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1

An Interrupted Life

THOMAS KYD'S LIFE, like that of so many other Elizabethan dramatists (apart from Shakespeare and Jonson), has left little trace in the official records. We have the briefest notices of his baptism, schooling, and burial. The only extended life records in his own hand are the two letters he wrote to Sir John Puckering in 1593, after his disastrous imprisonment in connection with the Dutch Church libel. None of the plays that Kyd wrote for the public theatre was published under his name—a not unusual occurrence in this period, since the play books belonged to the theatre companies, who were more concerned to advertise themselves than their authors. This introductory chapter begins by summarizing what is known about Kyd's life, from direct and indirect sources.

Where their parentage is known, most of the authors writing for the new medium of public theatre came from established middle-class professions. Marlowe's father was a shoemaker who subsequently became a parish clerk. Shakespeare's father was a glover, who also traded in commodities and served as Alderman and Mayor. Peele was the son of James Peele, clerk of Christ's Hospital, where Peele was educated. Lyly's father was a diocesan official at Canterbury; Munday's was a London draper. Jonson was the posthumous son of a minister of religion of Scottish descent; his stepfather has been identified as Robert Brett, a successful bricklayer who became Master of the Tylers' and Bricklayers' Company. Lodge's father, Sir Thomas Lodge, was Lord Mayor of London; Marston's father was a lawyer.

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On 6 November 1558 the parish register of St Mary Woolnoth recorded the baptism of 'Thomas, son of Francis Kidd, Citizen and Writer of the Courte Letter of London'.[1] Kyd's father, Francis, rose to be Warden of the Company of Scriveners in 1580, the official body supervising 'a profitable and ancient trade'. Scriveners, officially known as 'Writers of the Court Letter', enjoyed 'a monopoly on engrossing charters, contracts, testaments, and official documents', functioning 'not only as notaries and copyists, but also as money lenders'. The need for verbal accuracy in their profession made them insist, in a mandate dating back to 1497, that

> any scrivener's apprentice who had not a 'perfect congruity of grammar, which is the thing most necessary and expedient to every person exercising the science and faculty of this mystery', was to study at a grammar school until 'he be erudite in the books of genders, declensions, preterites and supines, equivix, and sinonimes'.[2]

Francis Kyd had evidently had a grammar-school education and ensured that his son had the same good start in life. Thomas must have received his first education at home, for when he entered the nearby Merchant Taylors' School on 26 October 1565, just before his seventh birthday, he was expected 'to know "the catechysm in English or Latyn" and be able to "read perfectly and write competently"'.

In his *Survey of London* (1598; 1603), John Stow recorded that in Suffolk Lane (which today has the postcode EC1), 'turning up towards Candlewick Streete, is one notable Grammar schoole, founded in the yeare 1561 by the master, wardens, and assistants of the Marchant Taylors in the parish of Saint Lawrence Poultney. Richard Hilles sometime master of that companie, having before given 500 pound towards the

1. Biographical details in this paragraph are mostly taken from the essential biographical resource, Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd. Facts and Problems* (Oxford, 1967).

2. A jumble of grammatical terms. According to *OED*, a preterit is 'the simple past tense of a verb'; a supine is a 'Latin verbal noun with the same stem as the passive participle, used only in the accusative and ablative cases esp. to denote purpose'. The word equivix is not in *OED*: perhaps an error for 'Equiuokes . . . such things as have one selfe name, and yet be divers in substance or definition' (T. Blundeville, *Art of Logike* (1599).

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purchase of an house, called the Mannor of the Rose . . .'.[3] Merchant Taylors' at once became the largest grammar school in England, with 250 pupils (St Paul's had 150), and one of the best.[4] The first person to hold the post of High Master, for which the Statutes specified 'a man in body whole, sober, discreete, honest, vertuous, and learned, in good and cleare Latin literature, and also in Greeke',[5] was Richard Mulcaster, who occupied it from 1561 to 1581, and subsequently became High Master of St Paul's School. Mulcaster was a distinguished humanist, whose published and unpublished Latin poetry survives, and who wrote two important educational treatises: *Positions, wherein those primitive circumstances be examined, necessarie for the training up of children* (1581), and *The first part of the Elementarie which entreateth of right writing of our English tung* (1582).

The curriculum of Merchant Taylors', as T.W. Baldwin showed in his magnificent study of the Elizabethan grammar schools,[6] was based on that of St Paul's, as laid down by Cardinal Wolsey in 1528, which in turn followed the scheme outlined by Erasmus in *De Ratione Studii* (1512). It envisaged six to eight years' intensive study of Latin grammar, as codified in the official 'King's grammar' of John Lily, reading a graded sequence of Latin authors (Cato, Terence, Virgil, Cicero's Letters, Sallust, Caesar, Horace's *Epistles*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*), and regularly composing Latin prose and verse, incorporating the figures of rhetoric. Those sceptics who have doubted Shakespeare's ability to read Latin, or even write plays, because 'he only had a grammar-school education', betray both snobbery and ignorance, for this was one of the most formidable educational systems ever devised. It had, of course, a very narrow scope, by modern standards, being essentially concerned with learning to read and write Latin, with a small amount of Greek added

3. C.L. Kingsford (ed.), *A Survey of London by John Stow*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1908), l.237.

4. See F.W.M. Draper, *Four Centuries of Merchant Taylors' School 1561–1961* (London, 1962), Richard De Molen, *Richard Mulcaster and Educational Reform in the Renaissance* (Nieuwkoop, 1991), and Jacqueline Cousin-Desjobert, *La théorie et la pratique d'un éducateur élisábethain: Richard Mulcaster ca.1531–1611* (Paris, 2003), revised as *Richard Mulcaster ca.1531–1611. Un éducateur de la Renaissance anglaise* (Paris, 2013).

5. Draper, *Four Centuries*, p. 241.

6. T.W. Baldwin, *William Shakespere's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols (Urbana, IL, 1944; 1966), 1.118–33, 395–404, 418–23.

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in the upper forms of the biggest schools. The Merchant Taylors' Statutes enjoined the masters to teach 'not only good literature but also good manners'.[7] A curriculum based on 'good literature' excluded history, geography, modern languages, mathematics, and the sciences. Although limited to Latin, the drilling in grammar, rhetoric, and classical prosody was so intense that it could hardly be matched in any modern university. Admittedly, classics students today read more authors, but they seldom achieve the intense familiarity that the Elizabethan grammar schoolboy had with his more limited knowledge of selections from Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Aeneid*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Cicero's letters, speeches, and philosophical works (*De Officiis*, *Tusculanae disputationes*).[8] Nor do modern students learn to write, speak, and even act in Latin. What is now a dead language was then still living.

Like all Renaissance grammar schools and gymnasia, the Merchant Taylors' curriculum laid great emphasis on Latin composition. In 1607 the school instituted 'probation days' three times a year, on which each of the six forms should be tested, the regulations giving what Baldwin describes as the best account 'as to exactly what in the way of compositional excellence was at this period expected of a learned grammarian'.[9] (These tests probably embodied existing teaching methods, for schools are notoriously conservative, and to introduce these graded stages of composition *ab ovo* would have necessitated a massive change in the curriculum.) In the upper school, the Fourth form boys aged ten or eleven were expected to write 'two, three, or more periods of some theme or sentence in Latine, and make two, or more verses upon the same'. The Fifth form, in the 'forenoone' examination, were expected to 'make a longer theme, or treatise in prose than the former forme did', and to write an unspecified number of 'verses upon the same theme or sentence'. Moreover, the regulations specified that in the afternoon the Fifth

7. Draper, 1962, p. 242.

8. On the limited curriculum of the Elizabethan grammar schools, see Robert Bolgar, 'Classical Reading in Renaissance Schools', *The Durham Research Review*, 2 (1955): 18–26.

