

Parallels and Poetry: Shakespeare, Kyd, and *Arden of Faversham*

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IN *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction*, Harold Love asserts that “literary quality is a genuine attribute of writing and one that can be recognised. As such it will be one of the criteria drawn on in conferring or denying attribution.”¹ This seems to me sensible. In reaction to the excesses of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scholars eager to foist onto some lesser dramatist anything of which they disapproved within the plays of the Shakespeare First Folio, there arose a distrust of any attempts at “disintegration” based on subjective assessment of merit. Shakespeare, it was insisted, could write poorly and other playwrights could write well. This is undoubtedly true. But Shakespeare, even at the beginning of his career as dramatist, was a better poet than Thomas Kyd, for example. The author of *The Spanish Tragedy* was a brilliant pioneer of stagecraft and dramatic plot construction, with a flair for the creation of striking theatrical moments and a sense of how to shape action to a climax. The verbal medium he devised—an elaborately patterned rhetoric, in which dialogue can become almost operatic—is an effective enough instrument for his purposes. But it lacks the linguistic subtlety, the lively play of imagery, and the rich metaphorical content that characterize Shakespeare’s dramatic verse. Even without making a value judgement, we could nevertheless say that as poetic dramatists Kyd and Shakespeare exhibit different kinds of imagination and habits of mind.

This article aims to show how this crucial difference between Kyd and Shakespeare helps answer an old question: who wrote the anonymous domestic tragedy *Arden of Faversham*? That play was published in a quarto of 1592, probably having been first performed sometime within the period 1588–91.² Shakespeare’s earliest plays are plausibly dated 1590–91.³ Recent scholarship assigns Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* to 1587–88.⁴ Kyd was also the undoubted author of a translation from Richard Garnier’s French, *Cornelia*, composed not long before Kyd’s death in August 1594.⁵ A strong case has been made, on internal evidence, for thinking that *Soliman and Perseda* is also his. Entered in the Stationers’ Register on November 20, 1592, and published shortly afterward in an undated octavo, it was almost certainly

written after *The Spanish Tragedy*, but whether as early as 1588 or as late as 1591 remains in dispute.⁶

Recently Brian Vickers has argued that *Arden of Faversham*, *The True Chronicle History of King Leir*, *Fair Em the Miller's Daughter of Manchester*, and “parts of Acts 2 and 4, and the whole of Acts 3 and 5” of *1 Henry VI* should be added to Kyd's canon.⁷ Using plagiarism software, he searched pairs of plays for shared three-word phrases (or “triples”) and then, again with electronic aid, checked the substantial lists against a corpus of seventy-five non-Kyd plays “produced before 1596.” He found that *Arden*, *Fair Em*, *King Leir*, and *1 Henry VI* each shared a fair number of triples or more extensive parallels with Kyd's plays alone among those of the period 1580–96. He concluded that the quantity of uniquely shared triples and the quality of the extended parallels clearly indicate Kyd's authorship of the nominated texts.

Elsewhere I have sought to demonstrate that these conclusions are unwarranted.⁸ When the same electronic searches are carried out for three-word sequences shared by *Arden of Faversham* and Shakespeare's *2 Henry VI* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Arden*, a domestic tragedy, yields about as many unique matches with each of the Shakespeare plays, one a history and the other a comedy, as with all three of the canonical Kyd plays combined. Edward Archer clearly intended to ascribe *Arden of Faversham* to Shakespeare in his playlist appended to an edition of *The Old Law* in 1656, and although Archer made many gross blunders, Shakespeare's authorship of the play was considered likely by several nineteenth-century scholars, notable among them being the poet Swinburne.⁹ However, early in the twentieth century several commentators argued for Kyd's authorship of *Arden of Faversham*. Charles Crawford, H. Dugdale Sykes, Félix Carrère, and others made out a case that convinced many, but was summarily dismissed by Kyd's editor Frederick S. Boas and pronounced “thoroughly unconvincing” by Kyd specialist Arthur Freeman.¹⁰

Let us, then, consider some passages in *Arden of Faversham* in relation to the contrasting styles of dramatic poetry of Shakespeare and Kyd. The most persistent feature of Shakespeare's language is its concreteness—its tendency to tie abstractions to physical phenomena, to express thoughts and feelings through images of objects and actions. Shakespeare is so alert to multiple meanings that imagery is often generated by a kind of wordplay. So in *King John*, Austria avers to Arthur that he will not return home

Till Angers and the right thou hast in France,
 Together with that pale, that white-faced shore,
 Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides
 And coops from other lands her islanders,
 Even till that England hedged in with the main,
 That water-wallèd bulwark, still secure

And confident from foreign purposes,
 Even till that utmost corner of the west
 Salute thee for her king.

(2.1.22–30)¹¹

Here “pale,” as a fence or enclosure, leads into “coops” (meaning “encloses for protection”), “hedged in,” and “water-wallèd bulwark,” but also, as denoting pallor, leads into “that white-faced shore.” The chalk cliff-face of the southeastern coast of England (or “Albion”) is thus personified, and so the moribund metaphor in “the foot of a cliff” can be revived and drawn into the personification as a human foot “spurning back” the tides.¹²

Even in Shakespeare’s very earliest plays this mode of operation, in which punning and imagery merge, is in evidence. For instance, in *2 Henry VI*, Suffolk, trying to convince King Henry of the Duke of Gloucester’s hypocrisy, says:

Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep,
 And in his simple show he harbours treason.
 The fox barks not when he would steal the lamb:
 (*To King Henry*)
 No, no, my sovereign; Gloucester is a man
 Unsounded yet, and full of deep deceit.

