Gabriel Harvey gives us the answer: it is the “**lust**y lad of the castle” who emulates the “**old lad** of the castle”(emphases ours).

In a long invective in *Pierce’s Supererogation* he calls Nashe “young Apuleius”. If there was a “young Apuleius”, there must have been and “old Apuleius”. Harvey certainly does not mean the second-century author of the *Metamorphoses*, better known as *The Golden Ass*, but “the old father, that begat., and ... the sweet Muses, that suckled and fostered young Apuleius.”<sup>20</sup> We have met “Nashe’s father” before. Phull-Assar, Full-Ass, Nashe was, Harvey writes, the son of the famous Phull Bullochus, Full-Ox; we have met the “old ass” as the godfather of so many authors. “Old Apuleius” is most likely the selfsame person, that is, the

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, III.268.

<sup>20</sup> Harvey, II.40.

“old ass”. Harvey confirms it a few pages later, when he delineates the distinction between “young Apuleius” and “old Apuleius”: “But the old ass was an infant in wit and a grammar scholar in Art: ... Unico Aretino will scourge Princes: and here is a lusty lad of the castle, that will bind bears, and ride golden asses to death.”<sup>21</sup> “Unico Aretino”, as seen, is Nashe; the “lusty lad of the castle” is also Nashe. Nashe had tried to “bind bears” in his fable in *Pierce Penniless*, that is, to bind bears to the stake, put them in the pillory, exposing him, in that he undertakes “to describe the right nature of a bloodthirsty tyrant”<sup>22</sup> There is no mystery in this exchange between Harvey and Nashe. It all revolves around the “old ass”, “old Apuleius”, though the latter epithet is not used by Harvey.

But how should we understand the phrase that Nashe, the “lusty lad of the castle,” will ride “golden asses to death?” It seems as if the “golden ass” of 1593 would be the same as the one to whom Harvey vaguely alludes in 1577 in his Latin essay *Rhetor*.

“For as I look around at everyone here, I nowhere spot that "ass with a lyre," born for the stables and not the schools. Forgive me, if I declare that I do see some Apuleiuses--but why do I say some?--rather I see one such, or even perhaps a second (I dare not add still another), who is delighted by his own peculiar style of speaking, a style I am not suggesting is asinine, but rather insufficiently Ciceronian. I name no names; I anticipate a metamorphosis. Not a change from asses into men, but from Apuleiuses into Ciceros.”<sup>23</sup>

Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, written in the second century A.D., is a satirical romance about a young man Lucius transformed into an ass by the charms of an earthly Venus, called Fotis. Though outwardly an ass, Lucius conserves his human intellectual faculties. The

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>22</sup> Nashe, I.321.

<sup>23</sup> *Gabriel Harvey's Rhetor*. Translated from Latin and edited by Mark Reynolds. <http://comp.uark.edu/~mreynold/rhetor.html>. 2001, p. 12

romance ends with Lucius recovering his human shape by eating the roses the goddess Isis reaches him. Nowhere in the tale is there any question of a “golden” ass. The alternate and better-known title *The Golden Ass* is most likely based on a note by Apuleius’ countryman Saint Augustine some three centuries later: “sicut Apuleius in libris quos ‘Asini Aurei’ titulo inscripsit...”<sup>24</sup> The epithet “golden” does not relate to any tribulation suffered by the hero of the novel but to the literary quality of the novel. One of the meanings of the latin “aureus” is “of great excellency and beauty.”<sup>25</sup> The alternate title “Golden Ass” is to be understood as a tribute to the outstanding literary quality of the work. Hence, Harvey does not use the epithet “golden ass” in a pejorative sense but as a synonym of literary excellence. In *Four Letters* he notes: “Even Lucian’s true tales are spiced with conceit: and neither his nor Apuleius’s ass is altogether an ass. It is a piece of cunning in the most fabulous legends...”<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, Harvey, the rhetorician, places rhetoric above poetry in general and lyrics in particular. To him the Apuleian style is “insufficiently Ciceronian”, contrary to Sir Philip Sidney, who in his *Apology for Poetry* puts poetry on the throne of rhetoric, which he demonstrates by Menenius Agrippa’s famous tale of the belly and the body and Nathan’s parable of the rich man who sacrifices the poor’s man sole sheep (2 Samuel, 12), whence Sidney concludes that “the Poet doth draw the mind more effectually than any other art doth...”<sup>27</sup>

It would be interesting to know who the one poet is that Harvey recognizes in 1577 as the unique or nearly unique Apuleius. If he is the same “golden ass” Harvey in 1593 says Nashe “will ride to death”, then this “Apuleius” of 1577 is the golden ass that in 1593 has become the “old ass”.

---

<sup>24</sup> *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Vol. 2. Edited by Georg Wissowa. Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlerscher Verlag. 1896, p. 250.

<sup>25</sup> *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, At the Clarendon Press, 1968,

<sup>26</sup> Harvey, I.200. Lucian is the satirist Lucian of Samosata, a contemporary of Apuleius, to whom, most probably incorrectly, is ascribed a work *Lucios or the Ass*, a similar story in which the hero is called Lucius of Patriae. It is by no means certain that the name Lucius of Patriae is the name of the author of this other novel about a man transformed into an ass.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, Gregory. *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, I.174-5.