9. Baldwin, *Small Latine*, 1.395. He reprints (pp. 395–8) these regulations from H. B. Wilson, *The History of Merchant Taylors' School: From its Foundation to the Present Time* (London, 1814), pp. 163–7.

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form 'shall make some *parodiae*, or imitacons of Latine verses', and 'also make some *parodiae*, or imitations of Greeke verses'. By the time they reached the Sixth form, boys were expected to have mastered the major classical verse forms. The regulations for the forenoone examination specified that 'the schoolemaister having opened, on the sodayne, some part of Tully' (that is, one of Cicero's prose works), and dictated 'one period, word by word', the pupils 'shall turn it into Latin hexameters and pentameters, or sapphicks'. In the afternoon the master would dictate a passage from 'the Greeke Testament, Esop's Fables, in Greeke, or some other very easie Greeke author', and the pupils were expected to 'turne it into Greeke hexameters and pentameters, or sapphicks'. In 1611 William Haine (or Hayne), who had become Headmaster of Merchant Taylors' in 1599, recalled the texts he had used for Latin–English translations in his career, including the Ramist rhetoric of Talaeus, excerpts from Cicero's epistles, speeches, and philosophical works (Book I of *De Officiis*, *Tusculan Questions*), two plays by Terence, Virgil's *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, *Aeneid* (the first six books), and Horace's *Odes*, Book I.[10] The Elizabethan grammar schools deserve our respect for imprinting on their pupils the basic literary processes of analysis and composition. An inventory of the Merchant Taylors' library in 1599 includes several folio-sized Latin dictionaries and reference works, 'all rent' (Baldwin, l. 421), worn and torn by generations of pupils learning Latin.

In addition to a thorough acquisition of Latin, Kyd may have owed to Merchant Taylors' School his first exposure to drama. The headmaster William Mulcaster had been educated at Eton under Nicholas Udall, who had used Terence's plays as the basis for his pioneering florilegium, *Floures for Latine Spekynge* (1534). Anticipating Shakespeare's feat in *The Comedy of Errors*, Udall had combined two Latin comedies (Plautus' *Miles Gloriosus* and Terence's *Eunuchus*) for his *Ralph Roister Doister*, the first English classical comedy (probably written between 1545 and

10. Cf. Draper, *Four Centuries*, pp. 38–43 and Baldwin, *Small Latine*, 1.400–401, who cites Haine, *Certaine epistles of Tully verbally translated* (London, 1611). As the *Short Title Catalogue* indicates (no. 5304), Haine used Book 1 of the selection edited by Sturmius (Johannes Sturm).

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1552; published in 1567).[11] Mulcaster emulated Udall by encouraging drama at Merchant Taylors', alongside music and games. The benefits of acting in Latin drama had been celebrated by humanist pedagogues throughout sixteenth-century Europe, but few schools can have brought their performances to such a high level as to be invited to act at court. Mulcaster had contributed to Queen Elizabeth's royal entry into the City of London on 14 January 1559, being rewarded by the City 'for makyng of the boke conteynynge and declaryng the historyes set furth in and by the Cyties pageauntes'.[12] As a result of this honour, royal invitations for his troupe were issued at least eight times between 1572 and 1583. The Merchant Taylors' boys performed before the Queen on Shrove Tuesday 1573, in an unnamed play (on this and all other occasions the Office of the Revels providing 'Gloves for Munkesters boyes ii dozen'). During Candlemas 1574 the accounts list the

> Necessaries Incident for One Playe [*Timoclia at the sege of Thebes*, by Alexander] showen at Hampton Coorte before her Majestie by Mr Munkesters Children And One Maske (of Ladies with lightes being vi vertues) likewyse prepared and brought thither in Redynesse but not showen for the Tediusnesse of the playe that nighte.[13]

Although that performance did not please, later that year Mulcaster's troupe played *Percius and Anthomiris* on Shrove Tuesday 'at Nighte', and were invited back on subsequent feast days. The outlays recorded show that these performances attempted to create appropriate theatrical effects. Although unperformed, the masque of 'Six Vertues' still needed the provision of eight 'Bandes and Ruffes for children all spangled', at 25s. 8d., and eight pounds of 'Wyer to strayne cross the hall and to hang the braunches

11. Udall may also have been responsible for both *A new enterlude calld Thersytes* (1537), and the morality *Respublica* (ca.1554): cf. William Tydeman (ed.), *Four Tudor Comedies* (Harmondsworth, 1984), pp. 21–6. Martin Mueller has convincingly ascribed to him *Jacob and Esau*.

12. Draper, *Four Centuries*, p. 29.

13. Albert Feuillerat (ed.), *Documents Relating to the Office of the Revels in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (Louvain, 1908), pp. 206, 208–11. Cf. also E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1923), 2.75–6; 4.88, 90–91, 99; Draper, *Four Centuries*, Appendix II, 'Mulcaster's Plays', pp. 252–3; and Wiggins, *British Drama*, 2.106–7, 109–10.

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with the lightes', at 28s. Mulcaster's final performance, in 1583, was also his most spectacular, on a story taken from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*:

> A historie of *Ariodante and Geneuora* shewed before her majestie on Shrove tuesdaie at night enacted by mr Mulcaster's children, ffor which was newe prepared and Imployed, one Citty, one battlement of Canvas, viii Ells of sarcenet,[14] and ii dozen of gloves. The whole furniture for the reste was of the store of this office, whereof sondrey garments for fytting of the children were altered and translated.[15]

As anyone will know who has been involved in directing or performing in school plays, the preparation can stretch over several months, absorbing much energy within and outside school hours. Mulcaster's company also performed in the school hall in 1572–3 with an admission charge of one penny, 'the earliest record of a boy company playing before paying spectators'.[16]

The judge Sir James Whitlocke recalled his training under Mulcaster in the early 1580s:

> I was brought up at school under mr. Mulcaster, in the famous school of the Merchant taylors in London, whear I continued untill I was well instructed in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongs. His care was also to encreas my skill in musique, in whiche I was brought up by dayly exercise in it, as in singing and playing upon instruments, and yeerly he presented sum playes to the court, in whiche his scholars wear only actors, and I on among them, and by that meanes taughte them good behaviour and audacitye [boldness, self-confidence].[17]

Another distinguished product of Mulcaster's enlightened humanist education was Edmund Spenser, who attended Merchant Taylors'

14. The ell was 'A measure of length varying in different countries. The English ell = 45 in.' (*OED*); sarcenet: 'A very fine and soft silk material made both plain and twilled, in various colours, now used chiefly as a lining material and in dressmaking' (*OED*).

15. Feuillerat, *Office of the Revels*, p. 350.

16. Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and their Plays* (New York, 1977), p. 14.

17. Baldwin, *Small Latine*, 1.420–21.

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between about 1561 and 1569. In the December eclogue of *The Shepheardes Calendar*, under the *persona* of Colin Clout, Spenser paid an affectionate tribute to his old teacher, recalling his carefree youth:

> And for I was in thilke same looser years
> (Whether the Muse so wrought me from my birth,
> Or I tomuch beleeued my shepherd peeres)
> Somedele ybent to song and musicks mirth
> A good olde shephearde, *Wrenock* was his name,
> Made me by arte more cunning in the same. (37–42)

'E. K.', whoever he was, added this gloss to the word 'Musicke': 'Poetry as Terence sayth, *Qui artem tractant musicam*, speaking of Poetes'.[18] Other notable products of Mulcaster's school included Lancelot Andrewes, who was three years older than Kyd when he entered the school in 1565, leaving in 1571; Matthew Gwinne, a future Latin poet and playwright (1570–74); and Thomas Lodge, who was there for a year in 1571 before going up to Oxford. Kyd had one of the best schoolings available in England, and it is appropriate that he may have received his first experience of drama at a school on Suffolk Lane, near Thames Street, just across the river from the South Bank theatres.