(3.1.53–57)

The water metaphor in the semi-proverbial first line leads to the verb “harbours” in the next and gives concreteness and life to the otherwise almost dead metaphors of the words “unsounded” and “deep” in the last line. Most writers would refer to depths of deceit without evoking any image, but Shakespeare makes the depths real by juxtaposing “unsounded”—literally not measured with a plummet, as well as figuratively untried or unexamined. Even “The fox barks not when he would steal the lamb,” which seems unrelated to the nautical imagery, is connected to it by an associational link in “bark”: when Shakespeare uses the word “bark” in any sense, other senses are apt to be just below consciousness—the bark of a tree, for instance, and, as here, a sailing vessel (alternatively spelt “barque”).

Arden of Faversham displays the same linguistic awareness. For example, Black Will, thinking of Alice Arden’s promise of payment for acting as her husband’s assassin, says:

Why, this would steel soft-mettled cowardice,
 With which Black Will was never tainted with.

(3.98–99)

“Mettle” is an abstract noun, deriving its meaning “courage” or “spirit” by metaphor from “metal,” of which it is a variant. Here the verb “steel” draws

attention to the original sense: even soft metal would be turned into hard steel, as the financial reward will harden Will's resolve. In her valuable book *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, M. M. Mahood noted that "although Shakespeare frequently puns on *metal* and *mettle*, there are many places in the plays where the two words coalesce into one significance."¹³ They do so in the following passage from *2 Henry IV*, which affords a line remarkably similar to Black Will's. Morton says that report of Hotspur's death:

took fire and heat away
From the best-tempered courage in his troops;
For from his metal was his party steeled;
Which once in him abated, all the rest
Turned on themselves, like dull and heavy lead.

(1.1.112–18)

The fusion of abstract and concrete is complete and either spelling of the key-word would serve. From many other instances of such wordplay may be singled out Romeo's complaint that Juliet has made him effeminate, "And in my temper softened valour's steel" (3.1.115), where "temper" is doubly meaningful, as of course is "tempered" in the *2 Henry IV* passage. A search of the "Literature Online" (*LION*) electronic database reveals no play of 1580–96 that provides parallels as close to Will's "steel soft-mettled cowardice" as do *2 Henry IV* and *Romeo and Juliet*, while the only other instance of "never tainted with" falls within a scene of *1 Henry VI* that has been generally accepted as Shakespeare's (4.5.46), where it again refers to cowardice.¹⁴

Very common in early modern drama and poetry are allusions to the "closet" of the breast or heart. A closet is a small room, cupboard, or cabinet. As Marlowe employs the analogy in *Edward II*, it is stock poetic diction:

My daily diet is heart-breaking sobs,
That almost rents the closet of my heart.

(5.3.21–22)¹⁵

Taken as genuinely figurative language, this is a muddle. Sobs that are consumed ("diet") almost tear or split ("rents") a closet. Words are being used loosely, without interacting to create any sensory stimulus to the imagination. In *Arden of Faversham* cliché is transformed. Will tells Michael:

I am the very man,
Marked in my birth-hour by the Destinies,
To give an end to Arden's life on earth;
Thou but a member but to whet the knife
Whose edge must search the closet of his breast.

(3.159–63)

The verb “search” here shows that the author is not using the word “closet” in any automatic and unimaginative way. His line is genuinely metaphorical. The searching of a closet blends with the kind of probing that Cassius commands from Pindarus: “with this good sword . . . search this bosom” (*Julius Caesar*, 5.3.40–41). Shakespeare twice uses the variant “the closure of my breast” so as to bring out the full force of the metaphor.¹⁶

Analysis of a few representative parallels that Vickers cites between *Arden of Faversham* and *Soliman and Perseda* reveals crucial differences in the way the shared three-word sequences or “triples” are used—differences that point to dissimilar kinds of poetic imagination and hence to separate authors. Among the triples that *Arden of Faversham* shares with *Soliman and Perseda* is “to everlasting night,” preceded in both plays by the verb “to send.” *Soliman and Perseda* has “to send them down to everlasting night” (5.2.110) and has earlier used “down to everlasting night” without the verb (1.1.26).¹⁷ *Arden* has “And Arden sent to everlasting night” (5.9).

But if we consult the contexts in which the phrase occurs, the verbal parallel between the two plays appears less significant than the disparity in poetic quality. In *Arden*, the hired assassin Shakebag, after a brief and evocative tribute to the “sheeting darkness” that facilitates such villainy as he and his accomplice Black Will delight in, concludes that the “night” to which he is about to consign Arden will be an “everlasting one” (5.1–9). Not only is it to be under cover of literal night that Arden is dispatched to figurative night, but woven into the fabric of Shakebag’s speech is an opposition between time and eternity. As Shakebag waits for night (“In which sweet silence such as we triumph,” line 5) to drape the earth in “the black fold of her cloudy robe” (line 3), he says:

The lazy minutes linger on their time,
Loath to give due audit to the hour,
Till in the watch our purpose be complete
And Arden sent to everlasting night.

