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NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

Unvolving the Mysteries of the Melbourne Manuscript

Daniel Starza Smith

ABSTRACT The Melbourne Manuscript is an anonymous Stuart manuscript preserving 144 lines of a play-scene in draft form, which was discarded and used to wrap a packet of letters. This essay produces a new diplomatic edition of the manuscript, updating Antony Hammond and Doreen DelVecchio's 1988 text, and the first modernized, annotated edition. It gives an explanation of the editorial decisions associated with both versions. The essay introduces the context of the manuscript's discovery and the scholarly debate surrounding its authorship, summarizing the key arguments to date and putting forward a new suggestion. The authorship debate has dominated academic discussion of this manuscript to date; this essay offers the first full-scale literary analysis of this richly worked literary text. **KEYWORDS:** seventeenth-century drama; James Shirley; John Webster; attribution studies; textual editing

By heaven my Lord,
Not all the wit I am commander of
Can make me a wise Oedipus and unvolve
The mystery of your Sphinx.

☞ **THE MELBOURNE MANUSCRIPT** (British Library, Add. MS 88878) constitutes a single sheet of paper, folded once to make four pages, amply filled with writing. It contains a fragment of a dramatic scene, apparently a playwright's original draft from the early Stuart period. The author is unknown, but the fragment bears intriguing similarities to act 2, scene 1 of James Shirley's play *The Traitor*, which was written in 1630, licensed for performance on May 4, 1631, and published in 1635 by William Cooke (STC 22458).¹ The scene recorded in the Melbourne Manuscript presents the historical Duke of Florence, Alessandro de' Medici (1510–1537), here called Prince Alexander,

1. *The Traitor* was probably first performed by Queen Henrietta Maria's company and later taken over by Beeston's Boys. See G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1941–68),

and his cousin, Lorenzino de' Medici (1514–1548), here Lorenzo. Alexander dismisses his courtiers, then confronts Lorenzo with a letter from the exiled Castruccio accusing him of complicity in an assassination plot against the prince. Lorenzo jokes about the letter's style but admits the allegations are true. He then reminds Alexander of his previous loyalty and claims he was acting as a double agent in order to infiltrate enemy circles. The passage begins halfway through a sentence and ends on a cliffhanger—will the naïve prince believe his duplicitous *privado*?

The text strikingly captures an author in the act of composition: some words and sentences are altered *currente calamo*, and several inconsistencies and ambiguities are left to stand. The writing is by turns dramatic and humorous; its allusions to Aquinas, Boethius, Cato, Dionysius, Epictetus, Homer, and Sophocles are interspersed with bawdy jokes about cuckolds, concubines, and alehouse “roaring quaffers.” The play, had it ever been completed, would have stood comparison with any of the great Jacobean or Caroline tragedies. However, little else about it is so clear. This essay produces a new diplomatic text of the manuscript and the first modernized edition with glosses and notes. It also attempts to credit the author's literary achievements, which, based on the limited evidence that survives, are considerable.²

The Melbourne Manuscript was discovered by Edward Saunders in 1985 at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire. It had been used to wrap a packet of letters in the custody of Sir John Coke (1563–1644), a principal secretary of state under Charles I.³ Felix Pryor attributed the work to John Webster in a Bloomsbury Book Auctions sale catalogue, although the work failed to sell at its pre-sale estimate of £200,000–£400,000 when the auction took place on June 20, 1986.⁴ Controversy over its authorship was raised in

1:226, 258, 331, 341, 5:1150–53. *The Traitor and The Duke, or The Humorous Courtier* were licensed in May 1631, so it is “likely that one or both were compositions of the plague year of 1630” (5:1121).

2. A companion essay explores the manuscript's bibliographical nature as a draft text, asking how it can help scholars understand the term “foul paper(s)”: Daniel Starza Smith, “Papers Most Foul: The Melbourne Manuscript and the ‘Foul Papers’ Debate,” in *James Shirley and Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Barbara Ravelhofer (London, 2016), 124–38.

3. As Felix Pryor explains, “The manuscript had at some time been used to wrap a bundle of Coke's correspondence. When the archive was listed for the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts at the end of the last century it was docketed ‘Packet 3,’ and for some reason passed over in silence. It ended up in a box containing plans for the garden, from where it was fished out by Edward Saunders.” Pryor, “From Packet 3 to ‘The Duke of Florence,’” *The Spectator*, June 13, 1986, 34–35 at 34. Pryor notes that Packet 3 contained “correspondence by Coke dating between 1601 and 1630, and Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke's household accounts for 1602–03.” Much of Coke's correspondence in this period is recorded in Historical Manuscripts Commission, *The Manuscripts of the Earl Cowper (Coke MSS)* . . . Preserved at Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire, 3 vols. (London, 1888–89), henceforth *HMC Cowper*, but I have found no evidence in the calendared material to indicate what was bundled within the packet. Complicating matters, *HMC Cowper* indexes Greville's household accounts for 1608 (1:64–66) and 1609–10 (1:69) but not 1602–3. The packet's precise contents thus remain a mystery but, given that Saunders found such miscellaneous material within it, the manuscript was probably used to wrap documents already within the Coke household, rather than items being sent to Coke. As such, the contents would not cast light on the manuscript's provenance. *HMC Cowper* indexes neither the word “packet” nor any drama. “Packet 3” is still visible in pencil on fol. 2v.

4. *Catalogue of Valuable Printed Books, Autograph Letters and Manuscripts, Including an Autograph Working Draft of John Webster* (London, 1986), lot 212; it was also catalogued separately as John

the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement* in July that year, when I. A. Shapiro claimed the author must have been James Shirley on the basis of disputable paleographical evidence.⁵ When Antony Hammond and Doreen DelVecchio examined the document in 1988, they concluded that Webster was the more likely candidate.⁶ MacDonald P. Jackson significantly updated scholarship on the authorship question in 2006, producing stylometric conclusions that pointed to Shirley over not just Webster but all other known contemporary dramatists.⁷ The first volume of the Cambridge *Works of John Webster, An Old-Spelling Critical Edition* (1995), had promised the inclusion of the Melbourne Manuscript's text in volume 2, but by 2007 the editorial board had decided that the "circumstantial and internal evidence" that had once "seemed sufficiently strong" had been overruled by new research based on more thorough methodologies, and it was omitted.⁸ Peter Beal's *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts (CELM)* attributes the manuscript to Shirley (ShJ 192). Although Webster is now out of favor and Shirley is currently considered the most likely candidate, the fragment's authorship remains unknown and, in Beal's words, "the matter remains unresolved."⁹ This essay puts forward a new suggestion about the manuscript's authorship.

Despite the text's profile and the controversy that it has inspired, no modernized edition has been published to date in English, and its literary qualities have rarely received comment.¹⁰ At the time of writing, the contents list for the forthcoming Oxford *Complete Works of James Shirley* does not include the Melbourne Manuscript, although it will be discussed briefly in Eugene Giddens's edition of *The Traitor*.¹¹ This essay therefore seeks to release the text from editorial limbo and make it available to a modern readership. A diplomatic edition and a modernized, annotated edition can be

Webster: The Duke of Florence: Autograph Working Draft for a Scene from a Hitherto Unrecorded Tragedy Based on the History of Alessandro dei Medici, Duke of Florence (London, 1986). Pryor's correspondence from this period has now been deposited in the British Library as Add. MS 89082/1/2.

5. I. A. Shapiro, letter, *TLS*, July 4, 1986. Entry ShJ 192 in *CELM* lists several other publications that picked up on the controversy; author page for James Shirley, *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450–1700*, ed. Peter Beal, accessed January 3, 2015, <http://www.celm-ms.org.uk/authors/shirleyjames.html>. To this list can be added *The Antiquarian Book Monthly Review* 13 (1986): 227–29. Dennis Flynn generously permitted me to consult the Shapiro papers currently on deposit at Bentley University; these unpublished notes, which mainly pertain to Shapiro's work on John Donne, do not contain further information. They will eventually return to the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham.

6. Antony Hammond and Doreen DelVecchio, "The Melbourne Manuscript and John Webster: A Reproduction and Transcript," *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988): 1–32.

7. MacDonald P. Jackson, "John Webster, James Shirley, and the Melbourne Manuscript," in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 19, ed. S. P. Cerasano (Cranbury, N.J., 2006), 21–44.

8. MacDonald P. Jackson, "The Webster Canon: A Reassessment," in *The Works of John Webster*, ed. David Gunby, David Carnegie, and MacDonald P. Jackson, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 2007), 3:xxx–xxxix at xxx–xxxix.

9. Author page for James Shirley, *CELM*.

10. Alfred Marnau has translated the fragment into German as *Il Moro, Herzog von Florenz. Ein Webster-Fragment*. See *John Webster: Teufel Wörter* (Nordlingen, Germany, 1986).

11. Eugene Giddens, personal communication; "List of Contributors," OUP Complete Works of James Shirley project pages, University of Warwick website, last modified 2011, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/oupjamesshirley/contributors>.

found in the appendix (at pp. 639 and 647). Readers may find it useful to begin by reading one or both of these. Line references to the text in the body of this essay take three forms: unqualified references are to the modernized edition: “(1)”; references to the manuscript are qualified: “(MS 1)”; references to both editions simultaneously, first diplomatic and then modernized, are presented as “(1/1).” Images of the manuscript are reproduced below and have also been posted on the *Lost Plays Database* website, where they will be accompanied by a full entry in due course.¹²

Plot and Literary Analysis

Most discussions of the Melbourne Manuscript’s content and style have understandably focused on comparisons with Shirley’s finished play. Nevertheless, this draft scene—described by Pryor as “a richly worked, subtly ironic, dense piece of literary composition”—deserves critical appraisal in its own right.¹³

Literary Analysis

The real-life Alessandro de’ Medici, represented in the Melbourne Manuscript by Prince Alexander, was in fact murdered by his favorite courtier Lorenzino, who subsequently claimed he had acted in the civic interest by assassinating a tyrant. Despite the fictional Lorenzo’s protestations of innocence in this fragmentary scene, the signs all point to his guilt—if Alexander were only smart enough to read them correctly. Lorenzo commands this fragment in both prose and verse, magnificently conducting “a bluff and a double-bluff.”¹⁴ While Alexander betrays himself as fearful, upset, and prone to melodrama, Lorenzo consistently retains his cool demeanor and delights in his intellectual superiority. Alexander is first encountered mid-sentence, in a formal group setting, apparently complaining about a “wrong” done to his good judgment and dispatching Alphonso, a courtier, to rectify it. He dismisses “all” (5) in attendance, presumably including guards as well as courtiers. Alexander apparently cannot bring himself to believe the accusation of treason he has recently received and wishes to confront Lorenzo privately, perhaps in order to protect his favorite’s reputation.¹⁵

Alexander’s first words in private testify both to his melodramatic tendencies and to his inability to master complex thought and rhetoric. He invokes an encounter with a personified Death (6), but within a few lines has become confused about whether he is bravely facing down Death, Danger (13), or both together (13–14). He imagines following the trajectory of a moving projectile with “fixed eyes,” then illogically conflates the deep boom of the cannon’s detonation with the high-pitched sound of the cannonball’s movement (“thundering whistle”). Indeed, he seems to imply that

12. Play about the Duke of Florence (BL, Add. MS 88878) page, *Lost Plays Database* website, last modified October 2015, [https://www.lostplays.org/lpd/Play_about_the_Duke_of_Florence_\(BL_Add_MS_88878\)](https://www.lostplays.org/lpd/Play_about_the_Duke_of_Florence_(BL_Add_MS_88878)).

13. Pryor, private communication.

14. Peter Beal, “Papers Most Foul: A Lost Tragedy by John Webster?,” unpublished article commissioned by the *TLS* and kindly shared with me by the author.

15. Depending on directorial decisions (should the actor playing Lorenzo bare his breast at 80–83, for example?), the dispersal of the courtiers might also increase a latent erotic tension in the scene.

the cannon itself travels through the air (“see the cannon fired, then . . . Mark his career,” 10–11). His words are the product of poor mental organization. He ostensibly seeks to test his favorite but acknowledges twice that his conclusion was reached before the analytical process began (71–72; 83–84). On a rhetorical level, he seems aware that a rhyming couplet can convey a dramatic finality (37–38), but after he belatedly realizes that the letter’s subscription reveals his informant’s identity, his speech continues for another three lines (39–41), deflating the effect the couplet might have had. The limitations of the prince’s imaginative repertoire are suggested by his multiple recourse to the personification of abstract terrors (Death, Danger, Treason) and the similarity of the adjectives applied to those personifications (“grisly,” “horrid,” and “Stygian,” all implying dreadful or hellish to behold).

Alexander’s sentences are overwrought and overlong. After line 67, “Treason is like the cockatrice, once seen,” he could simply say “It dies.” Instead he depicts Treason first falling ill, then suffering spasms, and only then dying—or, rather, it “Gives up the ghost” (68), hardly an original construction to a Stuart audience’s ears and also evidence of the prince’s muddling of classical and biblical allusions.¹⁶ In expectation of a comparison, for “then” in line 10 we first hear “than,” but “than” is deferred to line 12 while we are instead given two further qualifying clauses (10–12). The double negative of line 9 (“Not any . . . less fear”) makes the prince’s lines grammatically tortured, and his image of a “beaten” soldier undermines the point he is trying to make about his own valor. He may well experience less terror than a defeated man facing cannon fire, but this still leaves considerable room for alarm. Perhaps the author intended to return and smooth out these problems, but since they depict Alexander’s weak character so consistently, they are probably intentional. Some changes in the manuscript were clearly made *currente calamo*, but if the text was also subject to an immediate edit after drafting, the author would have had an opportunity to refine these elements had he wanted to;¹⁷ more pertinently, Lorenzo himself comments on their riddling quality (14–17) and clearly exploits his master’s intellectual weakness in the lines that follow.