In 1577 the only point of reference<sup>28</sup> seems to be the three Apuleius sonnets among the “Divers excellent Devises by Sundry Gentlemen” in the original edition of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*.<sup>29</sup> Twenty-two-year-old Edward de Vere is certainly one plausible candidate for the authorship of these three sonnets. A line in Harvey’s satire “Speculum Tuscanismi” in 1580 adds some more weight to the hypothesis that it was Oxford to whom Harvey referred as Apuleius in his *Rhetor* in 1577. In this satirical poem Harvey characterizes Oxford as: “Eyed, like to *Argus*, Eared, like to *Midas*, Nosed, like to *Naso*.” The reference to the Phrygian king Midas assembles the two elements of “golden ass”.

One story about Midas relates that all that he touched was changed into gold, another story that he was given asses' ears by Apollo for having decided a musical contest between Apollo and Pan in favour of the latter. It should again be stressed that the epithet “golden ass” was, in fact, an epithet for poetical excellency. As early as 1577, certainly in his *Gratulationes Valdinensis* in 1578, again in “Speculum Tuscanismi” in 1580 and in *Pierce’s Supererogation – A New Praise of the Old Ass*, the pedantic scholar Gabriel Harvey acknowledged Oxford’s great poetical talent. Indeed, he whose name had almost become a by-word for pedantism among his contemporaries was in this respect less pedantic than some scholars today. And what of Harvey’s characterization of Oxford as “nosed like to Naso”, that is, Publius Naso Ovidius, whose soul, Meres was to write in 1598, lived on in “mellifluous & honey-tongued Shakespeare?” It is easy to downplay Harvey’s comparison as a mockery, it is as easy to refute this belittling interpretation. Harvey's reproach of Oxford in “Speculum Tuscanismi” was not that his poetry lacked quality, on the contrary, in 1580 and repeatedly in 1592/3 he acknowledges its excellence. But he rejects the subject of Oxford’s poetry as not sufficiently “valorous” or “heroical”. Moreover, in 1592/3 he accuses him, Lyly, Greene and Nashe of taking too many liberties. But for a similar reason Harvey could not

---

<sup>28</sup> We are indebted to Kurt Kreiler for having drawn our attention to this.

<sup>29</sup> *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres – From the Original Edition of 1573*. Edited by Ruth Loyd Miller. Jennings, LA: Kennikat Press Corporation, 1975, pp. 184-6.

accept Ovid as a model of poetry: “better an hundred Ovids were banished than the state of Augustus endangered, or a sovereign empire infected.”<sup>30</sup>

The sense of Harvey’s ‘prophecy’ seems to be that Nashe, the “lusty lad of the castle,” will exceed the Falstaffian railing of the “old golden ass” to the point of making his model look pale in comparison, of “riding the golden ass to death”, possibly with an additional malicious hint of Oxford’s decayed estate, to which he palpably alludes in his *Four Letters*, when he counsels Nashe to “enchant some magnificent Mæcenas”<sup>31</sup> and warn him of the fate of the poet-soldier Thomas Churchyard:

“I would think the Counter [the prison for debtors], M. *Churchyard*, his hostess *Penia* and such other sensible lessons, might sufficiently have taught him that Penniless is not lawless: and that a poet’s or painter’s licence is a poor security to privilege debt or defamation.”<sup>32</sup> In 1592, Thomas Churchyard had been compelled to seek sanctuary against arrest for debt, because Oxford was not able to keep his promise to pay Churchyard’s rent to his hostess Julia Penn.<sup>33</sup>

### ***5. How the impossibility of linking Shakespeare to Apis lapis is “overcome”.***

Though not all of McCarthy’s parallels may be equally convincing, some of them suffice to fully justify her refutation of Tobin’s representation of Shakespeare as the borrower. “To Tobin’s principle of core magnets, then, I oppose the principle of the second law of thermodynamics. How unlikely it is that from the chaos of Nashe’s remarks there should emerge the solid figure of Falstaff!”<sup>34</sup> She therefore claims that Apis lapis, Gentle Master William Beeston, and Shakespeare are identical. But her attempt to link the latter (as William of Stratford) with the former is vitiated from the very beginning and swerves out of rail to end

---

<sup>30</sup> Harvey, I.192.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, I.197.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, I.199.

<sup>33</sup> Moore Smith, G.C., “Taking Lodgings in 1591” in *RES*, Vol. VIII, 1932, pp. 447-450.