(5.6–9)

The imagery and thought here are echoed in *The Rape of Lucrece*. Rapist Tarquin, experiencing minor delays as he approaches the sleeping Lucrece’s bedchamber, takes them

. . . as those bars which stop the hourly dial,
Who with a ling’ring stay his course doth let
Till every minute pays the hour his debt.

(327–29)

The “bars” are the lines on the clock face that mark off the minutes, but they are also thought of as obstacles. They both punctuate the dial and appear to

halt the movement of the hand, since early modern clocks “moved with regular jolts rather than a smooth movement.”¹⁸ “Let” means hinder. In both *Arden* and *Lucrece*, time is felt to slow down so as to postpone the moment at which the crime (anticipated as fulfillment) is committed. With “minutes,” “linger,” and “hour” compare “ling’ring,” “minute,” and “hour.” In each case there is also a commercial metaphor. In *Arden* the minutes are “Loath to give due audit to the hour”—they are reluctant to render payment so as to square the final account that is owed (“due”). Similarly Tarquin is thwarted “Till every minute pays the hour his debt.” “Audit” is a word of which Shakespeare is fond. In Sonnet 126 it is used in connection with time. Although Nature seems to have power to “kill” “wretched minutes” and so prevent the Fair Youth from aging, yet Time’s “audit, though delayed, answered must be, / And her quietus is to render thee” (lines 11–12).

In Shakebag’s speech “the watch” is a period of vigilance or “a time division of the night,” but the word also evokes a timepiece or even “the marks of the minutes on a dial-plate.” The word adds to the images of time set against “everlasting night.” The idea of the minutes accumulating to make up the hour at which the assassins’ “purpose be complete” is akin to King Henry’s desire to sit and “carve out dials quaintly, point by point”:

Thereby to see the minutes how they run:
How many makes the hour full complete.

(3 *Henry VI*, 2.5.24–26)

Arden of Faversham is full of anticipations of *Macbeth*, and Shakebag’s “sheeting darkness” is well on the way to Lady Macbeth’s “blanket of the dark” (1.5.52). There are, as Fluellen might have said, bedclothes in both, with their connotations of nighttime. But “sheeting darkness” also carries suggestions of winding-sheets. This is *OED*’s only example of the present participial adjective, meaning “swathing, enfolding.” Its earliest example of the past participial adjective “sheeted” is in *Hamlet*’s “the sheeted dead” (Additional passage A.8), where the sheets are shrouds, and its earliest example of “sheet” as a verb is from *Antony and Cleopatra*, where “snow the pasture sheets” (1.4.65). So Shakebag’s speech displays a typically Shakespearean verbal inventiveness.

In Shakebag’s speech “Black night hath hid the pleasures of the day” and with its “sheeting darkness” conceals the would-be assassins “with the black fold of her cloudy robe,” so that they may send Arden to “everlasting night.” Likewise, in *Richard III* (1.3.264–67), Queen Margaret harangues Gloucester as butcher of her sun-like son (“now in the shade of death”), whose beams “thy cloudy wrath / Hath in eternal darkness folded up.” Gloucester “turns the sun to shade.” Neither Kyd nor Marlowe uses “fold” as noun or verb in connection with darkness. Shakespeare does so not only in *Richard III* but

also in *Venus and Adonis*, where “the merciless and pitchy night” did “Fold in” Adonis, obscuring him from Venus’s sight (821–82), and in *The Rape of Lucrece*, where Tarquin’s crime is “folded up in blind concealing night” (675).

Finally, with regard to the context of the triple “to everlasting night,” when *LION* is set to search all authors living in the years from 1000 to 1700 for juxtapositions of “minute(s),” “hour,” and inflections of the verb “to linger,” it finds only two instances besides those in *Arden of Faversham* and *The Rape of Lucrece*—in the anonymous play *Mucedorus* and in a poem called “The Hour-glass” by Rowland Watkins in *Flamma Sine Fuma* (1662). In *Mucedorus* (Q 1598, B1^r) the lingering is of a person and is quite distinct from “each minute of an hour.” Watkins has:

The sand within the transitory glass
Doth haste, and so our silent minutes pass.
Consider how the ling’ring hour-glass sends
Sand after sand, until the stock it spends.

(*Flamma Sine Fuma*, 1662, E5^v)

Here the sand in the glass “Doth haste” and the hourglass lingers. The ideas are different from those in the *Arden* and *Lucrece* passages, and in any case the poem was written about seventy years later.¹⁹

As poetry, the passage in which “to everlasting night” occurs within *Soliman and Perseda* lacks the interest of the *Arden* lines. Soliman, apostrophizing the dead Erastus, vows that he himself will kill the two janissaries who strangled him; Soliman’s hand

shall help
To send them down to everlasting night,
To wait upon thee through eternal shade.
Thy soul shall not go mourning hence alone.