In Lorenzo’s irrepressible verbal energy we can detect the fullest range of the author’s literary skills. Whereas Shirley uses blank verse throughout the equivalent scene in his *The Traitor*, Melbourne’s Lorenzo switches between verse and prose, affording him a wider range of rhetorical effects, including the openly transgressive nature of his bawdy (43–58) and the discursive intimacy of his political theorizing (103–18). Lorenzo’s first words are in verse, delivered while he maintains the pose of a courtier, humoring his prince’s attempts at fanciful language and reminding him of a recent service performed (17–19). But when Alexander descends to sententious cliché (20–21), Lorenzo can restrain himself no longer and begins to mock the prince’s shallow learning. Crucially, however, Lorenzo is also playing for time. Alerted immediately by the prince’s portentous proclamation on death and danger (6–14), he first attempts to sidestep the discussion (14–19) before—in Alexander’s words—adopting

16. The phrase derives from Mark 15:37 and was in common usage: *EEBO* lists 305 instances of “give up the ghost” and 126 for “giving up the ghost” between 1550 and 1650.

17. See my “Papers Most Foul” for more on the manuscript’s revisions.

“a face of harmless mirth” (34) to mislead his credulous master. Guessing the likely contents of the letter, Lorenzo stalls in order to formulate his dissembling response; lines 42 to 58 give him this thinking time, and his stated wish to memorize the letter (65 and stage direction) give him a little longer yet. The prince’s compulsion to deliver a long aside at this point grants Lorenzo disproportionate time for re-reading: the letter takes five to ten seconds to scan once in silence, but Alexander’s lines (66–72) about twenty-five seconds to deliver. Lorenzo’s own tendency toward rhetorical fecundity serves to cover his tracks, most notably when he repeats himself five different ways in lines 63–65 (“a Spartan,” “*laconicè*,” “briefly,” “to the purpose,” “love to the generation of Hercules”).

Lorenzo’s words are simultaneously marked by subtle rhetorical strategies: he reminds Alexander of his status as “favourite” (57, cf. 43) and “*privado*” (51), and gestures toward a shared appreciation of licentious behavior (45–58), simultaneously hinting at his capacity for violence (46–47). Lines 22 to 29, meanwhile, serve to undermine the prince’s confidence in his own intelligence (“If *you* [i.e., you of all people] grow bookish,” 25), a strategy designed to provoke self-doubt. The prince is clearly not the brightest of rulers, and Lorenzo repeatedly exploits this for his own advantage and amusement. Alexander shows himself to be ignorant of both the nature of treason (doubting that a traitor could conceal his intentions, 30–34, 68–70) and treason’s metaphorical representative, the cockatrice (67–69); he thinks he can protect a letter writer simply by tearing off his letter’s subscription (39–41); and, rather dull-wittedly indeed, cannot deduce what Lorenzo means by “prevent” (78–79), despite having raised the threat of assassination himself. Lorenzo consequently allows himself several moments of intellectual audacity, which substantially inform the aesthetic quality of the passage.

When Lorenzo refers to the story of *Oedipus Rex* (16–17), Alexander replies with an apparently related allusion (20–21). However, given the epigrammatic form, perhaps this is simply a proverb derived from Sophocles, which would signal a clichéd reaction to misfortune. Lorenzo’s response suggests that he is scornful of the prince’s learning, since he immediately expands his frame of reference to include Epictetus, Boethius, and Cato the Elder, stoic authorities the ignorant (and unstoical) prince has probably not read. Implying that the prince’s only use for geometry is to measure his courtiers’ erections (28–29), Lorenzo names Dionysius as a leader like Alexander, under whom vice flourished; since he does not pick up on the allusion, Alexander seems to be ignorant of Dionysius’s expulsion, twice, from his own kingdoms and thus misses a joke made at his expense. Dionysius was tutored by Plato himself, a bathetic intellectual disparity between master and servant here replicated in miniature by Alexander and Lorenzo. The only books in which Alexander might express an interest are “horn-book[s]” (26), with their intimations, via the pun on cuckolds’ horns, of sexual misadventure and dishonorable duplicity.

Lorenzo’s tendency to lard his sentences with so many allusions effectively turns his speech into an intertextual performance, a valuable literary tactic for confusing an

unlearned prince. Perhaps the most curious and subtle of those allusions comes in his response to the prince's question "Why, is it true?"; "As the first verity," Lorenzo replies (74). Typically, the phrase "first verity" (*veritas prima*) was used to refer to God, the object of faith; the concept received its fullest theological interrogation in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*.¹⁸ By alluding to this foundational Catholic work, Lorenzo mocks both the language of religion (as he also does in 57–58) and the prince's lack of knowledge, but the ironic nature of his retort here is particularly pointed. The letter has made the prince doubt his faith in his favorite; now Lorenzo demands that Alexander believe the charge against him as he would believe in God, fully and entirely: he *is* a traitor (80), and only his death can lead to "justice" (83). The evidence is "infallible" (73), a word Aquinas uses to distinguish between Aristotelian faith, based on the probable, and "*veritati divinæ quæ est infallibilis*" (divine truth, which is infallible).¹⁹ Alexander's weak response, offering his own death in place of Lorenzo's, reaffirms Lorenzo's supremacy and lays the ground for his forceful and convincing claims to righteousness. Proving Alexander's faith in the letter to be fallible, Lorenzo audaciously reclaims that faith for himself by proving its claims to be true.

The scene deploys a range of stylistic techniques that contribute to the text's aesthetic quality without being necessary to its plot or characterization. It revels in a kind of double allusiveness, since characters mention historical individuals (Sejanus; Cassius) who were also themselves near-contemporary literary characters (in Jonson's *Sejanus* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*). Certain letter-patterns and sounds are picked up and toyed with: "company" (8), "commander" (15), "commendable" (23), "complaint" (45), "compelled" (52), "compulsion" (54), "comfort" (55), "come" (93, 103), "commonwealth" (104, 106); "Go," "Alphonso," "go," "alone," "Alphonso," "go," "so," "motion" (2–6). Internal rhymes and sound patterns assert themselves throughout, such as the four-beat rhythmical partnership of "ma-tri-mo-ny" and "fe-li-ci-ty" (57), or the assonance of "frail ladies in this vale of misery" (57–58).

Source Material for the Plot

Several contemporary sources record the historical story that lies behind this dramatic scene, but one emerges as the most credible likely inspiration for Melbourne's author: Paolo Giovio's *History of His Own Times*. Bernardo Segni's *Istorie fiorentine* and Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* (in Thomas Bedingfield's translation) both relate this tale of Florentine treachery,²⁰ but John Stewart Carter, in his 1965 edition of *The Traitor*, noted that English versions of both Segni's history (1725) and Benedetto Varchi's *Storia*

18. I refer to St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, vol. 31, *Faith: 2a2ae. 1–7*, ed. T. C. O'Brien (Cambridge, 2006), e.g., at 4–9. Incidentally, geometry and a Dionysius (albeit a different one) are both discussed by Aquinas in this passage, suggesting that the writer may have had it in mind, or in front of him, while composing these lines.

19. *Ibid.*, 134–35.

20. Felix Pryor, "John Webster: The Melbourne Manuscript," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook: 1986*, ed. J. M. Brook (Detroit, Mich., 1987), 135. A. P. Riemer identified not Segni's but Machiavelli's *Istorie fiorentine* as a source for Shirley's play; "A Source for Shirley's *The Traitor*," *RES*, new ser., 14 (1963): 380–83.

fiorentina (1720), another candidate, were published too late to provide the basis.²¹ Instead, he pointed to Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* as a more likely source for Shirley's play: the *Heptameron* was available in contemporary translations in the fifty-fourth novel of William Painter's *The Palace of Pleasure* (1567) and the anonymously produced *Queene of Navarres Tales* (1597). N. W. Bawcutt updated this proposal in 2005 with regard to both the Melbourne Manuscript and *The Traitor*. Importantly, Bawcutt discovered in the plots of both texts many more detailed similarities with Paolo Giovio's *History of His Own Times*, first published in Latin in 1550–52; specifically, the historical moment they dramatize is absent from Navarre's version of the story, but present in Giovio's.²²

Bawcutt notes a number of plot similarities and differences across the three texts. In Shirley's *Traitor*, the confrontation takes place in public, whereas Giovio situates it in a bedchamber and Melbourne's author in a setting from which other courtiers have been dismissed. Giovio's Lorenzo is indignant, whereas in *The Traitor* and Melbourne he is humorous. Both Shirley and Melbourne give the name "Castruchio" to the exile who sends warning; in both, Lorenzo notes how he frustrated a previous plot by Cardinal Salviati and that he has not requested large sums of money for his services, unlike "Gonzales the Grand Capitan" (a reference to the historical soldier Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba). One striking observation is that Lorenzo's calm response to the accusation of treachery in Giovio is echoed in Melbourne (49–71/43–65), but not in Shirley's *Traitor*. In Bawcutt's translation, Giovio's version reads:

Not long afterwards Alexander summoned Lorenzo to his bed-chamber, and disclosed what he had heard. To which that traitor of consummate hypocrisy, smiling with a calm and settled countenance, thus replied, that he admitted all the things Strozzi had said to be true, yet they were planned by him over a long period of time with a fair degree of skill. In what safer and more appropriate way, O prince, he said, will the role of a perfect spy be fulfilled than by boasting myself to be in secret your bitter enemy? My purpose obviously being that by means of this subtle dissimulation all the secrets may be plucked from your enemies' hearts, and I may take excellent care of your security and honour—or rather I should say by this diligence of mine, even though it may seem harmful and discreditable to my reputation. Through these words, as we may well believe thought out in advance, he easily turned aside all suspicion on the part of the prince.

21. James Shirley, *The Traitor*, ed. John Stewart Carter (London, 1965), ix. Carter's working notes and an annotated typescript of the edition are preserved at the University of Chicago Library Special Collections Research Center (John Stewart Carter Papers, box 8, files 3–9).

22. N. W. Bawcutt, "The Assassination of Alessandro De' Medici in Early Seventeenth-Century English Drama," *RES*, new ser., 56 (2005): 412–23. Bawcutt acknowledges his debts to and departures from Joyce Bromfield's *De Lorenzino de Médicis à Lorenzaccio: Etude d'un thème historique*, *Etudes de Littérature Etrangère et Comparée* 64 (Paris, 1972).

It is this distinction (primarily, among others), that leads Bawcutt to conclude that two independent dramatists wrote Melbourne and *Traitor*, both drawing from “a modified version of *Giovio* which has yet to be found.”²³ It is thus fitting to turn now to the various other means scholars have employed in the search for Melbourne’s author.

~ Authorship and Attribution

The Melbourne Manuscript is best known for the anonymity of its author. It may have been composed by an otherwise unknown amateur author, albeit one of considerable skill, or one of the professional playwrights whose entire corpus is now lost. If so, the search for an authorial attribution may be futile. Alternatively, the manuscript can be added to the corpus of a known contemporary—but, if so, which one, and how can scholars credibly establish such an ascription? Attempting to locate the author among known contemporary dramatists, modern academic discussions have pointed to only two serious contenders, John Webster and James Shirley. Webster was proposed by Felix Pryor, and his candidacy supported by Antony Hammond and Doreen DelVecchio; I. A. Shapiro argued instead for Shirley, and his proposal was subsequently championed for different reasons by MacDonald P. Jackson. The question of authorship is naturally important to anyone with an interest in the period, but it became particularly crucial in determining whether or not the fragment should appear in the final volume of the Cambridge *Works of John Webster* (it was ultimately rejected by the editors). As Jackson argues, one ideal for attribution studies would be that an author’s “linguistic habits, taken together, are sufficiently idiosyncratic to constitute a kind of signature”;²⁴ a particularly confident attribution, however, would generally require a “convergence of different types of evidence,” including internal and external factors.²⁵

Considerable effort has already been expended on attributing this manuscript, and I do not intend to reproduce all the arguments’ details, but I do wish to survey the key findings, noting historical, paleographical, stylistic, and statistical methods. In the absence of strong external evidence to settle this debate, critical attention has focused on two investigative techniques: a statistical survey of the fragment’s linguistic make-up and close analysis of the handwriting. The two approaches have produced conflicting conclusions, which have proved difficult to reconcile. After a critical summary of the debate to date, I will make a new suggestion about the manuscript’s authorship.

External Evidence and Historical Provenance

An obvious counter-argument to a claim for Webster’s authorship is that he does not mention a play of this nature elsewhere in his writings. Referring to “Some of my other

23. Bawcutt, “Assassination,” 419–20, 423.

24. MacDonald P. Jackson, *Defining Shakespeare: “Pericles” as Test Case* (Oxford, 2003), xi. Harold Love similarly posits that “the issue is not whether individual idiolects and grapholects are indeed different but how these differences are to be detected with a certainty that permits the confident ascription of works to authors”: *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2002), 12.

25. Jackson, “John Webster, James Shirley, and the Melbourne Manuscript” 25.

Works,” Webster listed “*Guise*,” a play now lost but probably written circa 1615.²⁶ Early references to this play imply it is a tragedy but, as René Weis notes, there is some disagreement about *Guise*’s genre.²⁷ If *Guise* were not one of Webster’s “three noble Tragedies,” could the Melbourne Manuscript be the remains of it?²⁸ No other historical evidence seems to support this suggestion, and the title Webster provides would seem to point to the Duke of Guise, whose tragedy had been dramatized in Marlowe’s *The Massacre at Paris* (1592–93). The identification of the manuscript with *Guise* does not withstand much scrutiny. Might details about each contender’s life supply more conclusive evidence?

