

## Toward a Textual Study of *The Wit of a Woman*

by

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There is no entry in the Stationers' Register for the anonymous *The Wit of a Woman*, although it was published in 1604 by Edward White.<sup>1</sup> Greg and McKerrow have identified the printer's ornaments in the 1604 quarto as belonging to Edward Allde, Greg noting, as well, the Roman type which approximates the size of modern pica.<sup>2</sup> The play apparently was not again in the press until recent times. Since nothing much is known about the printing of this drama, any conclusions as to the order in which the extant copies of the 1604 quarto came from the press must depend upon bibliographical evidence. The surviving five copies of *The Wit of a Woman* are those mentioned by Pollard in the *Short-Title Catalogue*.<sup>3</sup> Four of these are located, one copy each, in the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, the Huntington Library, and the White Library.<sup>4</sup> The fifth, or Devonshire (Clawson) copy,<sup>5</sup> passed into storage a number of years ago.<sup>6</sup> Available, fortunately, is Greg's careful study of pages *B* 4 recto and verso of the British Museum, Bodleian, and Devonshire (Clawson) copies.<sup>7</sup> To these, I have been able to add variants from *H* recto on which page the Devonshire (Clawson) copy differs materially from the others. A study of textual matters, including observations on punctuation, spelling, and spacing, points to the following conclusions: the Bodleian copy was probably the earliest printed copy;<sup>8</sup> the Huntington copy contains readings next in point of issuance; the British Museum and White Library copies followed the Huntington copy from the press; and probably the Devonshire (Clawson) copy coincides with the printing of the British Museum copy. Variants in the texts are undoubtedly printer's corrections, and the fact that none of the plot errors shows any evidence of having

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<sup>1</sup>W. W. Greg (ed.), *The Wit of a Woman* (Malone Society Reprints), p. v. In this study, all line references to the play are taken from this text. In my textual study, I have made use of the Tudor Facsimile of the British Museum quarto, the Malone Society Reprint (Greg) of the Bodleian quarto, a rotograph copy of the Huntington (Huth) quarto with leaf *H* added from the Devonshire (Clawson) quarto, and a rotograph copy of the White quarto, none of which is edited.

<sup>2</sup>R. B. McKerrow, "Edward Allde as a Typical Trade Printer," *The Library*, X (September, 1929), 149: "About 1604 [Allde] seems to have obtained several fresh ornaments, four of which occur in *The Wit of a Woman*, printed anonymously in 1604 but identified as Allde's . . ."

<sup>3</sup>A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (eds.), *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, 1475-1640*, p. 602.

<sup>4</sup>The William A. White Library, New York City.

<sup>5</sup>Greg calls it the *Devonshire* copy.

<sup>6</sup>The Devonshire (Clawson) copy was sold on May 2, 1926, at the Anderson Galleries in New York City to the late Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, agent in the transaction, whose secretary informed me that the book had been "put into storage, where it is likely to remain for some time."

<sup>7</sup>Greg, *op. cit.*, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>8</sup>In preparation of a critical text of this play, I have followed the Greg (Malone) reprint of the Bodleian copy, not a facsimile, but because of the accuracy of Greg's work, I doubt that enough errors may have entered the reprint to alter my conclusion that the Bodleian copy represents the earliest printing of the text.

been corrected indicates that the author made no alterations in the text during printing.

In 1912, John S. Farmer supervised a reprinting of the play in the Tudor Facsimile Texts. The only other modern printing of *The Wit of a Woman* is the Malone Society Reprint of 1913, under the authority of Greg, who, at one time, had considered editing the play, but settled, instead, for a listing of obvious errors and the inclusion of a few notes about the printed *dramatis personae*.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, scholars are indebted to him for the following summary of the inaccuracies in the text:

The present play is extremely corrupt, particularly as regards the dramatic arrangement of the text. Speakers' names are frequently misprinted, speeches are wrongly assigned, and stage directions repeated, misplaced, and omitted. We also frequently find commas and colons in place of periods at the end of speeches. In some instances this is probably intentional. Periods are also present or absent incorrectly after such words as *Exit*.<sup>10</sup>

Possibly, there are three explanations for the mangled condition of the text. First, it is conceivable that an actor may have sold the play (not necessarily unperformed). Secondly, it may be that the author failed to finish the manuscript. Finally, the text may have been tampered with in some inexplicable manner. In my attempt at ordering this difficult text, I have arrived at the following organization of the plot:

Four girls are in the care of Balia. Each of these girls' fathers, apparently widowers, wishes to marry one of these girls. The four fathers, however, have four sons who also have designs upon the four girls. Fearing their fathers' amorous intentions, the four boys disguise themselves as a physician, a singing and dancing master, a rhetorician, and a painter. In disguise, they offer themselves to the four men (their fathers), who employ them to administer to the four girls at Balia's house. One of the girls arranges for the marriage of all of the girls (herself included) to the four boys so that all concerned will have the good will of the four fathers, as well as ample funds for their futures. Presumably, the play ends with the marriages of the four youthful couples.