(5.2.109–12)

There is no complex interplay of images here, just a straightforward reference to the classical descent into Hades. This is true also of Kyd’s first use of the phrase. In the chorus involving Love, Fortune, and Death that opens the play, Death asserts: “I will not down to everlasting night / Till I have moralized this tragedy” (1.1.26–27).

Another triple common to *Arden of Faversham* and *Soliman and Perseda* is “with eager mood.” The dying Soliman entreats Perseda:

And, sweet Perseda, fly not Soliman
Whenas my gliding ghost shall follow thee
With eager mood thorough eternal night.

And now pale death sits on my panting soul
And with revenging ire doth tyrannize.

(5.4.149–53)

Here “eager mood” takes its place in an assembly of nouns preceded by the most obvious epithets: “sweet Perseda,” “gliding ghost,” “eternal night,” “pale death,” “panting soul,” “revenging ire.” The excerpt is a tissue of inert expressions and other men’s inventions.

There could hardly be a greater contrast than with the rich particularity of the lines in which “with eager mood” appears in *Arden*. Greene advises Black Will and Shakebag as they prepare to attack their victim:

Well, take your fittest standings, and once more
Lime your twigs to catch this weary bird.
I’ll leave you, and at your dag’s discharge
Make towards, like the longing water-dog
That coucheth till the fowling-piece be off,
Then seizeth on the prey with eager mood.
Ah, might I see him stretching forth his limbs
As I have seen them beat their wings ere now.

(9.38–45)

The metaphorical hunting scene has been clearly visualized by the poet and vividly presented. A “water-dog” is “a dog trained to retrieve waterfowl.” Shakespeare refers to a “water-spaniel” (“a variety of spaniel, much used for retrieving waterfowl”) in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (3.1.269) and to “water-rugs” (belonging to “a shaggy breed of water-dog”) in *Macbeth* (3.1.95). The retriever crouches, belly to the ground, longing for the moment when the bird is shot, and then dashes to seize the prey “with eager mood”—the phrase assumes a certain concreteness in the context. The eagerness is in the dog’s very nature.

The opening image of “smearing . . . twigs with a sticky substance known as bird-lime to catch birds”²⁰ is one to which Shakespeare frequently returns. There are three such bird-snaring images in *2 Henry VI*: “Madam, myself have limed a bush for her, / And placed a choir of such enticing birds / That she will light to listen to their lays, / And never mount to trouble you again” (1.3.91–94); “And York and impious Beauford that false priest, / Have all limed bushes to betray thy wings, / And fly thou how thou canst, they’ll tangle thee” (2.4.54–56); “Like lime twigs set to catch my wingèd soul” (3.3.16). There are many other cases: “lay lime to tangle her desires” in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (3.2.68); “Birds never limed no secret bushes fear” (*The Rape of Lucrece*, 88), whereas “The bird that hath been limed in a bush / With trembling wings misdoubteth every bush” (*3 Henry VI*, 5.6.13–14); “they are limed with the twigs” (*All’s Well That Ends Well*, 3.5.23–24);

and so on. But Kyd also uses the image in *The Spanish Tragedy*: “I set the trap, he breaks the worthless twigs, / And sees not that wherewith the bird was limed” (3.4.41–42).

It is the detailed picture of the water-dog—which reads like the work of a country man who has experienced hunting for waterfowl at first hand—that most suggests Shakespeare. For anything comparable in the drama of the late 1580s and early 1590s we would have to turn to Shakespeare, as in *1 Henry VI*, 4.2.45–52:

How are we parked and bounded in a pale!—
A little herd of England’s timorous deer
Mazed with a yelping kennel of French curs.
If we be English deer, be then in blood,
Not rascal-like, to fall down with a pinch,
But rather, moody-mad and desperate stags,
Turn on the bloody hounds with heads of steel
And make the cowards stand aloof at bay.

The imagery in that speech, of hunting for deer, governs Arden’s narrative of his dream at 6.6–31.

That Shakespeare had handled a “fowling-piece” is suggested by Robin Goodfellow’s (Puck’s) account, in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, of the “rude mechanicals’” reaction to Bottom’s metamorphosis into an ass. When they catch sight of him:

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun’s report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky—
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly. . . .

(3.2.20–24)

Again we have the fowl, the stalker’s stealthiness (water-dog “couching,” fowler “creeping”), the firing of the gun, the beating of wings. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Page, Ford, Caius, and Evans are said to have gone “a-birding” (3.3.221, 3.5.43, 3.5.119, 4.2.7) and “fowling-pieces” in the Quarto (1602) become “birding-pieces” in the First Folio (1623) (4.2.50).

Both *Arden of Faversham* and *Soliman and Perseda* contain references to “a sudden qualm.” In Kyd’s play, Lucina asks “What ails you, madam, that your colour changes?” and Perseda replies “A sudden qualm” (2.1.49–50). In *Arden*, Franklin asks “What ails you, woman, to cry so suddenly?” and Alice replies “Ah, neighbours, a sudden qualm came over my heart” (14.301–2). Both question and answer share a three-word sequence. But in this case it is worth consulting every instance of the word “qualm” in plays

of 1580–96. Some plays use “qualm” without offering anything much by way of parallelism with *Arden* or *Soliman and Perseda*. Greene’s *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* has “a qualm did cross his stomach then” (1.18)²¹ Greene and Lodge’s *A Looking Glass for London and England* has “to ease a woman when a qualm of kindness come too near her stomach” (1100–1102). Lyly’s *Sapho and Phao* has “or else a woman’s qualm” (3.1, p. 86).