<sup>34</sup> McCarthy, p. 181.

up as an amorphous heap of bizarre associations. She thus supplies her own verification of the second law of thermodynamics, which states that the decrease of entropy or disorder in one particular system will always be exceeded by an increase in the whole of the surrounding systems. McCarthy's elimination of entropy in Tobin's system is more than compensated by the entropy she herself generates by the attempt to link up Apis lapis with Shakspere. Her attempt is based on Gabriel Harvey's sneer that Nashe has "robbed William the Conqueror of his surname, and in the very first page of his Strange News chopped off the head of four Letters at a blow."<sup>35</sup> :

"Here is an attempt at an answer: Nashe left off the first "L" of "Lapis Lapis," so that this William became apparently "Bee stone," not "Stone stone" or "Stones." And what might "Stones" imply? Nashe took as his scriptural text for his oddly off-key sermonizing *Christs Tears Over Jerusalem* (1593/4) a verse from Matthew's gospel: "Stones gather desolation." Shakespeare's tomb-stone in Stratford Church has the inscription "Bleste be ye man that spares these stones." These puzzles may find their secret rationale in a nick-name. As for "William the Conqueror," everyone knows the anecdote in John Manningham's diary about Richard Burbage's thwarted assignation with a woman, and the message that gave the identity of his rival Shakespeare: "William the Conqueror came before Richard."<sup>36</sup>

To McCarthy's attempt, partially based on the third line of the quatrain on Shakspere's tomb, we may oppose the first line of that quatrain: "Good frend for Iesus sake forbear!" But by "four letters" Harvey means his own pamphlet published in the form of four letters, not "four characters". A secret nickname is postulated and reference is made to a story which scholars have discarded as a "myth". Further, it is possible to understand "Conqueror"

---

<sup>35</sup> Harvey, II.49.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-8.

as but another way of expressing Nashe's "supererogation", his "overbearing" according to Harvey, as an alternative for other warrior-like metaphors, in which Harvey delights, such as "Hercules", "King Phul Assur", "doughty warrior", and so on. If "William the Conqueror" is Gentle M. William, than he is rather Harvey's "old and golden ass", Nashe's fellow-author.

McCarthy's criterion against Tobin's having Shakespeare scour Nashe for suitable morsels, sometimes fetching a phrase from Nashe's manuscript at deadline, can be turned against her own assimilation of Apis lapis to William Shakspere of Stratford: "I also propose a new axiom: *the lectio facietior* or "wittier reading". An analogue to the well-established critical principle of *lectio difficilior*",<sup>37</sup> a more difficult reading. But: how could Nashe have foreseen in 1592 the doggerel quatrain on Shakspere's tomb in 1616? Like a rolling stone of associations from atop the mountain of revelation, she has no eye for the surrounding landscape, the information contained in Nashe's dedication. What does it mean that Apis lapis kept three maids or daughters in his house? Shakspere of Stratford had only two. Why would Shakspere and Gabriel Harvey have been set off as antagonists, as suggested by the matching of the three sons of John Harvey, the "honest man of Saffron-Walden", with the **three** daughters of Apis lapis? Was Shakespeare a generous patron of scholars and poets, as Nashe states? And above all, why was this passage cancelled in the dedication of the second edition?

Obviously, Apis lapis/William Beeston was not so well pleased with Nashe's pert allusions. He must have felt publicly exposed; if he had not feared recognition, there would have been no need for the ensuing cancellation and apology. Nashe's visor was judged too transparent to contemporaries. Should it be too opaque to us? And again the question: why would Shakspere of Stratford have needed a visor? Why he and not Nashe or Harvey? Was it because he was, in the words of Harvey, one of the "honorabler sons of the Muses"?<sup>38</sup> Was gentle Master William of gentle birth? A member of the gentry? Nashe is not at all parsimonious with clues that indeed he was.

---

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>38</sup> Harvey, p. 219.

## 6. *Liberality and hospitality*

Gentle M. William has been “such an infinite Mæcenas to learned men, that almost every man has “tasted of the cool streams of his liberality”, even “sumners”, and Nashe could also witness to his “hospitality” but that is recorded in the “Archdeacons’s court”. The words “hospitality” and “liberality” are absent from the second dedication; as are the words “sumner” and “Archdeacon’s court”. Scholars have failed to pinpoint these cancellations, which lead us in but few removes to the man. In the sixteenth century they were, indeed, reliable identifiers, first, generally, of M. William Beeston’s social rank, then, particularly, of his being [an] exceptionally liberal and 'hospital' [person, of ]himself.

The pairs “liberality/hospitality” and “sumner/Archdeacons’s court” tie up the second and third paragraph and need to be analyzed jointly. Unlike today, the words were not just adjectives applicable to any member of society: in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries they were hallmarks of the aristocracy. The mere use of these words by Nashe should have induced scholars to do what they never did: to look first for Master William Beeston, gentle M. William, among the nobility.