In his letters to the *TLS*, I. A. Shapiro constructed an argument for the historical provenance of the document and its connection to Shirley. He notes that Shirley studied at Gray’s Inn at the same time as Sir John Coke’s sons John and Thomas, and indeed seems to have been admitted there to compose a masque for the court revels in February 1633 or 1634. Shapiro claims:

We should therefore not be surprised to find that a sheet of manuscript from an early draft of Shirley’s *The Traitor* was in 1640 lying discarded in Gray’s Inn, and used for wrapping up a packet of documents [which were then sent to Sir John Coke’s Derbyshire residence, Melbourne Hall].²⁹

Hammond and DelVecchio speculate instead that the manuscript, although written by Webster, could have ended up in Shirley’s hands at Gray’s Inn. Between 1607 and 1612, there are no records of dramatic publication by Webster, a hiatus that “invites speculation,” but the *non*-existence of a positive attribution to Webster (or anyone else) cannot be admitted as an argument for his authorship.³⁰ A more useful piece of information is that Webster was admitted into the New Inn, in the Middle Temple, in August 1598.³¹ However, it seems more likely that a Shirley manuscript would make its way from the

26. See Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 5:1253–54. A further connection is the fact that Humphrey Moseley included “The Duke of Guize” among a list of his plays made on September 9, 1653, attributing it to Henry Shirley; W. W. Greg, *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, 4 vols. (London, 1939–59), 1:60–61. Bentley could “only speculate” (5:1058–59) about connections between this lost text and Marlowe or Webster.

27. *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays*, ed. René Weis (Oxford, 1996), 403. This play seems to have been printed, and Jackson discusses it in “The Webster Canon,” 3:xxxvii–xxxix. Webster’s dedicatory epistle in *The Devil’s Law Case*, addressed to Sir Thomas Finch, states, “Some of my other Works, as *The white Deuill*, *The Dutchesse of Malfi*, *Guise*, and others, you haue formerly seene”; *Paratexts in English Printed Drama to 1642*, ed. Thomas L. Berger and Sonia Massai, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2014), vol. 1, s.v. “Greg 388.”

28. Samuel Sheppard, writing in 1624–25, quoted in Hammond and DelVecchio, “The Melbourne Manuscript and John Webster,” 7.

29. I. A. Shapiro, letter, *TLS*, July 4, 1986, 736. For evidence of material traffic between the Inns of Court and Melbourne Hall see, e.g., *HMC Cowper*, 2:61: “sent to Melbourne the books of Sir John Coke that were at Gray’s Inn. The law books Mr. Thomas Coke keeps for his own use” (Richard Poole to Coke, August 1, 1634).

30. *ODNB*, s.v. “Webster, John (1578x80–1638?),” by David Gunby, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/28943.

31. *Ibid.*

Inns of Court to the Coke household than one by Webster. In the absence of external evidence that the manuscript was written in Webster's fallow period between 1607 and 1612, when Shirley was between eleven and sixteen years old, the conjectural external evidence advanced by Shapiro seems to point tentatively toward Shirley.

Two other provenance possibilities are worth mentioning, though neither of them proves more conclusive than those already advanced. The Historical Manuscripts Commission recorded many letters at Melbourne Hall exchanged between Coke and Fulke Greville, first Baron Brooke. The manuscript is certainly not in Greville's distinctive hand, and there is no suggestion that he is its author, but since he was a man of literary interests who regularly sent material to Melbourne Hall, there is certainly a chance that the manuscript might derive from his household. Two other related correspondents with extensive collections of literary manuscripts are the elder and younger Edward Conway. The elder man (later first Viscount Conway, d. 1631) was friends with Coke around 1601–2, as numerous letters in *HMC Cowper* attest, and then his colleague as secretary of state. If the manuscript derived from the elder Conway it would have to date from before his death in 1631; his son, the second Viscount Conway (d. 1655), also corresponded with Coke and was known by contemporaries as an energetic transmitter of literary manuscripts.³² Although neither option helps advance the question, these previously unconsidered alternative routes into Melbourne Hall remind us that the existing provenance histories are entirely speculative and do not provide a reliable basis for identifying authorship.

Paleographical Grounds

On the basis of surviving evidence, the authorship question cannot be settled on paleographical grounds, either. Despite some vigorous debate on the matter, Peter Beal has declared the paleographical argument “*sub judice*.”³³ There is no extant example of Webster's hand, and Melbourne is not in a hand identical with known examples of Shirley's.³⁴ Shirley's handwriting has been discussed in the past by reference to documents

32. For both men, see Daniel Starza Smith, *John Donne and the Conway Papers* (Oxford, 2014), *passim*.

33. Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, 4 vols. (London and New York, 1980–93), vol. 2, pt. 2, 325, henceforth *IELM*. Beal's more recent assessment, in *CELM*, confirms that “the situation is no nearer to a consensus following more recent discoveries.” For the original debate, see Shapiro's letter to the *TLS*, cited above (July 4, 1986), and subsequent responses from Felix Pryor (*TLS*, July 18, 1986, 787), Richard Proudfoot (*TLS*, August 22, 1986, 913–14), and Shapiro (*TLS*, August 8, 1986, 865).

34. Carol Chillington suggested that Hand D in the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More* (BL, Harley MS 7368) might be Webster's rather than Shakespeare's, but there is no evidence for such a claim. “Playwrights at Work: Henslowe's, Not Shakespeare's *Book of Sir Thomas More*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 10 (1980): 439–79. Gary Taylor expressed skepticism about Chillington's argument in “The Date and Auspices of the Additions to *Sir Thomas More*,” in *Shakespeare and “Sir Thomas More”*: *Essays on the Play and Its Shakespearian Interest*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill (1989; repr., Cambridge, 2009), 101–30. John Jowett's Arden 3 edition of *Sir Thomas More* (2011) dismisses Chillington's suggestion (see 100n1 and 441n1), citing Charles R. Forker's rejection of the argument in “Webster or Shakespeare? Style, Idiom, Vocabulary, and Spelling in the Additions to *Sir Thomas More*,” in *Shakespeare and “Sir Thomas More*,” ed. Howard-Hill, 151–70.

in the Hertfordshire County Record Office (ASA 5/6, No. 108), a Bodleian manuscript of his poems (MS Rawl. poet. 88), a manuscript of *The Court Secret* at Worcester College, Oxford (MS 120, formerly Plays 9.21), and documents connected to the performance of the masque *The Triumph of Peace* (Longleat House, Whitelocke Papers, Parcel II, item 9). Examining these, Hammond and DelVecchio concluded that the Melbourne Manuscript was not in Shirley's hand. However, this is a small and problematic sample size for comparison. The Hertfordshire documents are now thought to be by John Shirley, vicar and headmaster of St. Alban's Grammar School, rather than the playwright;³⁵ only a few final pages of the Bodleian manuscript and the Worcester College manuscript are believed to be Shirley's autograph (to what known autograph are they being compared, though?);³⁶ and I have seen no certain evidence that the Longleat papers witness Shirley's hand.

Curiously, no one seems to have compared any of these documents to Shirley's will (The National Archives, Kew, PROB 10/993), identified by W. W. Greg as autograph (although with no certain correlative for comparison, we cannot be sure he was right).³⁷ When reproductions of the (assumed) autograph will, the (assumed) autograph parts of the two Oxford manuscripts, and the Melbourne Manuscript are placed alongside one another, it becomes clear that the paleographical approach is doomed in Shirley's case: all four documents differ markedly from one another in virtually every letterform.³⁸ Shirley was apprenticed between 1612 and 1614 to the scrivener William Frith and, as Beal points out, "is therefore likely to have been trained to write different scripts for different purposes."³⁹ The Bodleian manuscript's "fluent calligraphy," for example, shows a hand "at its most elegant"; conversely, the will (which also exists in a formal scribal copy) and Melbourne are both draft documents.⁴⁰ The will was written some thirty to fifty years after Melbourne, causing further methodological problems, since handwriting can change with age. Discrepancies even occur within the Melbourne Manuscript itself—there are differences in the written forms of

35. Author page for James Shirley, *CELM*.

36. P. J. Croft, *Autograph Poetry in the English Language*, 2 vols. (London, 1973), 1:40.

37. For reproductions, see W. W. Greg, *English Literary Autographs*, vol. 2 (London, 1932), plate 95 (b–c), and *IELM*, vol. 2, pt. 2, facsimile 12, after p. xxi. A formal scribal copy can be found at TNA, PROB 11/322, fols. 259v rev.–249r rev.

38. Hammond and DelVecchio ("The Melbourne Manuscript and John Webster," 11) observed that the clear, neat hand of the Worcester College manuscript "could scarcely be more dissimilar" from Melbourne's scrawl. Cf. R. G. Howarth, "A Manuscript of James Shirley's *Court Secret*," *RES* 7 (1931): 302–13, and "A Manuscript of James Shirley's *Court Secret*," *RES* 8 (1932): 203. This bifolium (fols. 29r–30v) has been tipped in; the paper is different from that of the rest of the volume, its staining and dirt patterns do not match, and it was folded for separate storage; a heading on fol. 30v calls it "Induction to ye Court Secret." Other writing on this page has been damaged and is not legible. The fact that the induction was supplied separately to the main body of the text constitutes further evidence about the kinds of piecemeal or "patchy" productions of contemporary dramatic texts explored by Tiffany Stern in *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009).

39. Beal, *IELM*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 323. Cf. J. P. Feil, "James Shirley's Years of Service," *RES*, new ser., 8 (1957): 413–16; *ODNB*, s.v. "Shirley, James," by Ira Clark, last modified May 2015, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/25427; and Arthur Nason, *James Shirley Dramatist* (New York, 1915), one of the few full-length biographical-critical treatments of Shirley.

40. Croft, *Autograph Poetry*, 1:40.

the same words in different parts of the manuscript, for example “death” (MS 8, 16) and “world” (MS 2, 29).

Shapiro claimed the manuscript was “indubitably” in Shirley’s hand: if this were so, the matching document could be produced and the matter settled. Conversely, if we could be sure that Melbourne’s hand was certainly not Shirley’s, then Shirley could be disqualified from the following discussion, since the manuscript evidently shows handwriting in the act of composition. Although the paleographical evidence is inconclusive, and it might seem surprising that a former scrivener’s apprentice could produce something so untidy, the uncertainty about and discrepancy between “known” examples of his hands nevertheless allows that the manuscript *could* be in one of Shirley’s draft hands. Naturally, authorship cannot be proved by an absence of evidence, but the absence of disqualifying factors becomes important when considering the testimony of the fragment’s linguistic features. After doing so, I shall return to the paleographical question with a new suggestion.

Grounds of Vocabulary

A non-paleographical approach was introduced to decide the matter for the purposes of the Cambridge *Works of John Webster*. In *Defining Shakespeare*, MacDonald P. Jackson established a set of rules for studying a play’s linguistic and textual minutiae: contractions (e.g., “ye,” “Traitor:”), *-th* or *-s* verb forms (e.g., “hath” versus “has”), expletives (e.g., “Sfoot”), and alternative connectives (e.g., “between”/“betwixt”) are counted, as are phrases and collocations in the document that occur five or fewer times in a restricted corpus. The corpus Jackson used was all plays of a set time period (1600 to 1640) whose texts were recorded in the database *Literature Online (LION)*. When striking words and phrases resulted in five or fewer *LION* “hits,” they were counted as significantly unusual. Since authors have identifiable linguistic habits, their preferences can in theory be detected, and since words and phrases can be subject to temporary vogues, the likely date of a text can be surmised in order to provide a second layer of identification. For example, in the Melbourne Manuscript’s case, if peculiar phrases cluster in use between 1606 and 1609, they could point to Webster’s authorship, but if they peak around 1630, they could be used to argue for Shirley.⁴¹

Table 1 records the results of a verbal parallel check conducted by Jackson on *LION* using the 560 plays published between 1600 and 1640. The column “*LION* Hits” records how many times an author’s corpus contains the most distinctive words and phrases from the Melbourne Manuscript; this figure is then divided by the number of

41. The rigor of such a technique contrasts with a method that selects the attributionist’s favorite unusual lines and compares them to only a selection of plays that spring to mind. Hammond and DelVecchio, in “The Melbourne Manuscript and John Webster,” drew parallels between the manuscript and Webster’s plays in this manner, but none of them survives a negative check. For example, there are twenty-one instances of the phrase “Jacob’s staff” (one of the phrases selected by Hammond and DelVecchio as distinctively Shirleian) in works between 1600 and 1640, including two by Shirley (*The Bird in the Cage* [1633] and *The Humorous Courtier* [1633]). Furthermore, in *The Humorous Courtier* the phrase is preceded by the words “eyes [. . .] fixed,” while twenty-one lines before “Jacob’s staff” in the manuscript, the author writes “fixed eyes.” MacDonald P. Jackson, lecture, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of London, February 24, 2005; transcript kindly shared by the author.

his surviving plays in order to produce a broad percentage of correlation. These results point convincingly to Shirley, and not just over Webster but over all their known play-writing contemporaries.⁴² Even taking into account Shirley's prolific output (twenty-nine plays between 1600 and 1640), this is an impressive correspondence. The number of plays written by other playwrights matches and even exceeds Shirley's tally, and yet their authorship is not implied by the above test, as table 1 indicates. In terms of links per play, Shirley remains the lead contender. Webster's single link is not exclusively his (the phrase is also used by Shirley), and its significance is weakened by the inclusion in the count not only of his three unaided plays but also of eight collaborative plays.

Linguistic analysis of the same dataset also points to a composition date range that would favor Shirley over Webster. Words and phrases can come into and go out of fashion; unusual language can therefore point to limited date ranges, especially when it is detected in clusters. If certain phrases are used a great deal between 1630 and 1631, say, but rarely in other years, then the presence of those phrases in a text suggests that it was composed around that time. Jackson compiled a list of phrases and collocations in the Melbourne Manuscript and tested them for date specificity. Figures 1 and 2 indicate the patterns we could expect for Webster and Shirley, respectively, based on their most productive writing years. As figure 3 shows, the dates of composition cluster around the early 1630s, peaking in 1635; these plays contain thirty-six of the notable phrases between 1631 and 1635, the precise years between which *The Traitor* was first performed and printed. Even if all links to Shirley are discounted, 1635 still emerges as the year with the most hits, followed by 1632.⁴³

Could Webster's writing possibly show evidence of mid-1630s style? His last published work was a set of verses for an engraving of King James with his family printed after 1633, but this appears to have been a reprint of a lost original of circa 1624. Heywood refers to Webster in the past tense in 1634, a fact that is usually taken as evidence of his death by that date, although the *ODNB* gives "1638?" as his terminal year. He could, therefore, have left a late, unfinished manuscript at his death that came into Shirley's hands and was adapted into *The Traitor*. However, this theory would not account for the text's apparently overwhelming verbal links to Shirley's own writing.