Other plays offer more. Alice’s “qualm came over my heart” is paralleled in “a qualm that often cometh over my heart” of Lyly’s *Endimion* (3.4, p. 170) and in an exchange in Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labour’s Lost*: Katherine remarks, “Lord Longaville said I came o’er his heart. / And trow you what he called me?,” which elicits the Princess’s quip “‘Qualm’, perhaps” (5.2.278–79). Evidently qualms are apt to come over the heart. In *2 Henry VI*, Gloucester says “Some sudden qualm hath struck me at the heart” (1.1.52). In the bad quarto (1594) of the same play this becomes “Pardon, my lord, a sudden qualm came over my heart” (A3^r).²² It is possible that a reporter corrupted the text preserved in the Folio through recollection of Alice’s “a sudden qualm came over my heart.” Whatever the reason, the quarto *Contention* shares with *Arden of Faversham* this uninterrupted seven-word sequence.

But it is Gloucester’s use of the verb “struck” that points to the most significant link with a “qualm” in *Arden*. Gloucester is reading out an agreement that Suffolk has engineered between King Henry and the French King Charles in which lands held by the English are to be released to the French. He breaks off, dropping the paper: “Pardon me, gracious lord. / Some sudden qualm hath struck me at the heart / And dimmed mine eyes that I can read no further” (1.1.51–53). In *Arden of Faversham*, Franklin is urged by Arden to continue his a tale of an adulterous wife. Franklin attempts to excuse himself:

I assure you, sir, you task me much.
A heavy blood is gathered at my heart,
And on a sudden is my wind cut short
As hindereth the passage of my speech.
So fierce a qualm yet ne’er assailed me.

(9.63–67)

In both passages the qualm strikes or assails, is sudden, and affects the heart. The attack stops Gloucester from continuing to read aloud and Franklin from continuing to narrate. In one further mention of a qualm in the drama of 1580–96, Greene writes “A sudden qualm / Assails my heart” in *James IV* (5.1.65–2). Here is the same verb that Franklin employs in *Arden*. I doubt that we can possibly establish relationships of influence or agency between all these early modern qualms, though the parallel between Franklin’s qualm

in *Arden of Faversham* and Gloucester's in *2 Henry VI* strikes me as the most evidential of authorship. But the crucial matter to which I want to draw attention is the Shakespearean way in which "fierce" and "assailèd" interact in Franklin's "So fierce a qualm yet ne'er assailèd me." *2 Henry VI* has "struck" and *James IV* even has "Assails." But the addition of the simple adjective "fierce" brings out the latent metaphor in "assailèd": the two words act upon each other to create a line with real metaphorical life.

To examine one further parallel, Crawford and Sykes, arguing for Kyd's authorship of *Arden of Faversham*, compared "forge distressful looks" in *Arden* (8.56) with "forge alluring looks" in *Soliman and Perseda* (2.1.117). Since *LION* yields no further instances of the forging of looks in English drama of the period 1576–1642, from the opening of the Theatre to the closing of the theatres, there is almost certainly a connection between these two. But studying them in context leads to the conclusion that identity of authorship is most improbable.

In *Arden of Faversham*, Mosby, with characteristic egotism, accuses the sighing Alice of feigning misery only to make him feel miserable too:

Ungentle Alice, thy sorrow is my sore;
Thou know'st it well, and 'tis thy policy
To forge distressful looks to wound a breast
Where lies a heart that dies when thou art sad.

(8.54–57)

The author of *Arden* is alive to the language he is using. The implications of the latent metaphor in "forge" (one forges weapons) are fully appreciated, and carried on in "wounds" and "dies." This strand of imagery begins in the earlier lines of Mosby's speech when he compares Alice's sighs to "a cannon's burst / Discharged against a ruined wall"—sighs that break his "relenting heart in thousand pieces" (51–53); and the word "policy" contributes to the thread with a hint of military strategy. Shakespeare similarly exploits the underlying, primary sense of the verb "forge" in 137:

Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forgèd hooks,
Whereto the judgement of my heart is tied?

(lines 7–8)

The fashioning of hooks from metal (probably with the aid of beams flashing from the eyes) is implicit in this intricate image of false beguiling.

In *Soliman and Perseda*, Perseda exclaims:

Ah, how thine eyes can forge alluring looks
And feign deep oaths to wound poor silly maids.

(2.1.117–18)

Kyd (if it be he) uses “forge” prosaically to mean “contrive” with no interest in its derivation. The word “wound” is present but fails to connect with any other word to generate a metaphorical charge in the lines. How, one may ask, can eyes feign oaths, let alone deep ones? The playwright responsible for *Soliman and Perseda* did not trouble himself with such questions. The author of *Arden of Faversham* awakes the dormant metaphors in words; the author of *Soliman and Perseda* bundles together his “alluring looks,” “deep oaths,” and “silly maids,” and lets the metaphors sleep.