Aristocratic society was based on honor and reputation. “A by-product of this cult of reputation was an insistence upon the aristocratic virtue of generosity... The prime test of rank was liberality, the pagan virtue of open-handedness... Memorial inscriptions upon tombs are reliable evidence of aspirations, if not of achievements, and they are almost unanimous in their harping upon the open-handedness of the deceased, both in entertainment of equals and in charitable gifts to inferiors... John Dutton of Sherborne, Glos., who survived the Restoration, was ‘noted for his great hospitallitye’. Sir Henry Poole of Sapperton, Glos., did not hesitate to boast that he was ‘much given to Hospitallity’...”<sup>39</sup> However, rather than a by-product, as Stone terms it, liberality and hospitality were constitutive elements of the

---

<sup>39</sup> Stone, Lawrence. *Crisis...* pp.42-3.

aristocratic ideology; rather than a cult, it was a culture by which the aristocracy marked itself off from the other social classes, especially from the merchants. As seen in Part I, chapter I, merchants were considered to be acquisitive and profit-oriented, guided by their own selfish interest, not liberal- and hospitality-minded, not, like the aristocracy, heedful of the overall interest of the commonwealth. Though like all ideologies this aristocratic attitude ought to be taken with a pinch of salt – the court aristocracy and the gentry too looked to their own interests but their main channels were royal grants and landed property – it was not dead letter either. It was sufficiently put into practice to shape social perception.

In France an anonymous citizen put it pithily: “Le marchand acquère, l’officier conserve, le noble dissipe.” [“The merchant acquires, the officer keeps, the nobleman spends.”]<sup>40</sup> In his report of the three Frobisher expeditions 1576-1578 captain George Best complains of the merchants, “which never regard virtue without sure, certain, and present gains” and turned a deaf ear to Frobisher’s request for funding; had it not been for the court, “from whence, as from the fountain of our commonwealth, all good causes have their chief increase and maintenance”, the expeditions would never have materialized.<sup>41</sup> Incidentally, the Earl of Oxford was an enthusiastic backer of Martin Frobisher in what would have been his fourth expedition had he not resigned his command, precisely because the objective of the expedition was diverted from the exploratory to the mercantile.. “Here is no answer come from my L. of friends here, as yet I have not more need Sir Francis Walsingham, nor any of the rest but my L. of Oxford, who bears me in hand; he will buy the Edward Bonaventure.”<sup>42</sup> The debate between an unknown member of the gentry and a merchant in the Parliament of 1597 about the enclosures hinged on the dichotomy between common wealth and private

---

<sup>40</sup> Huppert, George. *Les Bourgeois-Gentilshommes*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977, p. 120.

<sup>41</sup> Best, George. *The Three Voyages of Martin Frobisher*, issued by the Hakluyt Society, 1867, reprint by Burt Franklin, New York, pp. 70-1.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted from Taylor, Eva G.R. *The Troublesome Voyage of Captain Edward Fenton – 1582-1583* .Edited for The Hakluyt Society. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1959, p. 16.

wealth, liberality/hospitality and private gain.<sup>43</sup> In the counsels to his son Robert, Lord Burghley advises him to keep hospitality “according to the measure of thy estate”.<sup>44</sup>

Burghley’s son-in-law, the Earl of Oxford, did not follow that rule. He was certainly liberal, which in this case means “generous in spending” and which Gabriel Harvey calls “magnificent”, having more or less the same meaning as 'liberal'. Harvey writes that Oxford “in the prime of his gallantest youth... bestowed Angels upon me in Christ’s College in Cambridge, and otherwise vouchsafed me many gracious favours...”<sup>45</sup> Like Apis lapis, Oxford displayed a “high countenance unto scholars.”

The same generosity is attested Ver, the spring, in Nashe’s play *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*, written in 1592 or 1593 but published in 1600 (likely the year of Nashe’s death). It is a play about the succession of the seasons. Spring, Autumn, Winter; Vertumnus and Sol, the Roman god of the seasons and the sun respectively, Solstitium (solstice), Bacchus, the hunter Orion and Harvest, are called to account by Summer. Of the four seasons only the spring is given its Latin name, *Ver*. 'Ver' is an alternative spelling of Oxford’s family name. In Nashe’s play Ver has nothing left, he has spent it all: “...what I had, I have spent on good fellows; in these sports you have seen, which are proper to the Spring, and others of like sort (as giving wenches green gowns, making garlands for fencers and tricking up children gay) have I bestowed all my flowery treasure and flower of my youth.”<sup>46</sup> The phrase “tricking up children gay” can perhaps be understood as an allusion to the Earl of Oxford’s theatre company of children in the 1580s.<sup>47</sup> The passage on Ver/Spring contains allusions to the Earl of Oxford and Shakespeare alike. In the play Ver sings a song reminiscent of one written by Edward de Vere:

Falangtado, Falangtado, to wear the black and yellow:

---

<sup>43</sup> Neale, J.E. *Elizabeth and Her Parliaments*, 1559-1601, 2 vol., London: Jonathan Cape, 1957, vol. 2, pp. 340-3.

<sup>44</sup> Strype, *Annals*, IV.1, p. 476.

<sup>45</sup> Harvey, I.184.

<sup>46</sup> Nashe, III.240-1.

<sup>47</sup> Nashe, III.323. Preface to Greene’s *Menaphon*: “Sundry other sweet Gentlemen I do know, that have vaunted their pens in private devices, and tricked up a company of taffata fools with their feathers...”

Falangtado, Falangtado, my mates are gone, I'll follow.

The couplet conflates two alternating refrains in Edward de Vere's song "A crown of bays shall that man wear":

For black and tawny will I wear,  
Which mourning colors be.

and:

Ah a lalantida, my dear dame  
Hath thus tormented me.