Formalist Analysis of Versification

One final method remains to be discussed, the authorial signature revealed in poetic meter and stress patterns. Basing her conclusions on many years' formalist analysis of early modern dramatic verse, Marina Tarlinskaja has argued that "To mimic a poet's verse rhythm is much harder than to imitate his lexicon and phraseology."⁴⁴ The

42. A full presentation of the data can be found in Jackson, "John Webster, James Shirley, and the Melbourne Manuscript." The graphs and table are my own.

43. The results of a similar search for single unusual words again points toward Shirley: in 1635, five plays were published that used these words (the largest number of plays to do so in this date range), while 1636 and 1637 come in joint second place with four such works each.

44. Marina Tarlinskaja, *Shakespeare and the Versification of English Drama, 1561–1642* (Farnham, U.K., and Burlington, Vt., 2014), 2.

Table 1. Frequency of Melbourne Manuscript’s significantly unusual words and phrases in plays of contemporary dramatists

Author	Number of Plays	LION Hits	Link Percentage
Brome	15	6	40
Chapman	13	5	38.5
Heywood	28	6	21.4
Jonson	47	6	12.8
Massinger	16	8	50
Middleton	38	6	16.7
Shirley	29	21	72.4
Webster	11	1	9.1

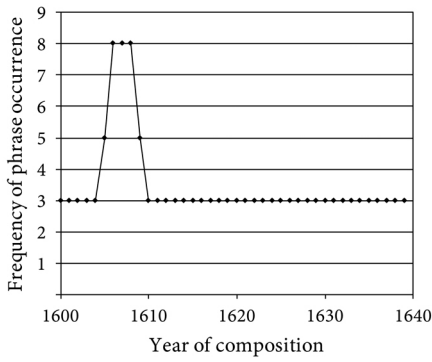


FIGURE 1. Expected results if Webster

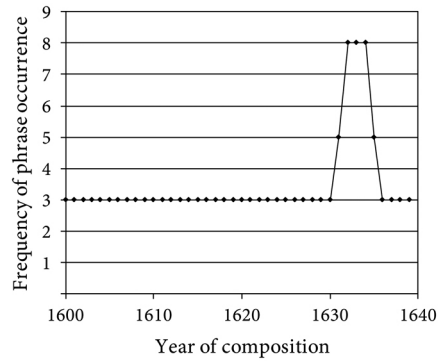


FIGURE 2. Expected results if Shirley

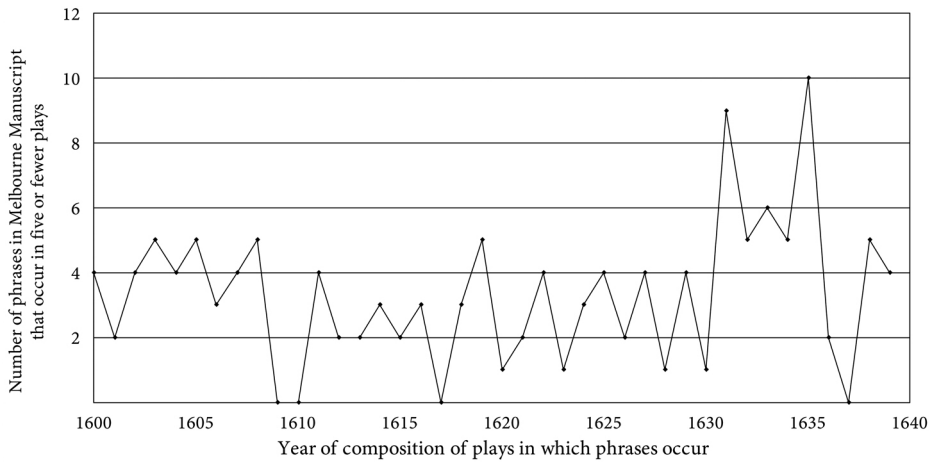


FIGURE 3. Number of times rare phrases in the Melbourne Manuscript occur in other plays, from 1600 to 1640

Tarlinskajan approach, which is set out in full in her 2014 monograph, accounts for various kinds of evidence: patterns of stress on each syllabic position in the iambic line; omitted stress on the tenth syllable; weak or unstressed monosyllables; placement of syntactic breaks along the line; run-on lines; and proportion of enclitic phrases, pleonastic *do*, syllabic *-ed* endings, and disyllabic *-ion* suffixes. Each of these is calculated as a percentage, and these percentages are taken as indicative of authors' metrical style. Because the Melbourne Manuscript contains such a small amount of verse data, "any versification analysis and statistics must be taken with a grain of salt."⁴⁵ Tarlinskaja and Jackson examined the data and surmised that "the versification style of the Melbourne MS, for what it is worth, seems to be closer to Shirley's style than to Webster's," although the evidence was not conclusive enough to warrant publication.

Problems

Has the literary world, therefore, embraced Shirley as the author of the Melbourne Manuscript? Not exactly. *CELM* lists the manuscript among Shirley's works, but with the caveat that "the matter remains unresolved," as noted above. Reservations remain about the handwriting, although I have suggested that the dissimilarity to currently identified Shirley autographs is not an insurmountable problem. What of the style? Jackson seems to show beyond doubt that the Melbourne Manuscript and *The Traitor* could have been written by the same person, yet the instinctive aesthetic judgment of many literary scholars is that the *feel* is palpably different from Shirley's other writings, *The Traitor* prominent among them. A friction clearly remains between two different scholarly notions of "style." Heather Hirschfeld has argued that for early modern authors

"style" had a much more capacious meaning than it does for contemporary stylometrists. . . . Style referred to a wide range of textual effects, from generic choice to imitation of earlier models to arrangements of plot or argument.⁴⁶

Some other modern critics agree. Bawcutt decided that "the stylistic differences, in the broadest sense, between the Melbourne manuscript and Shirley's play are so substantial that I cannot believe the same author wrote both works."⁴⁷ Richard Proudfoot thought that the manuscript evinced much more effective literary writing than Shirley's play.⁴⁸ Considering the theory that Melbourne was an early version of *The Traitor*, Pryor went further: if so, he said, it was "as if a piece for full orchestra had been

45. This and the following quotation are taken from an unpublished study by Tarlinskaja and Jackson. I am grateful to the authors for sharing their data and conclusions with me.

46. Heather Hirschfeld, "For the author's credit': Issues of Authorship in English Renaissance Drama," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre*, ed. Richard Dutton (Oxford, 2009), 441–56, at 452–53.

47. Bawcutt, "Assassination," 423.

48. Richard Proudfoot, letter, *TLS*, June 24, 1986, 651.

restored for a small wind band.”⁴⁹ Despite my methodological preference for the dispassionate evidence of Jackson’s data, I find it hard to disagree with these felt aesthetic judgments.

Since the language of the manuscript ties it quite definitively to 1630–35, the precise period when *The Traitor* was written, performed, and published, we must assume that the texts were contemporary with one another. At this point we are left with six main options. The manuscript could be:

1. a draft of *The Traitor*, by Shirley;
2. an attempted revision of *The Traitor*, by Shirley;
3. a response to or revision of *The Traitor*, by a contemporary;
4. a source for *The Traitor*, by Webster;
5. a source for *The Traitor*, by another author;
6. an entirely independent production drawing on the same source material.⁵⁰

If we choose option 1, we must account for the tangible stylistic differences in the two workings of the same material and the disparity between *The Traitor*’s composition in 1630 and the manuscript’s apparent composition up to five years later (or 1630–35): the manuscript would thus more likely be a draft of a rewrite (option 2) than of the 1630 *Traitor*. Option 2, though, requires us to explain why Shirley would overhaul a successful play and to resolve the handwriting question.

We are thus left asking again whether the manuscript is in Shirley’s hand. If not, whose hand could it be in? In fact, a possible option 6 author exists. Given the apparent resistance of the manuscript to being ascribed either to Webster or Shirley, perhaps we can entertain the candidacy of Anthony Rivers, a pseudonym, possibly for the Jesuit Henry Floyd (ca. 1560–1641) or the Jesuit John Abbot (1587/8–ca. 1650).⁵¹ The playwright Peter Motteux once suggested that “Shirley only ushered [*The Traitor*] in to the Stage; the author of it was one Mr. Rivers, a Jesuit, who wrote it in his confinement at Newgate, where he died.”⁵² “Mr Rivers” is credited as author in the dedication to the 1692 issue of *The Traytor*, then recently revived at Covent Garden (Wing S3487).⁵³ This claim has been rejected by several critics, but without consideration of the Melbourne

49. Pryor, “From Packet 3 to ‘The Duke of Florence,’” 34.

50. Option 6 is favored, as we have seen, by Bawcutt, and Eugene Giddens has expressed similar conclusions (private communication, February 2, 2007).

51. ODNB, s.v. “Rivers, Antony,” by E. C. Marchant, rev. Alison Shell, last modified January 2008, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/23689. Cf. ODNB, s.v. “Floyd, Henry,” by Thomas M. McCoog, last modified May 2007, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/9771, and “Abbot, John (1587/8–c.1650),” by Richard D. Jordan, last modified 2004, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6.

52. Quoted by Edmund Gosse in his introductory notes to the Mermaid edition of *James Shirley* (London and New York, n.d. [ca. 1880–1900]), xviii. This claim is first recorded in *The Gentleman’s Journal*: or, *The Monthly Miscellany* of April 1692 (21), when noticing an imminent performance of “The Traytor, an old Tragedy.” It was repeated in Charles Dibdin’s *Complete History of the English Stage*, 5 vols. (London, 1800), 4:40.

53. “I will not slander it with my Praise, it is Commendation enough, to say the Author was Mr. Rivers” (sig. [A]2r). The publication was dedicated to Donough Maccarthy (1668–1734), the Irish Catholic who had been imprisoned in the Tower for supporting the Jacobite uprising in Ireland in

Manuscript's existence.⁵⁴ As Martin Wiggins has pointed out to me, Sir John Coke, among whose papers the manuscript was found, was actively engaged in spying on Jesuits; the manuscript might therefore derive from a confiscation of a suspect's papers, and its lack of completion could be ascribed to its author's early death in prison.⁵⁵ Various problems attend this ascription, though, not least the chronological distance of both Motteux's statement and the 1692 quarto from the play's original composition, and the fact that Rivers/Floyd/Abbot is not known to have authored any other plays. Most importantly, the 1692 quarto ascribed to Rivers is very close to Shirley's text, and the crucial scene between Lorenzo and Alexander follows Shirley's *Traitor* rather than that recorded in Melbourne. Even if Rivers were shown to have written *The Traitor*, we would be left with very similar authorship questions about the difference between the finished play and the draft fragment.

Perhaps someone going by the name Rivers attempted a version of the same play, now preserved in the Melbourne Manuscript, and perhaps this knowledge continued to circulate. Eventually (the story might go), the name was attached (incorrectly) to the 1692 quarto of Shirley's play when its authorship was reassigned to an imprisoned Jesuit in a dedication to an imprisoned Irish Catholic. If this version of events is true, though, Rivers's language use must have had an extraordinary affinity with James Shirley's. Options 3, 4, 5, and 6 are particularly attractive if we decide that the manuscript's hand is not Shirley's, since this would immediately disqualify him from its authorship. If the author really were an otherwise-unknown writer and we were to have access to his corpus, we would doubtless find even closer verbal parallels—but we can only work with the evidence available to us. Advocates for all these options must therefore account for or convincingly dismiss the overwhelming verbal parallels with Shirley.

A New Suggestion: The Melbourne Manuscript as a Collaboration

Can the Melbourne Manuscript's mysteries ever be "unvolved" to any satisfactory degree? In fact, after this long history of authorship analysis I will end by complicating rather than resolving the issue, by adding an option 7: that the Melbourne Manuscript was written by *two* hands. The first hand (A) starts at the top of fol. 1r and ends after MS 22's "approaching^e happinesse"; the second (B) begins at MS 23 (figure 4) and continues to the bottom of the page (MS 34).

Folios 1v and 2r would seem to be written in B throughout, before A takes over again for the final page. The hands are strikingly different in letter formation, letter size, general neatness, and thickness of pen-stroke. This is not simply a case of differ-

1690 and was stripped of the Earldom of Clancarty in 1691 (ODNB, s.v. "Maccarthy, Donough, styled fourth Earl of Clancarty," by James Jay Carafano, last modified May 2006, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/17378.)

54. Gosse protested that "No one . . . who reads the play will doubt for a moment that it is all written as it now stands by the author whom it represents in so typical a manner. The versification, the arrangement of scenes, the morality, all belong to Shirley and to Shirley only" (*James Shirley*, xviii). Cf. Bentley, *Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 5:1152.

55. Personal communication, October 28, 2014. I am grateful to Dr. Wiggins for urging me to consider the Rivers question. For Coke's involvement in the interrogation of a seminary priest, see *HMC Cowper*, 2:39.