In illustration of the Shakespearean vitality of much of the language of *Arden of Faversham*, I cited the way that the verb “steel” brings out the “metal” in “soft-mettled” in Black Will’s avowal of his resolve to kill Arden. His speech continues

I tell thee, Greene, the forlorn traveller
Whose lips are glued with summer’s parching heat
Ne’er longed so much to see a running brook
As I to finish Arden’s tragedy.

(3.100–103)

Not only does the language have a vividness and concreteness never on display in Kyd’s plays, but it contains three significant links to early Shakespeare. The phrase “summer’s parching heat” is found in *2 Henry VI*, which has “In winter’s cold and summer’s parching heat” (1.1.78). It appears in no other play of 1576–1642, and the whole of *LION* English drama contains only one eighteenth- and one nineteenth-century echo of the phrase.²³ In the very next line “a running brook” is shared with *The Taming of the Shrew* (Ind.2.49) and with no other play of 1576–1642. Indeed, the phrase appears in only one other *LION* work—whether poetry, drama, or prose—before the nineteenth century, and that is John Studley’s translation of Seneca’s *Medea*, a closet drama of 1566. Thirdly, “Whose lips are glued” has its counterpart in “That glues my lips” in *3 Henry VI* (5.2.38). This image of glued lips constitutes a third Shakespearean link that is unique in early modern drama. And the three links—within two consecutive lines—are to three of Shakespeare’s first four plays, according to the Oxford *Textual Companion*, which dates them 1590–91.

Moreover, the *Arden* lines have close parallels in *Venus and Adonis*, written in 1592–93 and published in 1593. Venus eagerly anticipates a kiss from Adonis: her “lips were ready” but he “turns his lips another way” (89–90). Then “Never did passenger in summer’s heat / More thirst for drink than she for this good turn” (91–92). In both *Arden* and Shakespeare’s poem the “lips” of the traveler (or “passenger,” which means traveler) thirst for drink in “summer’s . . . heat.” The other element in the *Arden* image is present in a later stanza of *Venus and Adonis*, where Venus presses her “thirsty lips”

(543) on Adonis's mouth, until the pair, "Their lips together glued, fall to the earth" (545).²⁴

The Shakespearean linguistic alertness typified by the juxtaposition of "fierce" and "assailed" in relation to a "qualm" thus appears within a speech that not only has a Shakespearean poetic vigor but displays striking parallels with Shakespeare's earliest works.

One more example of Shakespearean wordplay-cum-image-making in *Arden of Faversham* seems worth noting, since it includes a submerged pun found also in *Macbeth*, which, as mentioned above, *Arden* often anticipates.²⁵ Quarreling with Alice, her lover Mosby protests that, in carrying on an affair with her:

I left the marriage of an honest maid
Whose dowry would have weighed down all thy wealth,
Whose beauty and demeanour far exceeded thee.
This certain good I lost for changing bad,
And wrapped my credit in thy company.
I was bewitched—that is no theme of thine!—
And thou unhallowed hast enchanted me.
But I will break thy spells and exorcisms
And put another sight upon these eyes
That showed my heart a raven for a dove.
Thou art not fair—I viewed thee not till now;
Thou art not kind—till now I knew thee not.
And now the rain hath beaten off thy gilt
Thy worthless copper shows thee counterfeit.

(8.88–94)

Mosby's character is here reflected in the imagery he uses. His concern with the "dowry" and the "wealth" that he has lost reappears in puns on "changing," "credit," and "company," and in the final image in which he compares Alice to a counterfeit gold coin. "Credit" is good reputation in general but also has specific application to financial credit-worthiness or solvency; "company" is both society and a business concern. Later in the play the commercial sense of "company" draws out the metaphorical content of "purchase": "Your company hath purchased me ill friends" (14.209).²⁶ Shakespeare several times quibbles on "company."²⁷ *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* affords a good illustration. Valentine says: "Sir Thurio borrows his wit from your ladyship's looks, and spends what he borrows kindly in your company" (2.4.36–40), and the commercial references are continued in "bankrupt," "exchequer," and "treasure" (40–42). Shakespeare brings *Arden's* "credit" and "company" together in *The Merchant of Venice*, where Tubal tells Shylock: "There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice" (3.1.105–6).

The opposing of dove and raven to contrast value and worthlessness or to emphasize the deceptive nature of appearances is Shakespearean, as is the image of the gilding of copper to symbolize falseness in love.²⁸ But it is the word “wraft” to which I want to draw attention. In *Shakespeare’s Wordplay*, Mahood notes Banquo’s remarks about Macbeth’s strange behavior when he learns that he has been made Thane of Cawdor: “Look how our partner’s rapt” (1.3.141). As she says, “the secondary meaning of ‘wrapped’ is shown to be in the air by his next words”:

New honours come upon him.
Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
But with the aid of use.

(1.3.143–45)²⁹

Mosby’s unconscious wordplay on “wrapped” (meaning involved, implicated, invested)³⁰ works in the other direction, the homophone “rapt” connecting with the subsequent “bewitched,” “enchanted,” “spells,” and “exorcisms.”