As on some other occasions where Nashe mentions the Earl of Oxford or alludes to him, Shakespeare's voice can be heard in the background. Here, in Nashe's play, it is Ver's song :

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant King,  
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,  
Cold does not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jugge, jugge, pu wee, to witta woo.

which calls to mind Shakespeare's closing songs in *Love's Labour's Lost*:

#### SPRING

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,  
And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks;  
When turtles tread, and rooks and daws,  
And maidens bleach their summer smocks;  
The cuckoo then on every tree  
Mocks married men, for thus sings he:  
'Cuckoo;  
Cuckoo, cuckoo'- O word of fear,  
Unpleasing to a married ear!

Here we can catch a glimpse of William Beeston, the “copious carminist”. McKerrow notes that A.B. Grosart took the meaning of “carminist” to be “poesy-maker and adds: “I am by no means sure that this is the sense intended, but can suggest nothing better.”<sup>48</sup> The meaning, though, seems obvious. “Carmina” is the Latin word for song: Nashe addresses Master William as the most prolific writer of songs. This insight does not carry us far. Many song lyrics are extant, very few authors are known. “It was not in accordance with the custom of the time to print in the music-books the name of the author of the lyrics. This was not done even in the case of those poems of which we can actually identify the author; and the presumption is, therefore, that many of these charming verses were written by the great Elizabethan poets, some of them perhaps by Shakespeare himself. This probability is not inconsistent with the fact that the poems do not happen to have survived apart from the song books.”<sup>49</sup>

Yet, some of them have survived, partly under Shakespeare’s name in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, partly under Oxford’s name in manuscripts, among the latter the popular “My mind to me a kingdom is”, twice alluded to by Ben Jonson<sup>50</sup>. Edward de Vere is known to have been a writer of song texts, about a dozen can be attributed to him. It is further known that he was a prodigious patron of scholars and poets, as is repeated in the next paragraph. The “wonted Chaucerism” hardly needs to be insisted on, several scholars have emphasized Shakespeare’s debt to Chaucer. Harold Bloom considers the Bible and Chaucer as Shakespeare’s two main sources. In 1569 Edward de Vere bought a Geneva Bible, Chaucer’s works and, besides, Plutarch’s *Lives* in French and two Italian books.<sup>51</sup>

## ***7. Sumner and Archdeacon’s court***

---

<sup>48</sup> Nashe, IV.154.

<sup>49</sup> Fellowes, Edmund Horace. *The English Madrigal Composers*. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1921, p. 142.

<sup>50</sup> *The Case is Altered*, I.i and *Every Man Out of His Humour*, I.i. For the ascription to the earl of Oxford, see May, Steven W. “The Authorship of ‘My mind to me a kingdom is’”, *RES*, New Series, Vol. XXVI, Number 104, Nov. 1975, pp. 385-394.

<sup>51</sup> Looney, John Thomas. “*Shakespeare*” Identified in *Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*. Port Washington: Kennikat Press for Minos Publishing Company, Jennings, LA. 1975, p. 473.

In the first edition paragraphs 2 and 3 read:

*“It is not unknown to report, what a famous pottle-pot Patron you have been to old Poets in your days, & how many pounds you have spent (and, as it were, thrown into the fire) upon the dirt of wisdom, called Alchemy. Yea, you have been such an infinite Mecænas to learned men, that not any that belong to them (as Sumners, and who not) but have tasted of the cool streams of your liberality.*

*I would speak in commendation of your hospitality likewise, but that is chronicled in the Archdeacon’s Court, and the fruits it brought forth, as I guess, are of age to speake for themselves. Why should virtue be smothered by blind circumstance? An honest man of Saffron Walden kept three sons at the University together a long time; and you kept three maids together in your house a long time. A charitable deed, & worthy to be registered in red letters.”*

In the second edition the part between “*Yea, you have been such an infinite Maecenas to learned men*” and “*red letters*” was replaced by:

*“Yea, you are such an infinite Mecaenas to learned men, that there is not that morsel of meat they can carve you, but you will eat for their sakes, and accept very thankfully. Think not, though under correction of your boon companionship, I am disposed to be a little pleasant, I condemn you of any immoderation either in eating or drinking, for I know your government and carriage to be every way **canonical** [our emphasis]. Verily, verily, all poor scholars acknowledge you as their patron, providitore, and supporter, for there cannot a thread-bare cloak sooner peep forth, but you straight press it to be an outbrother of your bounty: three decayed students you kept attending upon you a long time.”*

In the revised dedication Apis lapis is attested “canonical behavior”. Apparently, the behavior suggested in the first dedication was not so canonical. Which is why William

Beeston received the visit of a “sumner to let him taste of his liberality” and was recorded in the Archdeacon’s court in “red letters”.