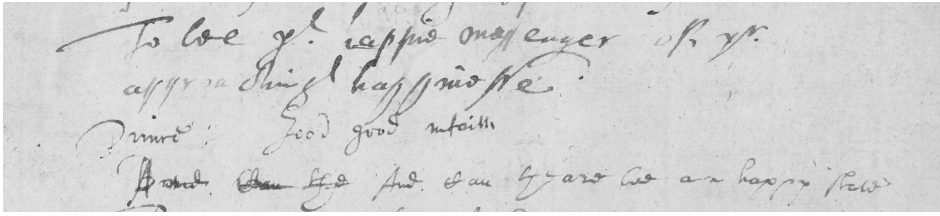


FIGURE 4. Detail from Melbourne Manuscript, lines 21–24.

ent letterforms being used to emphasize odd words and phrases, but a complete switch in the main body of the text.⁵⁶ Once the difference is seen, it becomes difficult to ignore. Hand A is characterized by mixed italic/secretary letters and long extravagant flourishes over *d* and *s*, as well as a thick pen-stroke; Hand B is characterized by a tighter secretary script. Minuscule *h* and *w* are useful differentiators between the two hands on fol. 1r, and in the sample above one can see other obvious differences in the forms of minuscule *c*, *e*, *f*, *g*, *p*, and *y*.

Two hands do not necessarily entail two authors: hands change over time, and writers were trained to use various kinds of script. Yet the apparent return to Hand A on fol. 2v suggests to me that this manuscript was not laid aside for some years and picked up after the author's hand had altered, and the continuity of subject matter argues against the notion that an author was using different hands for different kinds of writing (e.g. verse/prose, or comic/serious). At the very least the difference of hands allows the *possibility* that two authors were responsible for drafting the manuscript.⁵⁷ If so, it would mean that two authors together could have produced a text that a) felt stylistically coherent in itself, b) has close affinities to Shirley's word-usage, and c) has reminded numerous critics of Webster. Can we entertain the idea of a collaboration between Shirley and Webster, two authors whose hands are not reliably witnessed, but whose stylistic signatures have both been detected in the text? Alas, this precise arrangement strikes me as unlikely, but the possibility of collaboration in this manuscript ought to provoke fruitful future methodological discussion. To present-day scholars of the early modern stage who are continually developing new models of collaboration, I hope this will prove a suggestion more exciting than dismaying.

The Melbourne Manuscript presents a particularly interesting authorship question. The fragment has not, to date, moved readers to attempt to distinguish two or more authors' unique contributions to a collaborative play, a process that has had considerable scholarly success but has also been criticized for misunderstanding the nature of literary collaboration. Neither has it inspired critics to think about "socialized"

56. Neither do these mark a moment of pen-sharpening, or ink-dipping; compare the ink change at MS 43–44, which does seem to be such.

57. Regarding my earlier observation about paleographical inconsistencies within the manuscript, it is notable that some of these would be explained by a dual-author theory (e.g., "world," MS 2, MS 29), but others would not (e.g., "death," MS 8, MS 16).

models of authorship, in which the dramatist's role emerges "as a social or discursive construct embedded in particular historical conditions and disciplinary needs," and meaning is created by performers, editors, and publishers as much as by authors.⁵⁸ After all, no performer, editor, or publisher comes between us and this text. Scholars now tend to reject or criticize notions of the author as "an autonomous creator who enjoys a privileged, usually possessive and regulatory, relation to his work and its meaning," but the existence of the Melbourne Manuscript might initially encourage us precisely to credit the creative process fully to an author.⁵⁹ Here, it would seem, is a vital insight into the individual's creative moment, when the ideas passed directly from the brain onto the page. Yet if there really are two hands at work, what we are seeing is not a moment of spontaneous solo artistry but a negotiation between two collaborators sitting in the same room, excitedly sharing ideas.⁶⁰ If two (or more) authors are working together in this fashion, how confident can we be about the methods of stylometrics—whether Jackson's or more recent models—which would seem to depend on "pure" data? One hand, even in the act of composition, does not necessarily signal one voice or one set of ideas.

We may be no closer to matching a name with this text, but the multiple difficulties in attributing authorship presented in this essay offer a salutary caution not only to attributionists but also to theater historians and textual scholars. We must be careful not to think of the Melbourne Manuscript as a literary artifact entirely unmediated by the influence of others. The immediacy of this extremely rare authorial draft manuscript blinds us to a host of other relationships that potentially underlie any dramatic text: the financial imperatives that encouraged the writing process to begin, the actors intended for each role, the discussions with the theater proprietor who would bring the text to the stage.⁶¹ The issue of authorship intersects closely with an understanding of early modern literary production as conversational, at least partly imitative, and densely allusive. Authorship questions can therefore urge scholars to turn their attention back to literary style. In the continued absence of an identifiable author—or authors—the Melbourne Manuscript's considerable aesthetic qualities should be appreciated on their own merits.

This research began in 2004 during an MA degree at University College London. Its twelve-year gestation has allowed me to benefit from the advice of many insightful readers, as well as the support of many colleagues at UCL, the University of Reading, the University of Oxford, Lincoln College, and King's College London. Henry Woudhuysen, who has commented on multiple drafts of this essay with his typical generosity and attention to detail, introduced me to the manuscript and facilitated a meeting I convened in 2005 with MacDonald P. Jackson, Felix Pryor, and


58. Hirschfeld, "For the author's credit," 442. I derive my understanding of this model chiefly from D. F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London, 1986).

59. Hirschfeld, "For the author's credit," 442.

60. One is put in mind of Kyd and Marlowe, under different circumstances, "wrytinge in one chamber twoe yeares synce" (BL, Harley MS 6849, fol. 218), cited in *ODNB*, s.v. "Kyd, Thomas," by J. R. Mulryne, last modified 2004, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/15816.

61. See diagram 1 in Smith, "Papers Most Foul," for a visual model of the sociology of the play-writing process.

Hilton Kelliher. I am grateful to all participants for taking a young graduate student's work so seriously and for extensive discussion on this topic since then. During my time as a research assistant on the Oxford *Complete Works of James Shirley*, Barbara Ravelhofer encouraged me to revise the edition for publication and to present it at the Editing Now: James Shirley conference, University of Durham, September 19–21, 2012. I am indebted to Professor Ravelhofer and the AHRC-funded James Shirley Project, 1596–1666, for their considerable support, and to delegates at Editing Now for their advice, particularly Marina Tarlinskaja and Brian Vickers. Amy Bowles invited me to present my findings to the Early Modern Interdisciplinary seminar in Cambridge in November 2015, where I received much useful critical feedback. Tiffany Stern's detailed suggestions substantially strengthened both the edition and the commentary. Kate Needham guided me to numerous new literary and performative interpretations of the text, and many friends and colleagues have offered helpful suggestions about illegible words in the manuscript. Jake Wiseman capably assisted with proofreading at a late stage. In Sara K. Austin at the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, I was lucky to work with an extremely sensitive and careful editor who was alert to the many intricacies of this document. Finally, I am grateful to the British Library for permission to reproduce images of the manuscript.

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appendix overleaf

Appendix

The Melbourne Manuscript—Diplomatic and Modernized Editions

From October 18, 1989, the original manuscript was on loan to the British Library (Loan 98), courtesy of the Marquess and Marchioness of Lothian; it was incorporated into the permanent collection in May 2005. In addition to the images provided below, and those published on the *Lost Plays Database*, a scaled-down version of the manuscript is reproduced in Hammond and DelVecchio's article and some pages can be seen in the original sales catalogues.⁶² The sheet of writing paper measures approximately 390mm by 305mm, folded once to make four pages of 195mm by 305mm, and bears a pot watermark containing the initials "PD."⁶³ The longest sides of the unfolded sheet are deckle-edged, and the shorter sides are part deckled and part trimmed. There are 144 lines divided almost equally per page: fol. 1r, 1–34; fol. 1v, 35–70; fol. 2r, 71–104; fol. 2v, 105–144. Restoration work conducted by Christopher Clarkson between 1986 and 1988 repaired a tear in the center of the foot of the sheet and patched a hole in fol. 2, before the document was enclosed between polycarbonate sheets in June 1988; an attempt was made to preserve "the subtle paper textures, [and] deposits of dusting powder."⁶⁴

Diplomatic Transcript—Editorial Conventions

Editorial conventions follow Malone Society publications with some modifications.⁶⁵

[x] = deletions

<x> = lacunae/conjectural readings

\x/ = insertions by interlineation

Commander/a part = letter in italics signified by tilde/crossed *p*-descender

Alternative readings by Hammond and DelVecchio ("HD") are noted below the text, excluding our different presentations of *i/j* and *I/J*. Pryor's sale-catalogue transcript was an "approximate version" and not intended to be a scholarly edition, so my departures from it are not noted. Lineation does not account for the "2" at the head of fol. 1r. Whether in one hand or two, the text is marked by a mixture of secretary and italic letterforms throughout. I have not distinguished between these in my transcript, although some distinction may have been made for emphasis (see, e.g., "Sphinx" in MS 20). The manuscript witnesses two sizes of minuscule *c*, which are not distinguished in my transcript. In the textual notes, "amended" signifies an original authorial change from one letter or word to another, e.g., by overwriting (as opposed to an editorial emendation of my own).

62. Fol. 1v of the manuscript is reproduced in Peter Beal, *A Dictionary of Manuscript Terminology, 1450–2000* (Oxford, 2008), 164; and Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (London, 1997), 8.

63. A sketch of the watermark is provided in Hammond and DelVecchio, "The Melbourne Manuscript and John Webster," 2.

64. Christopher Clarkson, "A Fragmentary Manuscript by John Webster (?)," 1986–88, notes held with BL, Add. MS 88878.

65. Conventions originally derived from Thomas Middleton, *Hengist, King of Kent, or the Mayor of Queenborough*, ed. Grace Ioppolo, with John Jowett, G. R. Proudfoot, and H. R. Woudhuysen, Malone Society Reprints 167 (Oxford, 2003).

Modernization—Editorial Principles and General Observations

The Melbourne Manuscript requires significant work in order to make it accessible to a modern reader. This section explains the editorial decisions I have made. In order to avoid the possible deficiencies of an edition that neither makes the text accessible nor reproduces the original, John Russell Brown convincingly argues for an “all *and* nothing” approach, which provides a fully modernized version along with a diplomatic transcript that, in lieu of a facsimile, preserves the appearance of the original.⁶⁶ This approach enables scholars to investigate contemporary spelling and punctuation without pretending that an early modern text’s original reading conditions can be recreated. However, I have also provided facsimile images of the manuscript so that scholars without access to earlier reproductions can examine the hand and the layout.

In modernizing the Melbourne Manuscript, I follow Stanley Wells, who argues that “ordinary modern spelling should be adopted wherever it is not misleading.”⁶⁷ An attempt has been made to differentiate between variant forms of words and variant spellings. I have chosen “grisly” (8) over “grizlie” (MS 10), “cannon” (10) over “Canon” (MS 12), and “in faith” (19) over “infaith” (MS 23) to bring these words in line with modern practice. I have retained the difference between “alone” (3/3) and “all one” (60/51), as the latter subtly communicates a pun on sexual union absent in the former. Indifferent variants of spellings—those that do not affect the meaning of the word—have been standardized, while for semantically significant variants, I use “the spelling now current for the dominant sense.”⁶⁸

In analyzing variants, the editor must decide whether the author was choosing a spelling variant for a particular effect. We can see the author choosing between spelling variants in the Melbourne Manuscript in minor ways, such as changing “heare” to “heere” (MS 42), “shauld” to “should” (MS 47), and “theare” to “theire” (MS 47). These do not seem to alter the effect of the words; rather it would appear that the author is trying to standardize his text to some extent. In MS 75, “haue” is changed to “hath,” and here—followed by “oft”—the alteration makes a euphonic difference, though it is clearly a grammatical correction foremost, rather than a poetic decision. Some words in the manuscript which strike me as distinctive in spelling I have listed here: “cosen” (MS 3); the similarity of “weare,” “heare” (MS 8), and “feare” (MS 11); the double consonant in, e.g., “sett” (MS 9), “lett” (MS 70), and “writt” (MS 78); “shune” (MS 9); “firde” (MS 12); “Carreir” (MS 13); “vnvolue” (MS 19); “infaith” (MS 23); “guift” (MS 33); “recconings” (MS 54); “shalbee” (MS 67); “laconicé” (MS 79); “abhominable” (MS 80); “bloud” (MS 87); and the use of *u* in “wrongue” (MS 1) and “longue” (MS 110). Spellings of the same word can change between lines (“happie” [MS 21]; “happy” [MS 24]), and even within lines (“Danger,” “daunger” [MS 15]; “had,” “hade” [MS 110]).

Contractions that mark substantive variant pronunciation and thus affect scansion—“whatsoeër” (32) and “Whosoëer” (73)—have been marked as such. Speech

66. John Russell Brown, “The Rationale of Old-Spelling Editions of the Plays of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries,” *Studies in Bibliography* 13 (1960): 49–68 at 64. Cf. Arthur Brown, “The Rationale of Old-Spelling Editions of the Plays of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries: A Rejoinder,” *Studies in Bibliography* 13 (1960): 64–76.

67. Stanley Wells, *Modernizing Shakespeare’s Spelling* (Oxford, 1979), 25.

68. *Ibid.*, 11.

prefixes have been expanded and standardized, as have common contractions: “y^e,” “y^r,” “o^r,” “Taylor^r,” and “honor^r.” Following the Arden Shakespeare, I have noted unsyncopated accents in glosses and retained the full “-ed” form for syncopated endings (“Oppressed,” 33; “discovered,” 95). This approach produces a cleaner text, while still acknowledging pronunciation. Similarly, “thundering” (12) and “heaven” (14) are left unmarked. Some debate has been generated by the contraction “a pt” (MS 41), which Hammond and DelVecchio read as “agt,” and expanded to “against,” while admitting this makes little sense syntactically. I have opted for “a pt,” a contraction for “a part.” A crossed *p*-descender commonly signifies the missing letters *ar*, and although the *p* form in this word is unusual (the descender crosses through itself to join to the *t*, a form more common in the author’s *g*-descenders), it bears comparison to the *p* of “potle” (MS 56), and the formation of the bowl of the *p* resembles those of the author’s *ps*, not *gs*. I have modernized to “apart,” since “leave apart in” means something like “dismiss” (see *OED*, “apart,” *adv.*¹, 5a).