This résumé shows that the author intended *The Wit of a Woman* to advance through three phases of development. First, he reveals the love of four elderly men for four young women; next, he presents the women as having four young lovers; and, finally, although the third phase does not materialize in the 1604 quarto, he seems to have had plans for a plausible approach to a dénouement. It is conceivable, of course, that extensive tampering with the text has removed all traces of these necessary steps, since what remains prepares an audience for the marriage of one youthful couple, clearly, and of two such couples, possibly; but the play suggests, only indirectly through the speeches of the girl plotter, that a wholesale marriage of the youths and maidens was to have occurred in the final scene. Since the 1604 quarto implies a grouping of the chief characters with no consistent relationship, I have determined, by causing one of the girls to serve as the central figure in each case, what may be the only plausible combinations:

<sup>9</sup>Greg, *op. cit.*, p. ix.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. x.

Erinta has Bario as her father, Rinaldo as her brother, Maister Doctor as her elder lover, and Veronte as her youthful lover.

Lodovica (Merilla in the first scene of the play) has Giro as her father, Gerillo as her brother, Ferio as her elder lover, and Filenio (Niofell) as her youthful lover.

Isabella has Maister Doctor as her father, Veronte as her brother, Bario as her elder lover, and Rinaldo as her youthful lover.

Gianetta has Ferio as her father, Filenio as her brother, Giro as her elder lover, and Gerillo as her youthful lover.

Euphuistic tendencies in the dialogue suggest that certain portions of the play may have been composed not later than the early 1590's,<sup>11</sup> a view strengthened by a consideration of the doggerel, the concatenation of lines, and the Italian characteristics of the play, the latter being especially dominant in English dramas after the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, there are indications of a later date, possibly 1598, for reasons, again, of Italian influence.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Chambers explains that *Twelfth Night* (II.iii.52) was recalled to him by the "sweet and twenty" passage from *The Wit of a Woman* (753).<sup>14</sup> Finally, the fact that *A Woman Will Have Her Will* (the closest English parallel so far discovered for *The Wit of a Woman*) was performed in 1598 suggests that the latter work may have been written in this same year to satisfy a popular demand for such comedies.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the title page of *The Wit of a Woman* provides the only direct evidence for a date of 1604, the year of its publication.

No records or other external evidence of a performance of this play has been found, although a stage direction (*Enter Filenio now called Niofell, and his Seruant Goffo, now called Foggo*) may indicate that the play had been performed. For example, the servant, Goffo, makes his first appearance at this point in the play and nowhere else is called *Goffo*, suggesting that Robert Goffe (Goughe?), an actor of minor parts for many years prior to the time of the 1604 quarto, may have been doubling, here, in minor rôles.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, since Filenio, when disguised, is *Niofell*, there is the chance that the anagram implied in these names may have been intended in *Goffo-Foggo*, or that, for some reason, the author did not wish to develop the rôle of Goffo beyond its present status in the 1604 quarto. Nor does one overlook the possibility of a printer's error, here, since a compositor, observing the anagram implied in *Filenio-Niofell*, may have assumed that the same situation also applied to *Goffo-Foggo*, thus being responsible for the phrasing of the stage direction. However, were the actor, Goffe (Goughe), referred to in *Goffo*, it is possible that

<sup>11</sup>Martin W. Sampson, "A Review of *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare* by Ashley Thorndike, 1901," *JEGP*, IV (1902), 239-248.

<sup>12</sup>Louis B. Wright, "Will Kemp and the *Commedia dell'Arte*," *MLN*, XLI (December, 1926), 519-520; also, Winifred Smith, *The Commedia dell'Arte*, ch. VI, 170-199.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 183.

<sup>14</sup>Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, IV, 54; also, Joseph Q. Adams, *A Life of William Shakespeare*, p. 292.

<sup>15</sup>F. G. Fleay, *A Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama, 1559-1642*, II, 320. Haughton's *Englishman for My Money, or A Woman Will Have Her Will* is a close English parallel in its conflict between youth and age.