Mahood quotes Coleridge’s appreciation of Shakespeare’s “never broken chain of imagery, always vivid, and because unbroken, often minute.” As she explains, illustrating the point by analysis of a passage in *Romeo and Juliet*, “it remains unbroken because its images are linked by unconscious wordplay.”³¹ In an earlier article I showed how four threads of imagery—relating to horticulture, spoken and written language, conflict and violence, and parts of the body—run through Arden’s twenty-line speech in scene 4 (1–20), being inherent in words that often carry multiple meanings and interweave the threads.³² Complex sensory content animates the emotional, ethical, and theological abstractions. The rhetorical structure of the speech, at least in its opening lines, is scarcely less elaborate than that of certain set pieces in Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*, but the interplay of words and images fleshes out the skeleton of rhetoric in ways typical of Shakespeare but not of Kyd. And the sources of imagery in *Arden of Faversham* are those upon which, early in his career, Shakespeare repeatedly draws.

In the present article I have examined a handful of phrases shared between *Arden of Faversham* and *Soliman and Perseda* or other early modern plays. Their treatment in *Arden*, as opposed to their treatment by Kyd and others, exemplifies, in a small compass, the essence of the Shakespearean process described by Coleridge and analyzed by Mahood. There can be no doubt of the immense value of numerical approaches to questions of authorship. Objective counts of particular features can discriminate between one playwright and another. But traditional literary critical methods also have their place. Vickers’s pioneering employment of plagiarism software to identify sequences of words that anonymous plays share with Kyd has considerable po-

tential. But when his results for numbers of three-word sequences that *Arden of Faversham* shares with Kyd but not with other plays of 1580–96 are set against the results of a search of three-word sequences similarly unique to *Arden of Faversham* and 2 *Henry VI* or *The Taming of the Shrew*, it turns out that each of the two early Shakespeare plays yields many more unique triples than does any play by Kyd. And analysis of the literary qualities of the contexts in which shared triples occur within *Arden of Faversham* and *Soliman and Perseda* reinforces the verdict that Kyd is much less likely than Shakespeare to have written the pertinent passages in *Arden*. Swinburne had no head for statistics, but, as a poet himself, he recognized that the play contained dramatic verse of Shakespearean distinction. Shakespeare remains a strong candidate for the authorship of at least a substantial part of *Arden of Faversham*.

Notes

1. Harold Love, *Attributing Authorship: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94.

2. Matters of text and dating are ably discussed by M. L. Wine in his Revels edition, *The Tragedy of Master Arden of Faversham* (London: Methuen, 1973), from which my quotations from the play are taken and to which my scene and line references refer: Wine divides the play into scenes only.

3. I have relied on the Oxford chronology, in Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor with John Jowett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 69–133.

4. Lukas Erne, *Beyond The Spanish Tragedy: A Study of the Works of Thomas Kyd* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 58–59.

5. *ibid.*, 203–16.

6. For authorship and date of *Soliman and Perseda*, see Erne, *Beyond the Spanish Tragedy*, 157–67. Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) inclined toward 1591–92. In *The Tragedye of Solyman and Perseda Edited from the Original Texts* (New York: Garland, 1991), John J. Murray thinks it “not unreasonable to conclude . . . that Kyd reworked his play in its present surviving form around the year 1591” (xii). It is listed under 1590 in Alfred Harbage rev. S. Schoenbaum, *Annals of English Drama 975–1700* (London: Methuen, 1964). Scholarship on the play was surveyed by Jill Levenson, “Anonymous Plays: *Soliman and Perseda*,” in *The Predecessors of Shakespeare: A Survey and Bibliography of Recent Studies in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. Terence P. Logan and Denzell S. Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 230–39.

7. Brian Vickers, “Thomas Kyd, secret sharer,” *Times Literary Supplement*, April 18, 2008, 13–15. The data on which this article draws are posted on the website of the London Forum for Authorship Studies: <http://ies.sas.ac.uk/events/seminars/LFAS/index.htm>.

8. MacD. P. Jackson, "New Research on the Dramatic Canon of Thomas Kyd," *Research Opportunities in Medieval and Renaissance Drama* 47 (2007): 107–27.

9. That Archer intended to ascribe *Arden of Feversham* to Shakespeare, but that columns were accidentally misaligned was demonstrated by W. W. Greg, "Shakespeare and *Arden of Feversham*," *Review of English Studies* 21 (1945): 134–36. Greg assessed the reliability of attributions in Archer's and other seventeenth-century playlists in "Author Attributions in the Early Play-Lists, 1656–1671," *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* 2 (1938–45): 305–29. For Swinburne, see Algernon Charles Swinburne, *A Study of Shakespeare* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1880), 129–41. For other supporters of the Shakespeare theory, see the account of scholarship on the authorship question by M. P. Jackson, "Material for an Edition of *Arden of Feversham*" (BLitt thesis, University of Oxford, 1963), 129–264, and Levenson, "Anonymous Plays: *Arden of Feversham*," in *Predecessors*, 240–52; also Wine, *tragedy of Master Arden*, lxxxix–xcii.