There are no records of Kyd attending Oxford or Cambridge, so he presumably returned to his parental home, and may have followed his father's profession for a while. His plays use several legal terms,[19] and his 'handwriting, as it survives in two letters of 1593–4 to Sir John Puckering, is remarkably clear and formal',[20] perhaps that of a professional scrivener. His good handwriting, grammar-school education, and perhaps his knowledge of Latin, led Kyd to follow the path of many Renaissance humanists by taking up service with a noble lord in the post of secretary, responsible for correspondence, scribal-literary tasks, and perhaps some tutoring. A parallel example of this career choice would be Samuel Daniel

18. Edmund Spenser, *The Shorter Poems*, ed. Richard A. McCabe (London, 1999), pp. 149–50, 153, 573. The Terence quotation, '[competition for the palm] is open to all who practise poetry', is from the Prologue to *Phormio*, 18.

19. See F.S. Boas (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford, 1901), pp. xvii–xviii.

20. Freeman, *Thomas Kyd*, p. 12.

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(1562/3–1619), Kyd's contemporary, an Oxford graduate who served Sir Edward Dymocke from 1585 to 1591–2, when he entered the service of the Pembroke family at Wilton.[21] There he tutored the young William Herbert and joined the circle of writers around Mary Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Sir Philip Sidney's sister. Daniel had ample time for his own writing at Wilton, which he described as 'my best Schoole', publishing in 1592 both *Delia*, with a dedication to the countess, and *The Complaint of Rosamond*. In that year Herbert published her translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antonie*, influencing Daniel to produce *The Tragedy of Cleopatra* (1594), based on the models of Garnier and Jodelle. In the winter of 1593, having lost the patronage of 'my Lord, whom I have served almost theis vi. yeares now', Kyd translated Garnier's *Cornélie*, entered in the Stationers' Register on 26 January 1594 as '*Cornelia, Thomas Kydd beinge the author*'.[22] Kyd dedicated his translation to Lady Bridget Fitzwalter, the Countess of Sussex, apologizing for its faults, acknowledging her 'honourable favours past', and announcing that his next project would be a translation of Garnier's *Porcie*.[23] That work never appeared, for Kyd died in August 1594, and this was his last attempt to seek a patron under whom he could pursue his writing career. But his plan to translate another of Garnier's plays should not be seen as a sign that he was turning his back on the public theatre to devote himself to closet drama (although in fact, Garnier's plays had been acted).

Non-dramatic works

The documentation of Kyd's existence is so fragmentary that the biographer has soon finished his work. But rather more evidence exists of his career as a writer, starting with two works that preceded his career as a dramatist.

21. This account of Daniel's early career draws on Joan Rees, *Samuel Daniel. A Critical and Biographical Study* (Liverpool, 1964), pp. 9–13, 43–50.

22. W.W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration (BEPD)*, 4 vols (London, 1970), 1.195 (no. 116).

23. Boas, *Works of Thomas Kyd*, p. 102.

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Verses of Prayse and Joye *(1586)*

The first work by Kyd published during his lifetime was a small pamphlet containing English and Latin poems, *Verses of Prayse and Joye*, written by 'T. K.' (*STC* 7605). In his 1901 edition F. S. Boas relegated Kyd's *Verses* to an Appendix (pp. 339–42), describing them, rather unkindly, as 'a specimen of his non-dramatic hack work' (p. xxv). Whatever their literary value,[24] they represent Kyd's spontaneous response to a national crisis, and in other circumstances might have attracted a powerful patron.

The year 1586 was notable for the failure of a Catholic conspiracy laid by Anthony Babington to assassinate Queen Elizabeth and free Mary Stuart from imprisonment. Subsequently, the conspirators hoped, the forces of Philip II and the Catholic league in France would invade Britain and restore Catholicism. But from the outset the conspiracy had been infiltrated by Walsingham's double agents, and the plotters were brought to justice and executed on 20 and 21 September, with varying degrees of cruelty. One of the plotters was the young Chidiock Tychborne (born ca.1558), a known Catholic who had twice been interrogated by the authorities on suspicion of 'popish practices'. On the scaffold Tychborne made a long speech in which he acknowledged his fault, 'and moved great pity among the multitude towards him', as William Camden noted in his *Annales, or, The historie of the most renowned and victorious Princess Elizabeth*.[25] Tychborne also left behind a now famous poem, 'Tychbornes Elegie, written with his owne hand in the Tower before his

24. Lukas Erne briefly noted that Kyd 'may have written a poem [*sic*] on the subject of Queen Elizabeth's escape . . . Commonly referred to as the "Hendecasyllabon", it is included in a collection of five short poems entitled *Verses of Prayse and Joye* . . .' (*Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy. *A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester, 2001, p. 220). Regrettably, Erne echoed Boas's dismissive evaluation: 'the poetry is devoid of all intrinsic interest, a mechanical line-for-line answer to [Tychborne's poem], and any educated person would have been able to compose it' (ibid.).

25. Quoted by Penry Williams in his article on 'Babington, Anthony (1561–1586)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition, article odnb/967.

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execution', which begins 'My prime of youth is but a frost of cares'.[26] The poem had a considerable circulation in manuscript, as May and Ringler record, especially among Catholic sympathizers, and appears in several modern anthologies.[27]

Modern readers may well admire the modest, sincere pathos of these three stanzas, but Elizabethans could not overlook that their author had been a Catholic conspirator intent on assassinating the Queen, and several contemporary publications expressed the general indignation at the plot, and relief over its failure.[28] In 1586 the London stationer John Wolfe published a small black-letter pamphlet entitled *Verses of Prayse and Joye, Written upon her Majesties Preservation. Whereunto is annexed Tychbornes lamentation Written in the Towre with his owne hand, and an aunswere to the same* [by] *T.K.* This contains six poems by Kyd, four in English (here designated A–D), two in Latin:

(A) 'Verses of Praise, and Joy, Written upon her Majestie, after the apprehension and execution of Babington, Tychborne, Salisburie, and the rest'; 20 lines, unrhymed iambic pentameter, by Kyd.

A reprint of Tychborne's 'Elegie'; 3 stanzas of 6 lines, rhyming *ababcc*.

(B) 'Hendecasyllabon T.K. in Cygneam Cantionem *Chidiochi Tychborne*'; in English (despite the Latin title), using the same stanza and rhyme scheme.

'In nefariam Babingtoni cæterorumque coniurationem Hexasticon'; 6 lines,

Latin elegiacs by Kyd.

26. Text from Boas, *Works of Thomas Kyd*, p. 340.

27. Steven W. May and William A. Ringler, Jr., *Elizabethan Poetry. A Bibliography and First-line Index of English Verse, 1559–1603*, 3 vols (London and New York, 2004), 2.1055–6, lists some 40 copies. The poem was reprinted in vol. 3 of Holinshed's *Chronicles* (*STC* 13569, London, 1587), sig. 7M4v, and in John Mundy, *Songs and psalms composed into 3. 4. and 5. parts* (*STC* 18284; London, 1594), sig. D1. For a modern edition see Richard S.M. Hirsch, 'The Works of Chidiock Tichborne', *English Literary Renaissance*, 16 (1986): 303–18.