A “sumner” was a summoner to an ecclesiastical court. A good account of sumners and the jurisdiction of the Archdeacon’s Court is given by Geoffrey Chaucer in “The Freres Tale” (in *Canterbury Tales*):

Once on a time there dwelt in my country  
An archdeacon, a man of high degree,  
Who boldly executed the Church's frown  
In punishment of fornication known,  
And of witchcraft and of all known bawdry,  
And defamation and adultery  
Of church-wardens, and of fake testaments  
And contracts, and the lack of sacraments,  
And usury and simony also.  
But unto lechers gave he greatest woe;

Chaucer's account is confirmed by a document published in *Notes & Queries*<sup>52</sup>. The time referred to in the document is the beginning of the 16th century. The Archdeacon’s Court had not only jurisdiction over the clergy but in some matters also over the laity. Though the 16th and 17th century saw a shift of competences towards the common law courts, ecclesiastical courts still retained notable powers in behavioral matters<sup>53</sup>. The document notes: “The third part of our charge is concerning the life and conversation of the lay people of the

---

<sup>52</sup>*Notes & Queries* 2nd Series IX 1860, S. 135-137, Ante-Reformation Archdeacon's Charge and Inquisition.

<sup>53</sup>Holdsworth, W.S., Defamation in the 16th and 17th Centuries, in: *The Law Quarterly Review*, Vol. CLIX, 1924, S. 302-315, und Vol. CLX, 1924, S. 397-412; the same, The State and Religious Nonconformity: An Historical Retrospect in: *The Law Quarterly Review*, Vol. CXLIV, 1920, S. 339-358; Kent, Joan R., Attitudes of members of the house of Commons to the regulation of 'personal conduct' in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England, in: Bulletin of the *Institute of Historical Research*, Vol. XLVI No. 13, May 1973, S. 41-71.

parish you come from". 'Conversation' is to be understood here in its usual broad 16<sup>th</sup>-century sense of 'behavior.' The document sums up: witchcraft, usury, incest, sacrilege, adultery, fornication, testamentary fraud, tithes, unlawful marriage, swearing, etc. A large part of the competences concerned extra-matrimonial sexual relations, including bastardy<sup>54</sup>.

Nashe's exuberant praise of Apis lapis's liberality, which would even have extended to sumners (summoners of the Archdeacons Court), can only be meant ironically. First, it can be ruled out that Oxford, a peer, would have been summoned to this court for "lechery" or "fornication". But the term as such, especially within the context of progeniture, conjures up the idea of a bastard child. The only meaning can be that Apis lapis would have had to pay a sumner, so letting even "him taste of his liberality." In other words, for some reason or another he had to appear before the Archdeacon's court. This kind of "hospitality" is "chronicled in the Archdeacon's court" and "the fruites it brought fourth (as I guess) are of age to speake for themselves". Nashe is alluding to an illegitimate child, now old enough to express his own wishes. In 1593, Edward Vere, Oxford's and Anne Vavasour's natural son, was about twelve years old, old enough to speak for himself.

It seems that Apis lapis/Oxford felt uneasy about Nashe's allusion to one of the most troubled periods of his life. The birth of his natural son was followed by feuds with Ann Vavasour's family, in the course of which Oxford not only fell from favor at Court but was dangerously wounded. There was another and probably even stronger reason. Certainly, Oxford had three daughters. But they were not, as Nashe writes, kept in his house for a long time but in fact, since the death of his wife Anne in 1588, were housed in the home of their grandfather Lord Burghley.

But even then, it was a double-edged allusion. We know that Oxford regretted this alienation and was taking steps to restrengthen the paternal bond with his children. In a letter

---

<sup>54</sup>Furnivall, Frederick J., *Child-Marriages, Divorces, and Ratifications, &c. in the Diocese of Chester, A.D. 1561-6*, London 1897; Hodge, C.E., Cases from a fifteenth century Archdeacon's Court, in *The Law Quarterly Review*, Vol. CXCIV, 1933, S. 268-274.

of 18 May 1591<sup>55</sup> he writes to Lord Burghley: “The effect hereof is I would be glad to have an equal care with your Lordship over my children, and if I may obtain this reasonable suit of her majesty, granting me nothing but what she has done to others and mean persons, and nothing but that I shall pay for it, then, those lands which are in Essex as Hedingham, Bretts and the rest whatsoever, which will come to some 5 or 600l by year, upon your Lordship’s friendly help towards my purchases, in Denbigh, shall be presently delivered in possession to you, for their use... So shall my children be provided for, myself at length settled in quiet, and I hope your lordship contented, remaining no cause for you to think me an evil father... For to tell the truth I am weary of an unsettled life, which is the very pestilence that happens unto courtiers, that propound to themselves no end of their time, therein bestowed.”

Oxford might also not have wished to become too deeply and too openly involved in the Harvey-Nashe quarrel, for Gabriel Harvey’s animadversion against him was well known. Juxtaposing the three sons a honest man of Saffron-Walden (John Harvey) kept at the university of Cambridge and Oxford’s three daughters. was to mark them out as the principal antagonists in the literary contention known to posterity as the Harvey-Nashe quarrel.