The manuscript features full stops more than any other punctuation mark—85 instances, although 49 of these mark contractions (not including contracted speech prefixes). Some of these may be pen-rests, since they occur where we would not expect them: “firde.” (MS 12), “last.” (MS 25), “all.” (MS 60). For speech prefixes, colons are used 13 times and full stops 5 times, one of which (MS 106) has been deleted. Colons (20 times, one of which is in a deleted line, MS 74) and semicolons (23 times) are both used to break up streams of text and to finish passages. There are also 40 commas and 8 question marks. A dash is used to mark the break in “Matri- / monie” (MS 68–69) and “atten- / tiuely” (MS 71–72) but not “subscrip / tion” (MS 47–48). In modernizing, I have punctuated interpretively where this seemed appropriate, for example in Lorenzo’s syntactically ambiguous passage (MS 26–34/22–29) or the exchange in MS 97–99/77–79. I have ignored the unreadable interlineation “er < >” (MS 130—definitely “er,” not “o^r,” as Hammond and DelVecchio saw). I have deleted two accidentally undeleted words: “eare” (MS 37) and “not” (MS 41).

Two other deletions deserve comment. In MS 55 the author changes “Ile Coniure his Coat” to “Ile clapperclaw the villaine,” a much less ambiguous threat. Searches in *EEBO* for “conjure his coat,” “conjure your coat,” and “conjure NEAR coat” produced no analogues, but the phrase may mean something like “strip the coat off his back,” i.e., impoverish the taverner by withdrawing lucrative custom (see *OED*, “conjure,” *v*, 8: “To . . . convey *away*, by the arts of the conjurer or juggler”).⁶⁹ An illegible word in MS 114 may read “Conjurer,” which might have caused an unwanted repetition, possibly explaining the change. The second deletion occurs in the letter to Alexander, where the phrase “Knowe you foster in y^e bosome a serpent.” (MS 74) has been erased. The phrase

69. *Clapperclaw* is relatively common in the period. Shakespeare uses it twice to mean “strike,” in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Host: “He will clapper-claw thee tightly, bully,” 2.3.65) and *Troilus and Cressida* (Thersites: “Now they are clapper-clawing one another; I’ll go look on,” 5.4.1–2); *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed. (Boston, Mass., and New York, 1997). For Shakespeareans, the word’s most interesting appearance is probably in the dedicatory epistle to the 1609 *Troilus* quarto, “A neuer writer, to an euer reader. Newes,” which claims that this “new play” was “neuer stal’d [i.e., staled] with the Stage, neuer clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulgar” (fol. ¶2r); audience applause is here imagined as a mauling by the uncouth masses.

may be slightly cliché (there are 101 results for “bosom NEAR serpent” on *EEBO* between 1600 and 1650), and another serpent has already been mentioned in a recent line (MS 36), two possible reasons for deletion. Furthermore, the warning makes equal sense without this phrase, and its omission makes the letter shorter, as befits its terseness.

Meter and Rhyme

My modernized edition contains 66 lines of verse (1–21; 30–41; 66–72; 74–91; 94–102), mostly pentameter. It is not entirely clear whether “Now take and read” (MS 48), is verse or prose, which could affect these figures. If verse, it should continue the metrically deficient line MS 47—turning it into a hypermetric line instead. Given that the speaker is the prince, who always uses verse in this scene, it has been rendered as verse. Conversely, the sentences recorded in MS 113–15 have been rendered as prose. Given the way they are laid out on the page, running right up to the margin, I think this is more logical than setting them out as very irregular verse. MS 115 would be in iambic pentameter without the interlined “must,” but I think this is a coincidence; MS 116, on the other hand, is a regular verse line, as Lorenzo rouses himself to the first part of his defense. The verse throughout is blank but with occasional rhymes: “go”/“so” (4–5), “air”/“dare” (11–12), “state”/“fate” (20–21), “read”/“deed” (37–38). The latter two seem to serve a literary function, as discussed above, whereas the former two seem more casual effects. The rhyme at 37–38 is apparently created deliberately by the deletion of a line in between (MS 43).

Modernized Edition—Editorial Decisions and Interventions

Certain editorial decisions remain to be discussed. The first set pertains to unreadable words and passages in the manuscript:

1. Lorenzo calls Alexander “a learned Co< >er” (MS 114). I cannot make out this word. The third letter seems more likely to be *n* than *u*, so I have discounted “Courtier.” In this context, other possibilities may include “Conveyer” (one who conveys a devil across the Styx?) or “Conjurer” (one who, like Dr. Faustus, calls up a devil).
2. A conjectural reading of a lacuna in MS 144, “<&>,” has been rendered as “and” (117)
3. In MS 112, the letters *er* can be seen at the end of a lacuna; this may be the end of the word “Alexander,” especially since the prince refers to himself in the third person twice in MS 108; to maintain a clean text I have not recorded these letters in the modernized edition.
4. MS 113 is particularly damaged but seems to read as follows: “well <t>reason <is> a < >gian devill an<d> y<our> <Hono>r.” The adjective before “devill” is not “grim” (or, say, “pilgrim”) as the *i* and *a* are clearly discernible on close inspection. The only word that would seem to make sense here is “Stigian”/“Stygian.”
5. MS 110 features the unusual start “I had I [h] hade liude a thousand yeares too longue.” Hammond and DelVecchio read “hade” as “readie,” and “[h]” as “[All],” leading to the sensible suggestion “I had Allreadie liued...” However, minute inspection with a lightbox and magnifying glass reveals a tiny white speck on the limb of the *h* that makes it look like a Greek *e*: the word is “hade.” There appears to have been some confusion about the start of this line, which was begun several times and not tidied up; the

marginal “I had” may have been inserted to clarify the mess of “I [h] hade.” An additional marginal mark to the left of this line is not legible and has not been noted in the transcription.

I have allowed myself to make a few substantive interventions for the sake of sense. In MS 44 Alexander refers to “the *mention* deed”; I have changed this to “the *mentioned* deed” (38). The manuscript’s phrase “sicke of y^t mother” (MS 62–63) is a non sequitur. The “y[ha]t” would doubtless later have been changed to “y^e,” that is, “the,” since “the mother” was a supposed medical condition, to which Lorenzo alludes with ironic effect (see notes to modernized edition). More ambiguous is the manuscript’s apparently defective “Or it maie tis” (MS 59). Perhaps the author intended this unusual idiom to stand, but I have only found a single equivalent on *EEBO*, from 1642.⁷⁰ More likely, he would have changed “tis” to “be” to produce “Or it may be some oppressed damsel’s petition”—or deleted “it” and added “be” for “Or may be ’tis.” A final possibility is the wordier “Or it may be ’tis.” I have chosen this latter option in order to avoid deleting words which are certainly authorial. The “damosell” of MS 59 has been changed to “damsel’s” (50).

The manuscript poses several other issues for editorial interpretation. First, its use of proper names creates a problem for modernization, since many of its spellings—“Boetius” (MS 26), “Dionisius” (MS 33), “Medices” (MS 75), “saluiatto” (MS 121), “Consales” (MS 133)—do not match with the modern versions Boethius, Dionysius, Medici, Salviatti, Gonzales. Since the original spellings are available in the diplomatic text I have modernized these names for consistency. Secondly, it is unclear whether there should be a comma after “*laconicè*” (64). Is the sense “laconically, briefly, and to the purpose” (three descriptors); “laconically-briefly and to the purpose” (two descriptors, the first an intensified compound); or “laconically, briefly and to the purpose” (i.e., “laconically—that is to say, briefly and to the purpose”)? I suspect the author intended each word to stand separately, because the playful repetition of the concept is both humorously un-Spartan and allows Lorenzo to stall for time, but omitting the comma allows all three interpretations to remain available. Although the manuscript clearly shows a circumflex accent over the terminal *e* of *laconicè*, I have supplied a grave accent in the modernized text to accord with modern editorial practice when signaling pronunciation.

The final and most important problem does not have a diplomatic solution: is “I could wish this latter [i.e., alteration of the government], but not by the oblation of Cassius’ sacrifice” (61–62) the last sentence of the letter, or is it Lorenzo’s first comment after reading it? The latter is attractive because it would make the letter shorter, and therefore more Spartan. There is a subtle humor in the contrast between Lorenzo’s loquacious effervescence and the letter’s brevity, which would be heightened by the line’s reassignment to Lorenzo. Its unnecessary repetition (“oblation” and “sacrifice” essentially mean the same thing) and its allusiveness are characteristic of Lorenzo’s

70. “The Head Naturall is not onely *singulis*, but also *universis membris major Dignitate* (though it may ’tis not so *in universis*, as shall be by and by declared):” William Ball, *A Caveat for Subjects, Moderating the Observer* (London, 1642; Wing B587), 8. Wing P397 repeats the text.

style, and he could deliver it in an ironic, stagey aside for the prince's benefit—"Well, the current ruler isn't up to much, but I don't want him dead!" However, if the sentence belongs to the letter, its writer is admitting that he is indeed disgruntled with the current means of governing—as well a recent exile might be—but is still loyal and wants Alexander to live. Keeping it with the letter allows "Whosoever writ this . . ." to be Lorenzo's immediate response and reassigns the object of "the government" to Lorenzo rather than Alexander: in other words, Alexander is being warned that Lorenzo has become too powerful.⁷¹ This editorial quandary may be of particular interest given recent scholarly work on material letters, representation of letters in playscripts, and letters as stage property.⁷²

The manuscript's stage directions have required some expansion. "Exeunt" in MS 7 is not quite true, since the prince and Lorenzo stay on stage, so I prefer "*Exeunt [Alphonso and courtiers. Manet Prince and Lorenzo]*" (6); the plural does imply that others accompanied Alphonso and thus provides some information about lost portions of the scene. I have clarified the object of "teares the subscrip / tion" for readers unfamiliar with the technical language of letters (MS 47–48). The delivery of speech—whether aside, aloud, or directly to another character—has been clarified in lines 30, 37, 63, and 67 of the modernized edition; the original text does not offer such specific directions for actors' speech. However, the stage direction in MS 71–72 substantially intervenes in the onstage action: "Hee reades y^e Prince atten- / tiuely marking him." This direction participates in the directorial process. Interestingly, the related stage direction in MS 82, "read againe," would appear to be an imperative directed to the actor himself. In modernizing, however, I have standardized to "*Reads again*" (65).

In the modernized edition, proverbs have been checked against Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1950). The quotation from Jonson's *Sejanus* (note to lines 14–17) is from Tom Cain's text in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, gen. eds. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7 vols. (2012), vol. 2.⁷³

71. This editorial issue may have a bearing on the play's politics, since Lorenzo potentially bears comparison to the late favorite George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, who was assassinated in August 1628. Not only is he a corrupting favorite who has come to dominate an easily led prince but his comments about Alexander's writing books and scholarly pretensions could also be interpreted as referring to King James VI and I. This is the kind of issue that might have attracted censorship had the text in its present state ever reached the master of the revels. If the scene was composed as late as 1635, however, a satire on the Duke of Buckingham could seem rather dated.

72. See, e.g., Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford, 2008), passim; Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009), 174–200; J. Gavin Paul, "Cressida's Letter: Readings and Performances in the Shakespearean Archive," *Editing, Performance, Texts*, ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Julie Sanders (Houndmills, U.K., 2014), 146–67.

73. A final note on U.K. and U.S. style: The text of this article, including the notes to the editions, was composed with U.K. spellings and styles. These were changed in accordance with the *Huntington Library Quarterly's* house style. However, the author and journal editor decided after discussion to keep the body text of the modernized edition in U.K. spelling. Although this leads to some inconsistency in relation to the rest of the essay, it keeps the edition in the form in which it has always been conceived. It also retains certain small features that subtly affect the reading experience; for example, titles (e.g., "Prince," "Lord") are capitalized and the possessive form of names such as Cassius and Sejanus is indicated with an apostrophe only.

An' I would wronged y^e judgement of y^e hig^h best policy
 the world adores. See my Alphonso goes
 I am w^h alone I'm my deare cofin
 so print mit. Disburse: Alphonso goes
 And all with draw.
 Sep: As you, highness will see
 must see S. motion. Exordium.
 Prince. Why y^e death was. **hears.**
 And sett wide open his jawes I would not shame
 the chamber for y^e y^ele monster of Conscience
 Not his boate n foldiers with lesse fears
 Dares see the Caon fide. then with his eyes
 Murks his Cover in the respounding air
 And hears his thundring whistle then I dare
 encounter Danger though that danger harts
 Death for his danger attend death.

Lor: By heam my lord
 Not all y^e will I am Comander of
 Can make me ^{as rich} the Oedipus and involved
 the mystery of y^e Sphinx: I came
 to see y^e happy messenger of y^e
 apperaring happiness.

Prince: God good intaim
 And. Can the and can by are as an happy frow
 Before man meets with his last tale.

Lor: might are you heard Epitely or saw you want Godly
 de Confolation or have you read Calas fultorab, well it
 is a considerable thing in a Prince I hope you
 will in bym with soonob, but the whole world may
 laugh at you. If you give soonob use must all
 have fofal and every our brie it for no sooke many
 those we are walled may ^{not} gett obaine just v^el^eant by
 deed of gift ^{and out honblay} ^{as f^ential} ^{as f^ential}
 my out a -warrior but walked out the Jacob's Puffin

FIGURE 5. Melbourne Manuscript, fol. 1r. British Library, Add. MS 88878. © The British Library Board.

2.