28. See Williams, 'Babington, Anthony (1561–1586)', in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. He does not mention *Verses of Prayse and Joye*.

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(C) 'The Same in English'; 12 lines of '8 and 6' syllables (ballad metre), rhyming *abcb defe ghih*.

'Ad Serenissimam Reginam Elizabetham, Apostrophe'; 6 lines, Latin elegiacs, by Kyd.

(D) 'The Same in English'; 12 lines of '8 and 6' syllables, rhyming *abca defe ghih*.

Boas rightly observed that 'the Latin elegiacs mingled with the English verses' show a facility of composition in both tongues also found in *The Spanish Tragedy*. (A study of Kyd's Latin verse is much needed.)

The 62 lines of English verse alternate praise of the Queen with vituperation of the conspirators, most pungently in the point-by-point refutation of Tychborne's *Elegie*. As Daniel Starza Smith observes:

> the elegy is printed on the verso of a page, with Kyd's line-by-line riposte on the facing recto. The effect is both parodic and dialogic, as Kyd's speaker overturns Tychborne's statements one by one and collectively, mimicking his form by inverting or otherwise rephrasing each claim in order to undermine it.[29]

The young conspirator lamented his impending death in a series of paradoxes. The loyal respondent replies in kind, taking up the metaphors and 'over-going' them, as an Elizabethan might put it.

Tychborne's *Elegie*

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares,
  My feast of joy is but a dish of pain:
My crop of corn is but a field of tares,
  And all my good is but vain hope of gain.
The day is past, and yet I saw no sun, 5
  And now I live, and now my life is done.

29. Daniel Starza Smith (ed.), *Verses of Praise and Joy*, in Brian Vickers (ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Kyd*, vol. 2 (forthcoming). I also cite Smith's modernized text of the two poems.

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My tale was heard, and yet it was not told,
My fruit is fallen, and yet my leaves are green:
My youth is spent, and yet I am not old,
I saw the world, and yet I was not seen.
My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun, 10
And now I live, and now my life is done.

I sought my death, and found it in my womb,
I looked for life, and saw it was a shade:
I trod the earth, and knew it was my tomb,
And now I die, and now I was but made. 15
My glass is full, and now my glass is run,
And now I live, and now my life is done.

Kyd's reply

Thy prime of youth is frozen with thy faults,
Thy feast of joy is finished with thy fall:
Thy crop of corn is tares availing naughts,
Thy good God knows, thy hope, thy hap and all.
Short were thy days, and shadowed was thy sun 5
T'obscure thy light unluckily begun.

Time trieth truth, and truth hath treason tripped,
Thy faith bare fruit as thou had'st faithless been:
Thy ill-spent youth thine after-years hath nipped,
And God that saw thee hath preserved our Queen. 10
Her thread still holds, thine perished though unspun,
And she shall live when traitors' lives are done.

Thou sought'st thy death, and found it in desert,
Thou looked'st for life, yet lewdly forced it fade:
Thou trod'st the earth, and now on earth thou art 15
As men may wish thou never had'st been made.
Thy glory and thy glass are timeless run,
And this, O Tychborne, hath thy treason done.

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Although unconvinced of its authenticity, Boas pointed out several parallels between Kyd's response and his plays.[30] In line 4 the wordplay, 'thy **hope,** thy **hap** and all' recalls 'the **hopeless** father of a **hapless** son' (*Sp. T.* 5.4.85) and '**hopeless** to hide them in a **hapless** tomb' (*Corn.* 1.1.214). Line 7, '**Time tr**ieth **truth**, and **truth** hath **tr**eason **tr**ipped', is echoed: '**Time** is the author both of **truth** and right, | And **time** will bring this **tr**eachery to light' (*Sp. T.* 2.4.126–7). I add that in line 9, the metaphor of promising growth being prematurely blocked: 'Thy ill-spent youth thine after-years hath **nipped**' was one that Kyd used again in *King Leir* and *Arden of Faversham*. The loyal citizen left no doubt concerning his disgust with the plotters and his happiness at the Queen's escape.

Kyd's Intellectual Milieu

We have seen that Kyd received a good classical education at Merchant Taylors'. For many pupils that training would have been absorbed into their working lives, leaving no visible traces. Kyd was an exception, having chosen a career as a writer, beginning with *Verses of Praise and Joy*. We know nothing about Kyd's life after leaving school, and it seems likely that he worked in his father's scriptorium. One indirect witness to his activities in these years was recorded by Dekker in his pamphlet, *A Knights Conjuring* (1607). Dekker envisaged a scene in the Elysian fields, where a laurel grove shelters famous dead poets, one group including 'old *Chaucer*, reverend for prioritie', and '*Grave Spenser*'.

> In another companie sat learned *Watson*, industrious *Kyd*, ingenious *Atchlow*, and (tho hee had bene a Player, molded out of their pennes) yet because he had bene their *Lover*, and a Register to the Muses, Inimitable *Bentley*: these were likewise carowsing to one another at the holy well, some of them singing Pæans to *Apollo*, som of them *Hymnes* to the rest of the Goddes . . .[31]

30. Boas, *Works of Thomas Kyd*, pp. xxv–xxvi.

31. Thomas Dekker, *A Knight's Conjuring Done in earnest: Discouered in Iest.* (London, 1607; *STC* 6508), sig. K8v–L1r.

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For T.W. Baldwin the implication of Dekker's grouping was that 'Kyd had written plays before 1585, probably for the Queen's Men'[32]. The epithet 'industrious' suggests that Kyd's output was considerably greater than *The Spanish Tragedy*. The actor John Bentley died in 1585, and the scene Dekker describes must be dated around 1583, when the Queen's Men were formed. Modern historians of that company, commenting on Dekker's pamphlet, observed that 'only Kyd is known to have written for the common stage among this group, and he is not known to have written for the Queen's Men. But "known" is a rare quality when it comes to the authors of plays in the 1580s, even the titles of which have disappeared, with few exceptions'.[33] However, one play they confidently place in the Queen's Men repertory is *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, which was performed in 1594 at the Rose, when the Queen's Men and Sussex's Men were playing together.[34] McMillin and MacLean define the Queen's Men repertory as 'largely based on the English History play, which they were the first professional company to undertake extensively'. They judge *Leir* to be 'a typical Queen's Men play in its concern with narrative completeness, piety, and truth'. Their remarks on its use of rhyme notice one element that contributes to the identification of Kyd's authorship, as we will see in chapter 5.

Dekker records that Kyd's other associates were two poets. Thomas Atchelow (or Achelley) published a narrative poem, *Violenta and Didaco* (1576), translated from Spanish, and some fragments of his verse survive in the miscellanies. The other poet was much better known: Thomas Watson, 'perhaps the foremost Latin poet of his day', as Arthur Freeman described him.[35] In addition to his eminence as a neo-Latin poet, Watson was the leading English Petrarchan poet of the second generation, best known for his *Hekatompathia, or passionate centurie of*

32. T. W. Baldwin, *On the Literary Genetics of Shakspere's Plays 1592–1594* (Urban, IL, 1959), p. 178. See also Erne, *Beyond* The Spanish Tragedy, pp. 1–2, 163.

33. See Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean, *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 29.