#### ***8. Nashe suggests that Apis lapis write or rewrite a play featuring Harvey***

The next paragraphs in the dedication which should arrest our attention are 9-11 and the first part of paragraph 12. Not only does Nashe ask his patron Apis lapis to shield him from envy, which was almost a stock formula in dedications. But he also urges him to defend himself and suggests the way it could be done, namely by bringing Harvey on the stage. If Apis lapis is Shakespeare, the candidate which suggests itself for the play Nashe is alluding to is *Love’s Labour’s Lost*:

*What say you, Master Apis lapis, will you, with your eloquence and credit, shield me from carpers? Have you any odd shreds of Latin to make this letter-monger a coxcomb of?*

---

<sup>55</sup>BL Lansdowne 68[6].

*It stands you in hand to arm yourself against him, for he speaks against conycatchers, and you are a conycatcher, as conycatching is divided into three parts: the verser, the setter, and the barnacle.*

*A Setter I am sure you are not, for you are no musician, nor a Barnacle, for you never were of the order of the Barnardines, but the Verser I cannot acquit you of, for M. Vaux of Lambeth brings in sore evidence of a breakfast you won of him one morning at an unlawful game called riming. What lies not in you to amend, play the doctor and defend.*

*A fellow that I am to talk with by and by, being told that his father was a rope-maker, excused the matter after this sort: And hath never saint had reprobate to his father? They are his own words; he cannot go from them. You see here he makes a reprobate and a rope-maker, voces conuertibiles. Go to, take example by him to wash out dirt with ink, and run up to the knees in the channel if you be once wet-shod.*

Nashe's pamphlet *Strange News* contains at least four clues to *Love's Labour's Lost*, one in the pamphlet proper, three in the above paragraphs. First, in the last of these paragraphs Nashe harps on the word "reprobate", a word that Harvey used to excuse his low descent. Harvey wanted to be recognized as a gentleman. He liked warrior-like rhetoric. And he imitated the Petrarchan vein by inventing a gentlewoman who took up his defence against Nashe. This gentlewoman is none other than Gabriel Harvey himself. At least in his imagination could Harvey claim "gentle blood" through his spiritual union with his own creature, "the gentlewoman". In *Love's Labor's Lost* Shakespeare fulfills Harvey's wish in the personage of the Spanish Don Armado, a "gentleman and a gamester", a soldier and a rhetorician, but a "Don". However, the gentlewoman is turned into a country girl, and like the real Harvey his own descent, so does Don Armado term his love for the country girl "reprobate"(I.ii.56).

Secondly, Nashe asks whether Apis lapis has not some odd shreds of Latin to make a cockscomb of Harvey and adds that Apis lapis should defend himself. Again, if Apis lapis is Shakespeare, where or when did Harvey attack him? And where did Shakespeare counter-attack? He clearly attacked Oxford directly in 1580, and, as seen, undercover also in 1592-3, whereas Shakespeare poked fun at Harvey— in Nashe’s words “washed out dirt with ink” — with the character of Don Armado in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*. We are looking for Shakespeare, but it is Oxford who crosses our paths. It is noteworthy that Shakespeare’s only plays with such odd shreds of Latin are *Merry Wives of Windsor* and *LLL*.

Thirdly, Nashe invites Apis lapis to use his talent and “to amend, play the doctor and defend.” The phrase “to play the doctor” suggests that Nashe is thinking of a play in which some character would impersonate or caricaturize Harvey, the fear of which Harvey expressed in his pamphlets. The verb “defend” refers back to Nashe’s calling upon Apis lapis to defend himself. “Amend” confirms what some scholars have assumed: that *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is, an older play which Shakespeare amended mainly by adapting the subplot to the Harvey-Nashe quarrel<sup>56</sup>.

Finally, within the pamphlet we obtain the information that such a play was planned, that it would be acted by Shakespeare’s company the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and that Will Kempe, the company’s clown, would play the part lampooning Harvey. To Harvey’s expression of regret of having been prevented by Greene’s death from seeking remedy in law against him, Nashe replies, “What action will it bear? *Nihil pro nihilo*, none in law. What it will do upon the stage I cannot tell, for there a man may make action besides his part when he hath nothing at all to say, and if there, it is but a clownish action that it will bear, for what can be made of a rope-maker more than a clown? *Will Kempe*, I mistrust it will fall to thy lot for a merriment one of these days.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Harbage, A., “Love’s Labour’s Lost and the early Shakespeare”, pp. 18ff.

<sup>57</sup> Nashe, I. 286-7.

“Cony-catching literature” is, besides “tapster”, “villainous”, etc. another of Harvey’s depreciatory terms for the kind of literature Nashe was writing. According to Robert Greene’s description the setter is the one who first approaches the victim to extract as much information from him as possible. “At that word out flies the **setter**, and overtaking the man, begins to salute him thus: Sir, God save you, you are welcome to *London*, how doth all our good friend in the country, I hope they be all in health? The country man seeing a man so courteous he knows not, halfe in a brown study at this strange salutation, perhaps make him this answer. Sir, all our friend in the countrie are well, thanks bee to God, but truly I know you not, you must pardon me”<sup>58</sup>. The setter then informs the verser who tries to win the “cony” over for some play at card or dices, “but if he smack the setter, and smells a rat by his clawing, and will not drink with him, then away goes the setter, and discourses to the **verser** the name of the man, the parish he dwells in...”. If they have, finally, succeeded in enticing the “cony” into drinking with them and playing at cards or dice, a third man joins the company, feigning to be a stranger to the verser and setter but assisting them in cozening the victim. If the barnacle feigns to be drunken he is called **barnard**. [our emphases] But Nashe does not use the words in the meaning they had in thieves’ slang. Apis lapis is not a setter because he does not compose music; he is no barnacle or barnard because he does not observe Saint Barnard’s rules of asceticism. He is, however, a verser, a poet.