And [I should] wrongue y^e iudgement of y^e highest policy
 The world adores. Goe my Alphonso goe
 Leauē vs alone; I & my deare cosen,
 In p^riuat must discourse: Alphonso goe
 And all withdraw. 5
 Alp: As your highnesse wills soe
 Must bee o^r motion: Exeunt.
 Prince. Why yf death weare heare
 And sett wide ope his iawes I would not shune
 The chamber for y^e grizlie monsters Companie. 10
 Not anie beaten soldier with lesse feare
 Dares see the Canon firde. then with fixd eies
 Marke his Carreir in the resounding aire
 And heare his thundring whistle then I dare
 Encounter Danger, though that daunger had 15
 [death] for his [Page] attendant death.
 Lor: By heau'n my Lord
 Not alle y^e witt I am Commander of
 Can make mee [the] \a wise/ OEdipus and vnvolue
 The mysterie of y^e Sphinx: I Came 20
 To bee y^e happie messenger of y^e
 approaching^e happinesse.
 Prince: Good good infaith
 [And Can the] And Can theare bee an happy state
 Before man meetes with his last. fate. 25
 Lor: What are you lucid Epictetus; or haue you read Boetius
 de Consolatione or [haue you read] \els/ Catos sentences; well: it
 is a Commendable thing in a Prince, I hope you
 will in tyme write bookes, that the whole world may
 laugh at you. Yf you growe bookish wee must all 30
 turne schollers, and euery one buie his horne book; marry
 those who are wedded, may [gett] obtaine such volumes by
 deed of guift; \without troubling the stationer/ When Dionisius studied
 Geometrie, theare
 was not a Courtier but walkd with his Iacobs staffe.

3 Leauē] *Leave* (HD) ³ written over *my* 10 chamber] written over *roome* for] written over *nor*
 grizlie] amended 14 dare] possibly amended 15 daunger] *danger* (HD) 16 ¹death . . . attendant] *death*
 for his Page revised to *for his attendant death* 18 Commander] ²*m* signified by tilde over *a* 19 OEdipus]
Oedipus (HD) 20 The] *T* amended *Came*] the mark above this word does not look like the author's
 tildes 24 ¹And] written over *But* ¹Can] written over indecipherable 25 last.] *last* (HD) 26 What]
 amended, possibly from *Nay* lucid] *leane* (HD) 30 ¹you.] period written over erased ?;
 you? (HD) 33 guift;] *guift*: (HD) Dionisius] *dionisius* (HD) *studied*] *s* corrected from *t*

[Fol. 1v]

Prince. Can horrid Treason, which for intrailles hath 35
 The bowels of a serpent, and Conuerts
 Into burnt choler what \soere/ eare hee <ea>tes
 Oppressed Euer with suspecting thoughts,
 sett such a face of harmelesse mirth on it?
 Surely Castruchio banisht from his home 40
 [will] not by these false feares would make mee leaue a part
 In his proscription: heere Lorenzo read
 [The Causes of Alexanders feares]
 \Then haue a hart to doe the mention deed/
 But giue it mee againe; it is not fitt 45
 That who are vigilant for o^r safetie
 should putt in ieopardie theire owne teares the subscrip
 Now take and read; tion

Lorenz. Whats this? some bill exhibited by my Tailo^r against
 mee for not discharging his bill; [slight] \why/ [yf] I hope 50
 ffavorites may runne in debt, and not bee forced to [bee]
 pay them, but bee borne out in greater matters
 then [such small] pettie trifles: or ys it [some] \a/ Complaint
 of some of my Tauerners for his reconings, slide yf
 it bee Ile [Coniure his Coat] \clapperclaw/ the villaine, Ile braine him
 with his owne potle pots; besides withdrawing of my roaring 56
 quaffers from him, his howse shall stand more emptie then
 euer it did in y^e tyme of [plague] \a visitation/ : my anger shall bee more
 terrible than y^e red crosse!: Or it maie tis some \opprest/ damosell
 petition, who[se] hath thought it y^e hight of hono^r: to bee \all. one/ with your
 [ffavorite] priuado, [and I] condescending to her ambition 61
 [haue made her greate] and now fealing sicke of y^t
 mother, wo<uld> haue mee compeld by the title of a fater
 to legitimate y^e vnlawfully begotten progenie; why
 yf thi\e/se [things/ should goe by compulsion I should haue as 65
 many wiues as Salomon: noe \noe/ weele haue it enacted that it
 shalbee comfort enough, and hono^r. enough for anie ladie
 to bee y^e Mistresse of y^e Princes fauorite, and that Matri
 monie is a felicitie beyond y^e expecting of fraile Ladies in
 this vayne of miserie: but in y^e name of goodnesse lett mee 70

37 Into . . . choler] added in margin later eare] left accidentally undeleted 38 suspecting] inspecting (HD) thoughts,] thoughts (HD) 41 not] n amended from l leaue] leane (HD) a part] agt (HD) 42 heere] ²e formed from a 43 The] "The (HD) 44 Then] e amended mention] mentiond (HD) 47 should] o formed from a, d formed from p theire] i formed from a 51 runne] five minims in nn, but almost certainly runne forced] corrected, possibly from forcd 53 ys] corrected 54 slide] d amended from e 55 clapperclaw] ¹c amended from l crosse!:] crosse: (HD) 59 opprest] r amended from l 60 hight] high (HD) all.] all (HD) 62 fealing] written over falling y^t] ye (HD) 65 thi\e/se] amended from this 66 haue] have (HD) enacted] begun as another word 67 ²enough] amended 69 expecting] ing written over ation

words. my Hon^{ble} Lord. I wish the words of Dr. Clarke
 you, what your nearest friends would take from you
 safely. howe'er you believe in y^e 6th point a p^{ro}phet
 lone no trading hath oft bynd abolished y^e deathe
 and alteration in y^e gouernment. I should wish this
 latter; but not ~~the~~ ^{the} relation of Dr. Clarke
 Paritice. ~~It~~ ^{It} whose sent with y^e was
 a Spartan on my life, for with y^e law
 writing and to y^e purpose. with an abhorrence
 scale of hope to y^e generation of sterility.
 He gett it without booke. read againe
 Dr. Clarke. I protest I like y^e doctrine you see
 It wants full force, and after a few paynes
 Give us y^e Ghost. but y^e point was bought out
 The change of mind ~~is~~ ^{is} no greater than during
 The blood in y^e just and y^e ally y^e fane.
 It is all imputed and y^e do as virtue
 make him imputed.
 Lorenzo: Dr. Clarke's
 who saw with this Council had infallible in all y^e things
 Dr. Clarke: why is it true?
 Lorenzo: as y^e first rule
 But I am a Christian y^e
 Heavily. hee having no united mind
 But I before y^e do as y^e guide for helpe.
 my love you y^e full presence
 Dr. Clarke: I would not what and how?
 Lorenzo: I would not what and how?
 Heere take y^e blades; and run quite through a point.
 And if you want a hart or hand to do it,
 you shall in Lorenzo and we shall
 performe this justice.
 Dr. Clarke: why art thou fainter y^e?

FIGURE 7. Melbourne Manuscript, fol. 2r. British Library, Add. MS 88878. © The British Library Board.

[Fol. 2v]

I knowe thou art not by y^e. love thow owest mee tell 105
 [Lor.] mee [what] is theare y^e. least ground of this letter? why
 should that brest harbour y^e. first thought of danger
 Towards Alexander, Alexander would
 [Himselfe] with his owne hands saue thee a killing labor
 I had I [h] hade liude a thousand yeares too longue 110
 < > nearest freinds growe wearie of my being.
 <Taken> <>eep> < >er doubtfull: I aduise thee
 Lor: well treason <is> a < >gian devill an<d> y<our> <Hono>
 a learned Co< >er. it shall Comme vp, and appear
 in its likenesse but first hee \must/ make his waie. 115
 first tell mee Prince what services of state
 haue I not done; how oft discouered
 Plots of y^e. ban<isht> partie, who would innovate
 The forme of g<o>uernment; who did preuent
 <The> last surpris<e> soe [likely] probable 120
 by y^e. conspiracie of saluiatto that man
 of daunger < >d for his Cardinalls cap.
 < > y^e. states of Italie;
 < >ie state.
 Pr: y^e. world saies soe: 125
 Lor: Now I Come to proue my selfe treache< >us; Thereare
 are a thousand waies of doing \good/ services in a Common wealth,
 but are not all \those who doe these services/ y^e. statesmen greate
 intelligencers and
 without this intelligence Can theare bee anie thing done
 in this \Common/ wealth:\er < >/ why it is the spectacles wise men putt
 on to reade others liues, and how they should direct 131
 their owne acts. some with infinite summes corrupt
 those who are able to informe them; Consales y^e.
 Graund Capitan, putt in fferdinands reckoning
 a million of Crownes giuen to spies. Others with an 135

106 [Lor] . . . [what]] the line originally began *Lor. why* or *Lor. my; what* was then written over the second word, before it was deleted; *mee* written over *Lor. what*] *who(?) / my(?)* (HD) 109 *kill[ing]* gap between *kill* and *ing* labor] *labour* (HD) 111 < >] possibly *my first* 112 <Taken>] possibly < >er] possibly *Alexander* 113 well] *well*. (HD) 115 *likenesse*] *likenesse*. (HD) 116 state] *friends*<*hip?*> (HD) 117 *not*] *n* formed from *d* 120 *probable*] *ro* signified by crossed *p* descender 124 state] <*store*>(?) (HD) 126 *Now*] amended *proue*] amended from *show my*] begun as *much*, but *h* not completed, and *my* overwritten *treache*<>us] <*healie..ns*> (HD) 127 *Common*] ²*m* signified by tilde over *o* 128 *those . . . services*] interlined with caret 129 *this*] amended from *that* 130 *this*] amended from *that* *Common*] ²*m* signified by tilde over *o* *wealth*] written over *world* *er* <>] or *if* (HD) 132 *with*] *w* amended from *h* *summes*] ²*m* signified by tilde over *e* 133 *them*] *t* amended 134 *Capitan*] *C* written over *pr*

easier way, and sweeter know their enemies secrets
namely by lying with their wiues or mistresses; this was seianus
tricke with Liuia y^e wife of Drusus; and in o^r. latter
daies it hath beene much more putt in practice:
but for mee to doe Alexander service to deliuer 140
Ilium to y^e Argiues I haue put on y^e Person
of sinon; spoke against Agammemnon, rayld against
y^e. Greekes, thereatened my Prince fauored y^e. Exiles
<&> all for y^e. safety of my Prince, and to discouer y^e. plots of y^e. Exiles.

136 *their*] *i* amended 138 Drusus] *drusus* (HD) 142 *rayld*] *y* amended from *l* 143 *thereatened*] *herea* amended Prince] *Prince*, (HD) 144 Prince,] *Princes*, (HD) Exiles.] *Exiles* (HD)

2.

[PRINCE] And wrong the judgement of the highest policy
 The world adores. Go, my Alphonso, go,
 Leave us alone. I and my dear cousin
 In private must discourse. Alphonso go
 And all withdraw.

ALPHONSO As your highness wills, so 5
 Must be our motion.

Exeunt [Alphonso and courtiers. Manet Prince and Lorenzo]

PRINCE Why, if Death were here
 And set wide ope his jaws I would not shun
 The chamber for the grisly monster's company.
 Not any beaten soldier with less fear
 Dares see the cannon fired, then with fixed eyes 10
 Mark his career in the resounding air
 And hear his thundering whistle, than I dare
 Encounter Danger, though that Danger had
 For his attendant Death.

LORENZO By heaven my Lord,
 Not all the wit I am commander of 15
 Can make me a wise Oedipus and unvolve
 The mystery of your Sphinx. I came
 To be the happy messenger of your
 Approaching happiness.

PRINCE Good, good, in faith,
 And can there be an happy state 20
 Before man meets with his last fate?

0 2] This number is used in the MS, probably to signify the start of a new sheet of writing paper.

1 *And*] The text of this scene fragment begins partway through a sentence.

policy] Strategy, principle, or prudence.

5–6 *As . . . motion*] i.e., Since you order/desire it, we shall depart.

7 *shun*] “To seek safety by concealment or flight from”; “To escape” (*OED*, v., 2a, 4a).

6–13 *Death . . . Danger*] Alexander imagines these abstract threats as personified figures.

8 *chamber*] Chosen instead of “room,” which was deleted in the MS.

grisly] Causing horror, terror, or extreme fear; horrible or terrible to behold.

11 *Mark his career*] Logically, this must mean “follow the cannonball’s path.” Grammatically,

though, “his” refers to “cannon” (10). *resounding*] Echoing.

14 *For . . . death*] This line originally read “Death for his page”; “attendant” contains a pun on “closely consequent.”

16 *unvolve*] Unroll, unravel. Not in *OED* or *EEBO*. Derived from Lat. *volvare*, to roll.

14–17 *By . . . Sphinx*] Cf. Ben Jonson, *Sejanus, His Fall*, “By Jove, I am not Oedipus enough / To understand this Sphinx” (3.1.64–65). Cf. 113–14.

17–19 *I . . . happiness*] Probably a reference to an earlier promise to procure a woman (Amideia in *The Traitor*) for Alexander’s sexual pleasure.

20–21 *And . . . fate?*] A proverb, derived from Sophocles’s *Oedipus Rex*: “deem no man happy, until he passes the end of his life without suffering grief.” Tilley M333.

19 in faith] infaith MS

- LORENZO What, are you lucid Epictetus? Or have you read Boethius' *De Consolatione*, or else Cato's sentences? Well, it is a commendable thing in a Prince: I hope you will in time write books, that the whole world may laugh at you. If you grow bookish we must all turn scholars, 25 and every one buy his horn-book. Marry, those who are wedded may obtain such volumes by deed of gift without troubling the stationer. When Dionysius studied geometry, there was not a courtier but walked with his Jacob's staff.
- PRINCE [*aside*] Can horrid Treason, which for entrails hath 30
The bowels of a serpent, and converts
Into burnt choler whatsoever he eats,
Oppressed ever with suspecting thoughts,
Set such a face of harmless mirth on it?