34. Ibid., pp. 33, 52, 87, 88, 94, 100–101, 107–8, 133–4, 137, 146–7, 166–7.

35. See Freeman, *Thomas Kyd*, pp. 13–21 for the fullest biographical account of Dekker's witness.

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love (1582), a collection of a hundred eighteen-line 'Sonnets', including many translated from Petrarch and his continental imitators. We know that Kyd and Watson were friends, for each referred to the other's poetry.[36] The method in which they did this derived from the grammar-school practice of *parodia* (specified in the statutes of Merchant Taylors') used in the sense now more familiar from Renaissance music, 'a composition that employs reworked material from another piece or passage, with serious intent' (*OED*). Kyd included several such 'parodies' in *The Spanish Tragedy*, to the puzzlement of some editors. F. S. Boas, having dismissively described the classical attainments displayed in Kyd's works as 'the fruit of a clever schoolboy's reading, reinforced by later private study, rather than of a methodical university training', granted him 'a certain faculty of classical composition', as seen in the Latin verses in *The Spanish Tragedy*, albeit these having been 'constructed mainly out of familiar verse-tags'.[37] These condescending remarks betray Boas's ignorance of Elizabethan grammar-school training, fully documented for the first time in 1944 by T. W. Baldwin. Josef Schick, having had the classical German Gymnasium education, which made such a great contribution to the study of English and other literatures before the First World War, was more attuned to the classical tradition. In Act 1 of *The Spanish Tragedy*, when the Portuguese Viceroy '*Falles to the ground*', devastated by the (false) news of his son's loss in battle, he switches from English to Latin:

> Heere let me lye; now am I at the lowest.
>   *Qui iacet in terra, non habet unde cadat.*
> *In me consumpsit vires fortuna nocendo,*
>   *Nil superest ut iam possit obesse magis.* (1.3.14–17)

Schick observed that the Quarto printers had failed to notice that the flanking pentameter lines should be typographically distinguished from

36. See Brian Vickers, 'Authorship Candidates for *Arden of Faversham*: Kyd, Shakespeare, Thomas Watson', *Studies in Philology*, 118 (2021): 308–41, and 'Thomas Watson, Thomas Kyd, and Embedded Poetry', *Studies in Philology*, 120 (2023): 557–601.

37. F. S. Boas (ed.), *Works of Thomas Kyd*, pp. xvii–xix.

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the hexameter in the middle.[38] As for the origins of these lines, Boas speculated that this was 'probably another case of adaptation' (p. 396). It was left to W.P. Mustard to identify them: the first line comes from the *Liber Parabolarum* (2.19) by Alan of Lille, a collection of proverb-like statements with scriptural and classical echoes, written in elegiac couplets. This sententia expresses a common topos in the *consolatio* tradition, familiar to English readers from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: 'He that is down need fear no fall'.[39] The Viceroy's second line is adapted from Seneca's *Agamemnon*, a speech by Cassandra foreseeing her inevitable destruction, and expressing a comparable sense of terminal disaster: 'For my part I do not try to placate the gods with any prayer: even if they should want to be brutal, they have no means of doing harm. *Fortune has used up all her resources!*'.[40] The third line is Kyd's own composition, summing up the two borrowed verses: 'There is nothing left that can harm me more'. This is exactly the technique of *parodia* or serious imitation that Kyd had learned at Merchant Taylors' School, one method of making the transition from *imitatio* to *aemulatio* that was fundamental to Renaissance literary creativity.[41]

Another instance of Kyd's creative use of *parodia* is Hieronimo's fourteen-line Latin dirge for his murdered son, as he and Isabella pick up Horatio's corpse and prepare to

> bear him in from out this cursed place.
> I'll say his dirge, singing fits not this case:
> O aliquis mihi quas pulchrum ver educet herbas
> [*Hieronimo sets his breast unto his sword*]

38. Josef Schick (ed.), *Herausgegeben von J. Schick. I. Kritischer Text und Apparat, Thomas Kyd's Spanish Tragedy* (Berlin, 1901), p. 127.

39. W.P. Mustard, 'Notes on Thomas Kyd's Works', *Philological Quarterly*, 5 (1926): 85–6. The *Parabolarum Alani cum commento* were printed four times in London between 1505 and 1525 (*STC* 252–254.7) and were doubtless pillaged for other such compilations.

40. *Agamemnon*, 696–9; ed. and tr. John G. Fitch, *Seneca IX Tragedies*, vol. 2, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2004), p. 183; my italics.

41. See, e.g., Brian Vickers (ed.), *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 22–39, and Gian Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation. Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, ed. And with a foreword by Charles Segal (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1986).

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Misceat, et nostro detur medicina dolori;
Aut, si qui faciunt animis oblivia succos
Praebeat, (2.5. 65–70)

[If only somebody would mix a brew for me | From certain herbs that the fair springtime nourishes, | And physic be provided for what pains me; or | If they'd show me what extracts work forgetfulness | In souls;][42]

This formal appeal to gather up whatever herbs that can heal their pain begins with six lines of Kyd's own Latin verse, after which he inserts two lines that condense four from Tibullus:[43]

Ipse bibam quicquid meditatur saga veneni,
Quicquid et irarum Circeia naenia nectit.

[I'd drink whatever drug | The sorceress concocts, whatever madnesses The spell of Circe weaves..]

Other grammar-school graduates would have recognized the significance of this matching passage from Latin poetry, containing a similar description of a man mixing herbs to alleviate distress. Kyd alludes to Tibullus II. iv, a poem in which the frustrated poet complains at his heartless mistress, who excludes him but admits rich suitors: 'Whatever potions Circe or Medea have, | Whatever Thessaly's soil yields in drugs . . . if my Nemesis will calmly look at me, | Let her combine a

42. I am grateful to Dr. Nick Moschovakis for allowing me to quote both his Latin text and his verse translation (into iambic hexameters) from his essay, 'Stolen Elegy', *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 January 2024. Dr. Moschovakis identified Kyd's source as the first fourteen lines of 'Orion', a pastoral elegy on his dead wife by the pastor Johannes Fabricius Montanus (1527–66). First printed in his *Poemata* (Zurich, 1556), the poem achieved wider circulation in an anthology edited by Aegidius Periander, *Hortus Amorum* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1567), copies of which exist in the British Library, the Cambridge University Library, and the Bodleian. It is regrettable that Moschovakis should accuse Kyd of having 'stolen' or 'pilfered' this passage. In the Renaissance such borrowings were regarded as instances of *imitatio*, often, as I have described it, being 'embedded' in the poet's new poem.

43. This was first pointed out by Schick, *Spanish Tragedy* (London, 1898), p. 130.

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thousand drugs! I'll drink'.[44] From Latin love poetry Kyd switches to epic for Hieronimo's conclusion:

> Emoriar tecum. Sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras,
> Attamen absistam properato cedere letho,
> Ne mortem vindicta tuam tam nulla sequatur. (78–80)
>
> [I'll die with you. It suits me thus to go below, | Thus, to the shades—but I won't rush to yield to death, | Lest your death should be followed, then, by no revenge'.]

At this point the stage direction indicates the sword Hieronimo has been holding at his breast: '*Here he throws it from him and bears the body away*'. Line 78 of Hieronimo's speech is a deliberate 'parody' of the concluding lines of Dido's last words before committing suicide:[45]

> dixit et os impressa toro, 'moriemur inultae
> sed moriamur', ait. 'sic, sic iuvat ire sub umbras.
> hauriat hunc oculis ignem crudelis ab alto
> Dardanus et nostrae secum ferat omina
> mortis'. (*Aeneid*, 4.659–62)
>
> [She spoke, and burying her face in the couch, 'I shall die unavenged,' she cries, 'but let me die! *Thus, thus I go gladly into the dark!* Let the cruel Dardan's eyes drink in this fire from the deep, and carry with him the omen of my death!'][46]

44. Tibullus, *Elegies*, II. iv. 55–60, tr. A.M. Juster, with an introduction by Robert Maltby (Oxford, 2012), pp. 76–7. Kyd may not have been aware that, as Maltby notes, 'Thessaly was the traditional home of witches and their potions. The relevance of witches' brews in this context is their use as love potions' (p. 119). In line 58 (not translated) Tibullus also referred to *hippomanes*, a well-known aphrodisiac.