10. Frederick S. Boas, ed., *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), lxxxix; Arthur Freeman, *Thomas Kyd: Facts and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 179–80. The case for Kyd is assessed by Jackson, "Materials," 91–115, and fully documented by Levenson, *Predecessors*, 240–52.

11. I quote from *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works: Compact Edition*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). But throughout this article I have used the familiar titles *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI*, rather than Oxford's *The First Part of the Contention* and *Richard Duke of York*.

12. This passage was discussed by W. H. Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (London: Methuen, 1951), 75. Throughout the present article my definitions of words are taken from *OED*.

13. M. M. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (London: Methuen, 1957), 16.

14. At <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk>. In quoting from *LION* I modernize spelling and punctuation. For the authenticity of *1 Henry VI*, 4.5, see Brian Vickers, "Incomplete Shakespeare: Or, Denying Coauthorship in *1 Henry VI*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 58 (2007): 311–52, especially 339, where the ascription of 4.5 to Shakespeare is pronounced "uncontroversial."

15. *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. J. B. Steane (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1969, repr. 1975).

16. *Venus and Adonis*, 782; Sonnet 48.

17. I quote *Soliman and Perseda* from *Works*, ed. Boas, but modernize his old spelling and punctuation.

18. William Shakespeare, *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), ed. Colin Burrow, commentary on *Lucrece*, 327.

19. Shakespeare seems to have unconsciously recalled the *Arden* passage in *Cymbeline*, 5.6.51–53, where the words "minute," "ling'ring," "time," "purposed," and "watching" echo the vocabulary of Shakebag's speech, and the construction "in which" (plus noun) recurs.

20. Wine, commentary on *Arden*, 9.39.

21. This excerpt and those that follow are modernized from *LION* and may be found by keying words into the search boxes, but references are to the following editions: Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, ed. Daniel Seltzer (Lincoln:

University of Nebraska Press, 1963), Regents Renaissance Drama; Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene, *A Looking-Glass for London and England*, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), Malone Society Reprint; *Sapho and Phao* and *Endimion*, in *The Plays of John Lyly*, ed. Carter A. Daniel (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1988); Robert Greene, *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, ed. Norman Sanders (London: Methuen, 1970). Daniel's edition lacks line numbers, so page references are given.

22. Wine, commentary on *Arden*, 14.301–2.

23. Shakespeare's poem *The Rape of Lucrece* has the line "That knows not parching heat nor freezing cold" (1145). George Lillo echoes Shakespeare in *The London Merchant* (1731), with "the summer's parching heat and winter's cold" (2.11.68–69) and Alfred Austin borrows "Summer's parching heat" in his *Savonarola* (1881), 1.1. p. 15. References are to George Lillo, *The London Merchant*, ed. William H. McBurney (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965) and to *Savonarola* (London: Macmillan, 2nd ed. 1891).

24. Furthermore, the word "parch" (in any form) is found near "lips" in no other play *LION* of 1576–42 except *King John*: "parchèd lips" (5.7.40).

25. Likenesses were discussed by Percy Allen in a chapter on "*Arden of Faversham* and *Macbeth*" in his *Shakespeare, Jonson, and Wilkins as Borrowers* (Oxford: Cecil Palmer, 1928), 19–20, and, more fully, by Robert F. Fleissner, "'The Secret'st Man of Blood': Foreshadowings of *Macbeth* in *Arden of Faversham*," *University of Dayton Review* 14 (1979–80): 7–13. See also MacDonald P. Jackson, "Shakespearean Features of the Poetic Style of *Arden of Faversham*," *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 230 (1993): 279–304, at 288 n. 17.

26. The process, as regards "purchase," is similar to that in *Julius Caesar*, when Metellus recommends that the conspirators plotting Caesar's assassination enlist the support of Cicero, because "his silver hairs / Will purchase us a good opinion, / And buy men's voices to commend our deeds" (2.1.144–46). "Silver," primarily an adjective of color indicating the venerable Cicero's age, also suggests the precious metal and so revives the moribund metaphor in "purchase" (obtain) and "buy" (secure). Shakespeare uses Alice's expression "purchase friends" in *2 Henry VI*, 1.1.223 (following "cheap pennyworths"), *Titus Andronicus*, 2.3.275, and *The Rape of Lucrece*, 963 (where it is followed by the line "lending him wit that to bad debtors lends").

27. For example, in *1 Henry IV*, 2.2.11; *Love's Labour's Lost*, 5.2.224; *Much Ado About Nothing*, 3.3.57.

28. For raven and dove, see *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 2.2.120; *Twelfth Night*, 5.1.129; *2 Henry VI*, 3.1.75–76; *Romeo and Juliet*, 3.2.76; *Pericles*, sc.15.32. For gilding copper, see *Troilus and Cressida*, where Troilus vows fidelity to Cressida: "Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns, / With truth and plainness I do wear mine bare" (4.4.105–6).

29. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, 165.

30. Had Shakespeare used any one of these words, it would have been with full consciousness of its Latin derivation (the rolling up of cloth, folding, clothing). He chooses "wrapped," rather than a synonym from which the original physical sense has been lost.

31. Mahood, *Shakespeare's Wordplay*, 13.

32. Jackson, "Shakespearean Features" (as in n. 25 above), 283–86.

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