22 *Epictetus*] Phrygian Stoic (ca. 55–ca. 135) who taught that the end of life was happiness (*eudaimonia*). Not only was he a “lucid” writer, his *Discourses* tells the story of a man who stole a lamp from him: “for a lamp he became a thief, for a lamp he became faithless, for a lamp he became beast-like.” With this pun on *lucerna*, Lorenzo thus alludes obliquely again to the issue of faith.

Boethius] Ancius Manlius Severinus Boethius (ca. 475–524), Roman philosopher and theologian. His *De consolatione philosophiae* (*The Consolation of Philosophy*) was one of the most influential books of the Middle Ages.

23 *Cato's sentences*] Lorenzo is probably referring to Alexander's sententious epigram. Counterfeits of the maxims of Marcus Porcius Cato (Cato the Elder) came to be known as *Catonis disticha*. The distichon is a two-line poetic verse.

24–25 *I . . . at you*] Lorenzo is mocking the prince's lack of learning.

25 *bookish*] In addition to meaning “studious” (*OED*, A. *adj.*, 1a) and, of speech, “in an (overly) formal or literary manner” (B, *adv.*), this word can imply “Having only knowledge acquired from books; (hence) impractical; unworldly” (A. *adj.* 1a).

26 *horn-book*] “A leaf of paper containing the alphabet (often with the addition of the ten digits, some elements of spelling, and the Lord's Prayer) protected by a thin layer of translucent horn” (*OED*). Lorenzo is also punning on the idea of the cuckold's horns.

Marry] Expression of “surprise, astonishment, outrage, etc., or used to give emphasis to one's words” (*OED*, *int.*, 1, now *arch.*).

27 *deed of gift*] Legal term for transfer of property. Lorenzo implies sexual faithlessness (the “horn”-book) is inevitable in marriage and does not need to be sought out.

28 *Dionysius*] Dionysius II (ca. 397 BCE–343 BCE), tyrant of Syracuse, Sicily, in the fourth century BCE. As well as being an oppressive ruler, he was uneducated (like the historical Alessandro), and twice expelled from his own dominions by uprisings. He studied geometry under Plato.

29 *Jacob's staff*] The primary reference is to *OED*, 2b: “An instrument for measuring distances and heights.” Can also mean “A Pilgrim's staff” (1), “An instrument . . . used for taking the altitude of the sun” (2a), or “A staff containing a concealed sword or dagger” (3). In context, it is likely to be a phallic innuendo.

30 *horrid*] Bristling, shaggy, rough; terrible to contemplate.

30–32 *serpent . . . eat*] Possibly a reference to Job 20:14: “Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him.”

32 *burnt choler*] Choler is one of the four humors, supposed to cause irascibility of temper. However, burnt choler (also “choler adust,” “black choler”) signals the humor of melancholy.

33 *Oppressed*] Oppressed.

34] i.e., can someone guilty of treason wear such an innocent face?

Surely Castruccio, banished from his home, 35
 By these false fears would make me leave apart
 In his proscription. [*to Lorenzo*] Here Lorenzo read,
 Then have a heart to do the mentioned deed.
 But give it me again; it is not fit
 That who are vigilant for our safety 40
 Should put in jeopardy their own.

Tears the subscription [off the letter]

Now take and read.

LORENZO What's this? Some bill exhibited by my tailor against me for not
 discharging his bill? Why, I hope favourites may run in debt, and not
 be forced to pay them, but be borne out in greater matters than petty
 trifles. Or is it a complaint of some of my taverners for his reckonings? 45
 'Slid if it be, I'll clapperclaw the villain; I'll brain him with his own
 pottle-pots; besides withdrawing of my roaring quaffers from him, his
 house shall stand more empty than ever it did in the time of a visitation.
 My anger shall be more terrible than the red cross. Or it may be 'tis
 some oppressed damsel's petition, who hath thought it the height of 50

35–37 *Surely . . . proscription*] i.e., could the allegation have been falsely concocted by Castruccio to make me suspect Lorenzo and rescind Castruccio's banishment? Contemporary use of the formula "leave apart" (11 *EEBO* hits, 1550–1650) usually implies "put aside."

36] The line originally began "Will not by these false fears." The first word was then deleted for meter and sense, but "not" was left undeleted, presumably by accident.

37 *proscription*] Banishment; may also connote confiscation of property.

39–41 *it . . . own*] Despite the prince's melodramatic protestations of care, if he were murdered now Lorenzo could simply pick up the discarded subscription and identify his accuser.

42–43 *bill . . . bill*] A pun on two senses of "bill": "a formal petition" (*OED*, *n.*³, 2a) and "A note of charges for goods delivered or services rendered" (*n.*³, 6).

42 *tailor*] In proverbial and allusive phrases tailors often signify disparagement and ridicule (*OED*, "tailor," *n.*¹, 1b).

44–45 *borne . . . trifles*] Lorenzo implies he will pay off his petty debts by performing valuable

services to the state. See *OED*, "bear," *v.*¹, 12a, and "trifle," *n.*, 5a.

45 *some*] i.e., one.

46 'Slid] A petty oath, abbrev. of "God's eyelid." *clapperclaw*] "To claw or scratch with the open hand and nails; to beat, thrash, drub" (*OED*, *v.*, 1). Lorenzo is also punning on two interrelated meanings not given by the *OED*: to pay back and to take vengeance. See, e.g., B. E., *A New Dictionary of the Canting Crew* (1699; Wing E4), sig. C6v ("beat soundly, or paid off in earnest"). For a more contemporary usage, see the title page of John Taylor, *The Scourge of Baseness* (1624; STC 23768): "John Taylor hath curried or clapperclawed, neere a thousand of his bad Debtors." Lorenzo thus means "I'll repay him, all right—by beating him." The MS features here the deleted threat "Ile conuieure his Coat"; see discussion above.

47 *pottle-pots*] Two-quart pots or tankards. *roaring*] A cant term, meaning "uproarious."

48 *visitation*] An outbreak of bubonic plague.

49 *red cross*] The mark made on the doors of infected houses during London plagues.

50 *oppressed*] With possible pun on "pressed" and therefore intimations of sexual contact.

37–38 read, / Then] read, / [The causes of Alexander's fears] / Then MS 49 shall be] shall MS may
 be] maie MS 50 damsel's] damosell MS height] hight MS

honour to be all one with your *privado*. Condescending to her ambition, and now feeling sick of the mother, would have me compelled by the title of a father to legitimate the unlawfully begotten progeny. Why, if these things should go by compulsion I should have as many wives as Solomon. No, no we'll have it enacted that it shall be comfort enough 55 and honour enough for any lady to be the mistress of the Prince's favourite, and that matrimony is a felicity beyond the expecting of frail ladies in this vale of misery. But in the name of goodness let me read.

He reads, the Prince attentively marking him

'My Honoured Lord, I wish you what your nearest friends would take from you: safety. Lorenzo Medici hath oft times 60 avowed your death and alteration of the government. I could wish this latter, but not by the oblation of Cassius' sacrifice.'

[*to himself, aloud*] Whosoever writ this was a Spartan on my life, he writes so *laconicè* briefly and to the purpose, with an abominable deal of love to the generation of Hercules. I'll get it without book. 65

Reads again

51 *all one*] Alone.

privado] A ruler's favorite. With a potential pun on "private," with sexual connotations.

52 *sick . . . mother*] Afflicted with a "wandering uterus" (*OED*, "mother;" *n.*¹, II.8b), also known as "suffocation of the mother" (*suffocatio uteri*). Some medical authorities believed women's wombs became loosed from their moorings and traveled around the body, causing hysteria, fits, suffocation, and a range of other illnesses. Helkiah Crooke's *Mikrokosmographia* (1615; STC 6062) features a whole section "Of the Motions of the Womb"; cf. Edward Jorden, *A Briefe Discourse of a Disease Called the Suffocation of the Mother* (1603; STC 14790). Lorenzo uses the affliction as a metaphor for the hypothetical young woman's pregnancy.

54–55 *as . . . Solomon*] cf. I Kings 11:3: "he had seven hundred wives as queens, and three hundred concubines." These women turned Solomon against God.

55 *enacted*] Written into law.

57 *expecting*] With possible pun on pregnancy; the word was changed from "expectation" in the MS.

frail] Easily broken, destroyed, or shattered; morally weak and liable to temptation.

58 *vale . . . misery*] Rather clichéd way of describ-

ing mortal life. Having mocked the law, Lorenzo now satirically mimics the language of the pulpit. The author's spelling of "vale" is "vayle," which the *OED* lists as a variant of "veil," so perhaps there is a play on "marriage veil."

60 *safety*.] After this period, the MS features a deleted clause: "Knowe you foster in y^r. bosome a serpent"; see discussion above.

61 *avowed*] Promised, sworn to undertake (*OED*, *v.*², 3 and 4), but also sanctioned, justified (*v.*¹, 7).

61–62 *I . . . sacrifice*] The MS is unclear whether this sentence is the last line of the letter or the immediate reaction of Lorenzo.

62 *oblation*] The offer of a sacrificial victim. *Cassius*] In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Cassius wins Brutus's support in the assassination plot against Caesar by sending him forged letters.

63–64 *Spartan . . . laconicè*] Sparta is situated in Laconia in Greece, from which the word "laconic" derives. Spartans were reputedly "distinguished by simplicity, frugality, courage, or brevity of speech" (*OED*, B2). The MS features an accent over the terminal *e* of "laconice," probably to indicate pronunciation.

65 *the generation of Hercules*] the Greeks, i.e., the Spartans.

I'll . . . book] i.e., memorize the letter.

52 the mother] yt mother MS 60 safety. Lorenzo] safety. [Know you foster in your bosom a serpent:] Lorenzo MS 65SD Reads again] read again MS

PRINCE [aside] Treason is like the cockatrice, once seen
 It straight falls sick, and after a few pangs
 Gives up the ghost. But here's no languishing,
 No change of hue, no guilty fear drives back
 The blood into the heart, and pales the face. 70
 He is all innocent, and that clear virtue
 Makes him undaunted.

LORENZO Prince Alexander,
 Whoso'er writ this caveat had infallible intelligence.

PRINCE Why, is it true?

LORENZO As the first verity. 75
 But I am a better physician than
 Æacides: he having wounded cured,
 But I before the blow be given can help.
 My Lord, you shall prevent.

PRINCE Prevent? What? And how?

LORENZO Treason. The means, anticipation. 80
 Here take this blade, and run quite through a traitor.
 And if you want a heart or hand to do it,
 Speak to Lorenzo, and Lorenzo shall
 Perform this justice.

PRINCE Why, art thou faulty then? 85
 I know thou art not. By the love thou owest me, tell
 Me is there the least ground of this letter? Why,
 Should that breast harbour the first thought of danger
 Towards Alexander, Alexander would
 With his own hands save thee a killing labour.

66–68 *cockatrice . . . ghost*] A cockatrice is a mythical creature, with the head, wings, and feet of a cockerel, but the tail of a serpent, ending in a barb. The prince is dangerously mistaken as to its nature. The sight of the cockatrice was supposed to kill the *viewer* immediately. If viewed in the reflection of a mirror the opposite was believed to be the case.

67 *pangs*] Spasms of pain.

68 *languishing*] Weakening, loss of vigor.

72 *undaunted*] Unsubdued, but also unrestrained.

73 *caveat*] Warning.

74 *first verity*] God (*OED*, “verity,” 2c); “the formall obiect of our faith is *veritas prima*, the first veritie, or God himselfe”: Thomas Bell, *The Dovvnefall of Poperie* (1604; STC 1818), 136. While

apparently admitting his guilt, Lorenzo is testing the Prince’s faith in him using the language of Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*.

76 *Æacides*] Greek patronymic, a name for Achilles or Phyrus in the *Aeneid*. Pryor (in his 1986 sale catalogue *John Webster: The Duke of Florence*) suggested that this was a reference to Ajax, and his suicide by his own sword, quoting *The Taming of the Shrew*: “Æacides was Ajax, called so from his grandfather” (3.1.52). However, Achilles is the stronger candidate. Stopping in Mysia on the way to the Trojan War, Achilles wounded King Telephus. Telephus consulted an oracle, which advised: “he that wounded shall heal.” Pieces of Achilles’s spear were applied to the wound, and it healed.

85 *least ground*] i.e., slightest basis.

Ferdinand's reckoning a million of crowns given to spies. Others, 110
 with an easier way, and sweeter, know their enemies' secrets, namely
 by lying with their wives or mistresses. This was Sejanus' trick with
 Livia, the wife of Drusus, and in our latter days it hath been much
 more put in practice. But for me to do Alexander service to deliver
 Ilium to the Argives I have put on the person of Sinon, spoke against 115
 Agamemnon, railed against the Greeks, threatened my Prince,
 favoured the exiles, and all for the safety of my Prince, and to discover
 the plots of the exiles.

Known in Spanish as *El Gran Capitán*, he fought for both Ferdinand II, King of Naples, and Ferdinand II, King of Aragon. Cf. *Traitor* (1.2.146–50): “With my services / I ha’ not starv’d your treasury. The grand / Captain Gonzales accounted King Ferdinand / Three hundred thousand crowns for spies. What bills / Have I brought in for such intelligence?”

112–13 *Sejanus . . . Livia . . . Drusus*] Characters in Jonson’s *Sejanus, His Fall* (1603) as well as historical figures. The real-life Drusus (13 BCE–23 CE) was the son of Emperor Tiberius (42 BCE–37 CE).

Lucius Aelius Sejanus (20 BCE–31 CE), Tiberius’s favorite, seduced Drusus’s wife Claudia Livia Julia (ca. 13 BCE–31 CE), and the two allegedly poisoned Drusus; his death enabled Sejanus to maintain his control over Rome. The phrase “Livia, the wife of Drusus,” appears in “The Argument” to Jonson’s play. *Sejanus* is a fitting reference point for a playwright writing on treachery. Cf. 14–17.

115–16 *Ilium . . . Greeks*] In Homer’s *Iliad*, Sinon pretends to have been abandoned by the Greeks and is thus instrumental in securing the entrance of the wooden horse into Troy.