45. Marlowe also cited this passage for the heroine's last words in *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (1588): 'Live false Aeneas, truest Dido dyes, | *Sic sic iuvat ire sub umbras*' [*Stabs herself and throws herself into the flames*.]

46. Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*, tr. H.R. Fairclough, rev. G.P. Goold (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1999), pp. 466–7.

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But whereas Dido stabs herself with her sword, unable to wreak revenge on Aeneas, Hieronimo throws his away, resolving to stay alive to revenge Horatio's murder, as the final lines of his own composition underline. The significance of this counterpointing allusion would not be lost on those in Kyd's audience who had also had a grammar-school education.

From the Latin poems in *Verses of Praise and Joy* to Hieronimo's dirge, Kyd deserves to be taken seriously as a neo-Latin poet in a scholarly culture that understood and appreciated such skills.

The other major use of *parodia* in *The Spanish Tragedy* is a testimony to his friendship with Thomas Watson. I have shown elsewhere that Kyd quotes or alludes to many passages from Watson's *Teares of Fancie* and *Hekatompathia*.[47] In the first scene of Act 2, Lorenzo attempts to console Balthazar, whose courtship has been refused by Bel-imperia, by quoting from Watson's 'Passion' (Sonnet) XLVII, in which the Author complains at the stubbornness with which his lady refuses his courtship, worse than that of brute beasts:

In time the Bull is brought to weare the yoake;
In time all haggred Haukes will stoope the Lures;
In time small wedge will cleave the sturdiest Oake;
In time the Marble wears with weakest shewres:
More fierce is my sweete *love*, more hard withall,
Then Beast, or Bird, than Tree or Stony wal.[48]

That summation of the terms used is an instance of the rhetorical figure *synathroismus*, dubbed by Puttenham 'the collectour or recapitulatour'.[49] Watson gives only this clue to his source: 'The two first lines are an imitation of *Seraphino, Sonnetto* 103'. This is true but, whether intentionally or not, also deceptive. As I have shown elsewhere, Watson's source was

47. See Vickers, 'Embedded Poetry'.

48. *Hekatompathia* 47. 1–6 (author's italics). I cite Dana Sutton's valuable online edition of Watson's *Works*, revised 2022, http://www.philological.bham.ac.uk/watson/. Instead of 'Sonnet', Watson preferred 'Passion'.

49. George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936, 1970), pp. 236–7.

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in fact Ovid's *Ars Amatoriae*, Book 1. 467–78,[50] a sequence in which the experienced and cynical poet is advising a beginner that he should keep on sending his mistress love letters:

> If she does not receive your message and sends it back unread, hope that one day she will read, and hold to your purpose. In time refractory oxen come to the plough, in time horses are taught to bear the pliant reins . . . What is harder than rock, what softer than water? Yet soft water hollows out hard rock. Only persevere; you will overcome Penelope herself; late, as you see, did Pergamus [Troy] fall, yet fall it did.[51]

Ovid's erotic poetry was not included in the curriculum of the Elizabethan grammar school, but it is hard to imagine that a mature Latin scholar of Watson's stature would not know this poem. Perhaps he kept silent intentionally, to give knowledgeable readers the pleasure of recognition, a tactic certainly deployed by other writers using *parodia*.

Kyd's imitation is more direct in both vocabulary and syntax, appropriately so for a deferential speech in a play:

> My Lord, though Bel-imperia seem thus coy,
> Let reason hold you in your wonted joy.
> In time the savage Bull sustains the yoke,
> In time all haggard Hawks will stoop to lure,
> In time small wedges cleave the hardest Oak,
> In time the flint is piercèd with softest shower,
> And she in time will fall from her disdain
> And rue the sufferance of your friendly pain. (2.1.1–8)

50. See Brian Vickers, 'Thomas Watson, Thomas Kyd, and the re-use of Ovid', *Notes and Queries*, 267 (2022): 88–9. Watson's life-long interest in Ovid can be gauged by his head-note to the opening poem in *Hekatompathia* alluding to 'a peece of worke, whiche he wrote long since, *De Remedio Amoris*'. (This could either have been a translation or a poem of his own.)

51. Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, tr. J. H. Mozley, rev. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1979), pp. 44–5.

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This is Ovid's upbeat conclusion, as we have seen,[52] extended as the experienced lover assures the neophyte that writing letters will bring success: 'Suppose she has read, but will not write back: compel her not; only see that she is ever reading your flatteries. She who has consented to read will consent to answer what she has read; that will come by its own stages and degrees'.[53] Ovid's message is full of hope and encouragement, but Balthazar has given in to despair, and Kyd makes him quote the closing couplet of Watson's stanza verbatim to reject such easy promises:

> No, she is wilder and more hard withal,
> Than beast, or bird, or tree, or stony wall.

On the surface this *parodia* is a straightforward tribute by one poet to another, with Kyd's expectation that readers will recognize Watson's text and appreciate its suitability to the dramatic situation at this point. A closer reading suggests that, in addition, Kyd had recognized the Ovidian 'invention' behind Watson's poem and alluded to it by his choice of English equivalents. Watson refers to 'the Bull', simply, while Kyd adds the epithet 'savage'. Ovid has '*difficiles . . . iuvenci*', troublesome or obstinate. Kyd may have exaggerated the danger, but it suggests that he was aware that Ovid's bull had some troublesome attributes. Where Watson has water dripping on 'the Marble', Kyd has the more accurate 'flint' (the Latin has '*saxo*'). Stronger evidence of Kyd's knowledge of the original Ovidian context is provided by the rest of Balthazar's speech, in which he rounds on himself for blaming Bel-imperia and laments his failures as a suitor:

> But wherefore blot I Bel-imperia's name?
> It is my fault, not she that merits blame.
> My feature is not to content her sight,
> My words are rude and work her no delight.
> The lines I send her are but harsh and ill,
> Such as do drop from Pan and Marsyas' quill. (2.1.11–16)

52. Although the invocation of Greek and Roman epic, alluding to the constancy of Penelope and the fall of Troy, might mischievously undermine that assurance.

53. Ovid, *Art of Love*, 1. 479–82; tr. Mozley, p. 47.

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That closing couplet shows Kyd's familiarity with Ovid's recommendation to woo by writing love letters, with an additional finesse. Just as Ovid undercut his experienced lover's confident assurance of success by alluding to the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*, accounts of human actions stretching across many years, so Kyd shows Balthazar's lack of self-confidence with that painful allusion to Pan and Marsyas. As Philip Edwards observed, they had both 'foolishly challenged Apollo to contests in flute-playing'.[54] (Apollo skinned Marsyas alive.) Edwards correctly noted that '*quill* is a reed and not a pen', but Kyd was able to pun on both senses.