The “unlawful game of rhyming” is a quip at the rejection of rhyming by the classicists, foremost among them Harvey. “Lord Vaux of Lambeth” is an excellent example of how Nashe’s zigzagging between fancy and fact, jest and earnestness, defies the empirist. On this name McKerrow notes: “I could learn nothing of him”.<sup>59</sup> He is almost certainly Lord William Vaux of Harrowden (d. 1595), son of the poet Lord Thomas Vaux (d. 1556), an acquaintance of Oxford. As a recusant he had to appear regularly before the Privy Council.

---

<sup>58</sup> Greene, Robert, “The Art of Conny-catching”, Vol. X, in *The Life and Complete Works*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>59</sup> Nashe, IV.156.

Other recusants, occasionally perhaps also Lord Vaux, were summoned to Lambeth Palace, the Archbishop of Canterbury's London residence. Nashe irreverently insinuates that Lord Vaux of Harrowden, being more often at Lambeth Palace than at Harrowden, would be more properly called Vaux of Lambeth.

### **9. Nashe announces the printing of *Love's Labour's Lost*.**

Who will doubt that it is *Love's Labour's Lost* which Nashe toward the end of *Have With You to Saffron-Walden* says has been printed? The passage on p. 133 bears some resemblance to scene III.i of the play, which opens with a sustained mocking gallop on the word "I'envoy". Nashe's ride on the same word can be likened to a rodeo:

"Oo yes, be it known, I can rhyme as well as the Doctor, for a sample whereof, in stead of his *Noddy Nash*, whom everie swash, and his *occasionall admonitionative Sonnet*, his *Apostrophe Sonnet*, and tiny titmouse *Lenvoy*, like a welt at the edge of a garment, his goggle-eyed *Sonnet of Gorgon* and *the wonderful year*, and another *Lenvoy* for the chape of it, his *Stanza declarative*, *Writers post-script in meeter*, his *knitting up Cloase*, and a *third Lenvoy*, like a fart after a good stool,"<sup>60</sup>

Nashe's *Have With You to Saffron Walden* was printed by John Danter, who was also the printer of the 1597 quarto of *Romeo and Juliet*. In 1599 a new edition of the play was published by Cuthbert Burby and printed by Thomas Creede. The title-page stated that the play was "Newly corrected, amended and augmented." In 1598 *Love's Labour's Lost* was published by the same Cuthbert Burby; the printer was William White. On the title-page, similarly, we find: "Newly corrected and augmented." Scholars have taken this as certain

---

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, III.133.

evidence for the existence of an earlier version of *Love's Labour's Lost* and presumed the same John Danter as printer. Nashe confirms it:

“In stead of all these (I say) here is the stuff or label of a rime or two, the trick or habit of which I got by looking on a red nose ballad-maker that resorted to our printing-house.”<sup>61</sup>

The “red-nose ballad-maker” reminds “Master William and the first book of his comments upon red noses”, Shakespeare. And further:

“They are to the tune of *Labore Dolore*, or the Parliament tune of a pot of ale and nutmegs and ginger, or *Elderton*’s ancient note of *meeting the devil in conjure house lane*.”<sup>62</sup>

Again, the obvious answer to what this tune of *Labore Dolore* might be, has been drowned in a stream of speculation. McKerrow notes: “I can learn nothing of any such tunes.”<sup>63</sup> A.E.H. Swaen's solution quoted in the supplement of 1958 to McKerrow's original edition is far-fetched and explains nothing: “He takes 'Labore' to mean the rustic dance *La Borée*, i.e. *la bourrée*,...and 'Dolore' to be on par with the *dolorosa* of, for example, 'Pavana dolorosa’<sup>64</sup>. But what labour is more dolorous than love’s labour when lost?

Similar guesses have been made at Nashe’s quatrain, nobody – as far as we know – has ever thought of the obvious, Shakespeare’s quatrain on the fox, the ape and the humble bee:

The fox, the ape, and the humble bee,  
Were still at odds, being but three.

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.369.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, V. Supplement, p. 52.

Until the goose came out of door,  
And stay'd the odds by adding four.

Nashe's quatrain has the same meter. "If you hit it right", Nashe writes, "it will go marvellous sweetly":

Gabriel Harvey, fames duckling,  
hey noddie, noddie, noddie:  
Is made a gosling and a suckling,  
hey noddie, noddie, noddie<sup>65</sup>

Apis lapis, gentle Master William, is Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford. And Apis lapis, gentle Master William is, Penny McCarthy maintains, William Shakespeare. And Nashe still has more to say about it.

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., III.133