The Housholders Philosophie

Kyd's second publication was in a very different genre. On 6 February 1588 the Stationers' Register recorded an entry for 'the Philosophicall Discourse of the householder', a translation of Torquato Tasso's dialogue *Il Padre di Famiglia* (1583). When published later that year, by Thomas Hacket, whose shop was near the Kyd family house on Lombard Street,[55] the work was entitled *The Housholders Philosophie. Wherein is perfectly and profitably described, the true Oeconomia and forme of Housekeeping . . . First written in Italian by that Excellent Orator and Poet Signior Torquato Tasso, and now translated by T.K.* (London, 1588; *STC* 23702.5)—the same signature Kyd had used for the *Verses of Prayse and Joye*.[56] Tasso's dialogue, one of many that he wrote in the final period of his life, when imprisoned in the hospital of Sant'Anna in Ferrara following a nervous breakdown, took its origin in a trip he made to Turin in 1578. It is both 'a charming portrait of Renaissance country life,

54. Philip Edwards (ed.), *The Spanish Tragedy* (London, 1959), p. 30. A different version of the story tells of a similar musical contest between Apollo and Pan: see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 11.150–193.

55. Freeman, *Thomas Kyd*, p. 4.

56. A second issue in the same year (*STC* 23703) added a spurious 'dairie book for all good huswives'. All quotations from *The Housholders Philosophie* are from the modernized edition by Domenico Lovascio in Vickers (ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Kyd* , vol. 1, pp. 241–331. The text is through-numbered; references are to line numbers.

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and a treatise on the family',[57] taking that term in its widest sense, akin to the Greek *oikos*, 'at once house and household, building and family, land and chattels, slaves and domestic animals, hearth and ancestral grave'.[58] The Index refers, inter alia, to 'Beauty forced by painting insupportable in a woman'; 'Body wedded to the soul;' 'Colour of wine, and what it ought to be'; 'Chastisement towards servants, what'; 'Difference betwixt exchange and usury'; 'Mothers ought to give their own children suck'; 'Shamefastness not improper to a married man'; 'Usury, how pernicious a thing it is'; 'Women married rather young than old'. Tasso's own ideas are mediated through classical texts, including Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, *Physics*, *Metaphysics*, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics*, with additional touches from Terence, Virgil, and Cicero among the Romans, Dante and Petrarch among the moderns. It was perhaps Tasso's free mingling of classical philosophy and literature, together with his discussion of the family's internal structure and place within society, that attracted Kyd to translating this dialogue.

But Kyd was not a passive translator. Domenico Lovascio has calculated that 'the number of Kyd's amplifications and additions is roughly five times that of his omissions or condensations, none of which appear sizeable' (p. 247). The amplifications are mostly on a small scale, involving what Lovascio calls 'synonymic amplification', where 'Kyd takes a single word, phrase, or even clause in Tasso's text and turns into two roughly synonymous words, phrases, or clauses' (p. 247). As anyone familiar with sixteenth-century prose will know, such doubling was common in a period when writers were beginning to use English for serious topics. In addition, Lovascio notes, 'as this practice was frequent in the writing of English legal documents as a means to avoid misunderstandings, it might reflect the fact that Kyd may have learned the trade of his father, who was a scribe, and therefore daily engaged in transcribing legal

57. *Tasso's Dialogues*, tr. with introduction and notes by Carnes Lord and Dain A. Tafton (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1982), p. 43. 'The Father of the Family' occupies pp. 44–149 in a facing page translation.

58. John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (London, 1962), pp. 83–4. See also M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (London, 1967, p. 66) and Brian Vickers, *Towards Greek Tragedy* (London, 1973), pp. 109–11.

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documents and contracts' (p. 248). The largest addition to Tasso's *Il padre di Famiglia* is a 'vehement and protracted attack on the evils of usury' (p. 249). In 1901 Boas drew attention to Kyd's

> impassioned . . . indictment, for which Tasso gives little more than the hint, of the evils of usury . . . Not content with reproducing Dante's condemnation of it quoted by Tasso, he adds marginal references to Scripture, and inserts in the text an argument on the subject from Aristotle. It is noteworthy that in the Induction to *The Spanish Tragedie* usurers are placed in 'the deepest hell', where they are 'choakt with melting golde' (1.1.67), and Kyd's detestation of their practices may well have been the fruit of bitter personal experience.[59]

Tasso accepted that 'the real exchange of money might be in some sort reduced unto natural industry, wherewith usury can never be acquainted' (1,372). It has 'not only been condemned by Aristotle but also utterly inhibited by both the new and the old law' (1,379–80).[60] Kyd added this blistering denunciation of usury:

> being an artificial gain, a corrupter of a commonwealth, a disobeyer of the laws of God, a rebel and resister of all human orders, injurious to many, the spoil of those that most uphold it, only profitable to itself, more infectious than the pestilence and consorted with so many perilous evils as are hard or never to be cured. (1374–88)

At this point Kyd reproduces the passage from Dante denouncing usury cited by Tasso but follows it with further additional material that, as Lovascio discovered,[61] he took from Cristoforo Landino's commentary on Dante (1481). Although there is no other evidence of Kyd's interest in Dante, his knowledge of Landino may derive from his interest in Renaissance humanism, or from a Latin or Italian treatise on usury. Lovascio gives a well-informed account of the dissemination of Landino's commentary and makes the not unlikely suggestion that Kyd's invective

59. Boas, *Works of Thomas Kyd*, p. lxiv.

60. *Tasso's Dialogues*, tr. Lord and Tafton, p. 143.

61. See Domenico Lovascio, 'Thomas Kyd's *The Householder's Philosophy* and Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Comedia di Dante*', *Ben Jonson Journal*, 27 (2020): 84–104.

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against usury was 'connected with his father's profession'.[62] I mentioned earlier that scriveners also functioned as moneylenders, who supplied an essential service to the Elizabethan economy. In 1571 Parliament legalized the payment of interest up to 10 percent, but some lenders demanded 12 percent, and several contemporary writers condemned the practice, including Thomas Lodge in his *Alarum against Usurers* (1583) and Philip Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1583). Lovascio poses the questions 'Had Francis Kyd ever been suspected of usury? Did Kyd himself suffer from such accusations?'[63] Neither can be answered at present, but one avenue not yet explored in this connection is Kyd's dedication of *The Householder's Philosophy* to 'Master Thomas Reade':

> Worth more than this, digested thus in haste,
> Yet truly set according to the sense,
> Plain and unpolished for making waste
> Of that which Tasso's pen so highly graced,
> This work I dedicate to your defence.
> Let others carp, 'tis your discretion
> That must relieve mine imperfection.

The key phrase is 'I dedicate to your defence', which might mean 'I dedicate my work to the defence of you' (if, for instance, Reade was a scrivener who had been unjustly accused of usury or some other offence). However, it could also mean 'I dedicate my work to you in the expectation that you will defend it'.

The Householder's Philosophy has links with Kyd's later works. That dedication used a 'modesty topos' apologizing for the 'plain and unpolished' style in which he tried to render 'that which Tasso's pen so highly graced'. Kyd used that topos again in dedicating *Cornelia* to the Countess of Sussex, excusing this 'so rough, unpolished a work' for the 'grace that excellent Garnier hath lost by my default'. These rather more than

62. Ibid., p. 86.

63. Lovascio provides a useful bibliography of 'the current scholarly debate on usury in Early Modern England', ibid., p. 101 n. 10.

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conventional modesty formulae recur in the Epilogue to *Arden of Faversham*, spoken by Franklin:

Gentlemen, we hope you'll pardon this naked tragedy
Wherein no filèd points are foisted in
To make it gracious to the ear or eye;
For simple truth is gracious enough
And needs no other points of glozing stuff.

There are many striking verbal parallels between the translations and Kyd's plays, as Boas first noted. Where Garnier wrote a rather banal instance of *chronographia*—

Apres l'Hyver glacé le beau Printemps fleuronne,
L'Esté chaud vient après, après l'Esté Autonne.

In *Cornelia* Kyd expanded it with a more enthusiastic welcome to autumn:

When icy winter's past, then comes the spring
Whom summer's pride, with sultry heat, pursues;
To whom mild autumn doth earth's treasure bring,
The sweetest season that the wise can choose.[64]

In *The Householder's Philosophy* Kyd had translated Tasso's discussion of the comparative merits of the four seasons, which followed the tradition of biblical commentaries on Exodus by arguing that 'no time may be compared to Autumn'.[65] Having listed 'the inconveniences and discommodities of the winter and summer, whereof the spring and autumn are not to be touched' (313–15), Tasso played off these two seasons against each other, finding 'the spring so far inferior to autumn as hope is to effects, and flowers to fruits, whereof autumn most aboundeth of all other seasons . . . Therefore, I conclude that autumn is the most noble

64. See *Cornelia*, ed. Lucy Rayfield and Adam Horsley, 2.1.132–5, in Vickers (ed.), *The Collected Works of Thomas Kyd*, vol. 2.

65. 'And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you' (Exod. 12:1–2). See also *Tasso's Dialogues*, tr. Lord and Tafton, p. 29 n. 16.

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and best season of the year' (319–31). This reminiscence of his Italian translation accounts for Kyd's otherwise ungrounded expansion of Garnier.

The Danish scholar Paul Rubow pointed out in 1948 a striking match between *The Householder's Philosophy* and *The Spanish Tragedy*.[66] In the former the Father of the family argues that a good husband ought to be continent before marriage, so as not 'to offend the league of matrimony . . . for, if he himself do not first **violate** the bands by so **defiling of the marriage bed**, he shall doubtless much confirm [support] the woman's **chastity**' (*HP* 539–44). In the play Arden, suspecting that his wife has been conducting an adulterous relationship, swears that any

> injurious ribald that attempts
> To **violate** my dear wife's **chastity**
> (For dear I hold her love, as dear as heaven)
> Shall on **the bed** which he thinks **to defile**
> See his dissevered joints and sinews torn (*AF* 1.1.36–40)

Lovascio commented that 'the closeness between the two passages . . . seems all the more significant given that in *The Householder's Philosophy* Kyd is actually expanding Tasso's text by introducing the phrase "by so defiling of the marriage bed", possibly in order to make the accusation against adulterous husbands sharper than it is in the source text' (*HP*, p. 255)

Rubow noted another significant match: 'Thou **but a member**, but to whet the knife' (*AF* 3.162), with 'be housekeeping wholly or **but a member,** part, or Minister thereof' (*HP* 1193–4). Using anti-plagiarism software, I discovered many matches with Kyd's extended canon. The phrase '**the princely lion**' (*HP* 578) recurs two years later in *King Leir* (7.60). While Kyd, like other dramatists, often used this epithet, Lovascio has pointed out that, in choosing the adjective 'princely', Kyd was making a deliberate addition to Tasso's text.[67] Many of Kyd's favourite phrases were already part of his lexicon in the Tasso translation, such as

66. Paul Rubow, *Shakespeare Og Hans Samtidige* (Copenhagen, 1948), pp. 115–16.
67. Lovascio, *HP*, p. 254.

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the sentence 'it **giveth** us **to understand that** married women are not forbidden . . .' (*HP* 643–4). Kyd repeated this syntactic construction in *King Leir*: 'there **shall be given to understand that** my father hath detracted her' (12.89–90) and in *Fair Em*: 'It **is given** us **to understand that** your daughter is suddenly become both blind and deaf' (11.22–3). As Lovascio observed, 'in this case, the similarity is more impressive in light of the fact that the same syntactic construction is used each and every time to talk about people in the family ('married women', 'my father', 'your daughter') (*HP*, p. 245) I have found more links with Kyd's other works, as can be seen from my website.[68] The formative status of *The Householder's Philosophy* in Kyd's idiolect will become clear when readers are able to study his whole oeuvre.

An Emerging Playwright

With his fluent ability to compose Latin verse, shown in the *Verses of Praise and Joy* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd had established himself as a learned dramatist, able to impress an educated public. But all his subsequent plays were written not for the erudite but for the general public that thronged the London theatres. Boas, in his dismissive account of Kyd's classical learning, correctly observed the paucity of references to Latin authors in the succeeding plays. In *Soliman and Perseda* Latin is used by the uneducated Piston, who distorts Cicero's *O tempora, O mores*, into *O extempore, o flores!*, earning Basilisco's Holofernes-like correction: 'O harsh uneducate, illiterate peasant! Thou abusest the phrase of the Latin' (1.3.12–14). Basilisco himself is no better, uttering the exclamation *O coelum, O terra, O maria Neptune!* (4.2.58), although Boas describes this as being quoted 'intentionally in inaccurate form.'[69] None of the newly attributed plays use Latin.

Kyd's decision to dedicate himself to the native English drama was justified by his rapid production of four sole-authored plays: *Soliman*

68. See https://brianvickers.uk/work-in-progress.

69. Boas, *Works of Thomas Kyd*, p. xviii. Boas also identifies a few phrases translated from the Latin.

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and Perseda (1588), *King Leir* (1589), *Arden of Faversham* (1590), and *Fair Em* (1590). In addition, he wrote two co-authored plays: *1 Henry VI* (1592), with Nashe, and *Edward III* (1593), with Shakespeare.[70] His *Cornelia*, translated from Garnier's *Cornélie*, was published posthumously in 1594, but had perhaps been begun earlier, since he echoed passages from it in *The Spanish Tragedy*.

This sudden burst of success drew the attention of two dramatists already established in the London theatre world who were not given to welcoming newcomers. As far as we know, Kyd had no university education, and it was his misfortune to fall foul of the two most vociferous of the 'University Wits', anxious to defend their status against interlopers, first Greene in 1587, then Nashe. (I shall discuss Greene's attack on *Fair Em* in chapter 6.) In 1589 Kyd received a second attack from the copious and caustic pen of Thomas Nashe. We may take their joint displeasure as proving that Kyd was beginning to make an impact in the London theatre. Greene criticized the author of *Fair Em* for two trivial solecisms, a common attitude among those dramatists who cherished a sense of scholarly superiority over their fellows.[71] Nashe went much further, attempting a comprehensive put-down in his Preface to Greene's romance, *Menaphon. Camillas alarum to slumbering Euphues, in his melancholie Cell at Silexedra* (entered S.R. 23 August 1589). In an address to a learned audience—'Epistle to the Gentlemen students of both Universities'—Nashe commended some writers and condemned others, inveighing against 'a few of our triviall translators'. I label the points that seemingly refer to Kyd.

> It is a common practise now a dayes amongst a sort of shifting companions, that runne through every Arte and thrive by none, to leave *(A)* the trade of *Noverint*, whereto they were borne, and busie themselves with the indevours of Art, that could scarcelie Latinize their

70. These attributions will be justified in volume 2 of *The Collected Works*.

71. Compare Jonson's disapproving comments on Shakespeare's errors: 'His wit was in his own power; would the rule of it had been so too. Many times he fell into those things, could not escape laughter: as when he said in the person of Caesar, one speaking to him, "Caesar, thou dost me wrong"; he replied, "Caesar did never wrong, but with just cause"; and such like: which were ridiculous'. *Timber: or discoveries made upon men and matter*, in Brian Vickers (ed.), *English Renaissance Literary Criticism* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 561–2.

(continued...)

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