<sup>16</sup>Edwin Nungezer, *A Dictionary of Actors*, pp. 157-158, points out that Goughe's name appears in a stage direction in *The Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611), showing "that he played Memphonius."

the play may have been presented by the Shakespearean company, perhaps in competition with *A Woman Will Have Her Will*, performed at the Rose by the Admiral's Men in 1598.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the Elizabethan period, many dramatists, either by travel or foreign study, familiarized themselves with Italian thought and expression.<sup>18</sup> An interest in Italian drama may also have stemmed from the presence of various Italian acting companies at court and elsewhere during this time.<sup>19</sup> Plots derived from Italian plays or *novelle* flourished in the English theatre, either as adaptations or translations, and even, at times, in Latin for academic presentations.<sup>20</sup> In fact, as Scott has shown, those ". . . translated were practically every notable Italian author of the Renaissance, on all sorts of subjects."<sup>21</sup> At least on two occasions scholars have associated *The Wit of a Woman* with Italian influences. For example, Creizenach thinks that this play ". . . gives quite the impression of being a version of an Italian original,"<sup>22</sup> although Smith believes that his idea, while "interesting," is "inadequately proved."<sup>23</sup> To her comment might be added Chambers' remark, "Nothing is known of the history of this prose comedy with Italian names."<sup>24</sup> In addition, *The Wit of a Woman* has several other Italian characteristics.<sup>25</sup> First, the pantaloone is represented in each of the four fathers. The braggart, Bragardo, is constantly shadowed by the parasite, Bizardo. Balia, the school mistress, combines the traits of the earlier nurse, *balia*, with those of the later pedant. The Italian mountebank is evident in Filenio, disguised as a physician named Niofell. Foggo is a typical Italian servant who, in an intrigue, favors the son over the father. An Italian cleric type is Sir Lawrence, willing to comply with Ferio's request if sufficiently remunerated. The elderly suitors (the four fathers) are examples of Renaissance borrowing from Italian comedy. Finally, the social position of the heroine is similar to that enjoyed by most girls in Italian, rather than early Roman, comedy.<sup>26</sup>

The situation in *The Wit of a Woman* also partakes of Italian comic invention. For example, student life, a feature of many Italian comedies, is suggested by an allusion to a youth's being a "meere fresh-man." (244) Similarly, the girls are being trained as if in school.<sup>27</sup> Typical *borgnese* comedy is reflected in the fathers—a physician, a lawyer, a ship's captain, and a merchant, the last with business connections in different parts of the Mediterranean. The Italian comic plot of the son who risks disin-

<sup>17</sup>Fleay, *op. cit.*, II, 320; Chambers, *op. cit.*, III, 335.

<sup>18</sup>J. A. Symonds, *Shakespeare's Predecessors in the English Drama*, p. 275.

<sup>19</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick A. Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age*, p. 134, cites *Hymenaeus* (1578/9) as the first of a number of academic plays with plots of undoubted Italian origin.

<sup>21</sup>Mary A. Scott, *English Translations from the Italian*, p. lxxx.

<sup>22</sup>Wilhelm Creizenach, *English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare*, pp. 215-216, fn 1; 323, fn. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

<sup>24</sup>Chambers, *op. cit.*, IV, 54.

<sup>25</sup>In his introductory essay to *Early Plays from the Italian*, R. W. Bond assesses the characteristics of Italian comedy (some being slight modifications of features in Latin plays) and applies these standards to *Supposes* and *The Buggbears*, two English plays representative of the direct relationship of English and Italian comedy in the sixteenth century. In my following discussion, I have used Bond's criteria.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>27</sup>Frequently, speeches also show an academic turn in their methodical reasoning and occasional use of Latin phrases; see 450-475.



heritance should the father disapprove of a choice of mate is present in the play. Finally, the disguise motif, another feature of Italian comedy, is apparent in the case of the four boys. Even the form and technique of *The Wit of a Woman* savor of Italian influence, since, in a general way, the unities of time and place have been observed, although their application often brings to light situations which, at first, appear to be inaccuracies. For example, two characters in plain sight of the audience may remain on stage, unaware of the other's presence. Moreover, Foggo, in one scene (379-393), is silent and, perhaps, invisible on stage. The Italian custom of perspective staging (namely, receding streets lined with three-dimensional houses) is manifest in the setting of *The Wit of a Woman*. Frequently, the audience is addressed in soliloquy, both the Doctor and Giro resorting to this device in confessing their loves. Proverbs occur in great numbers, often with exact Italian parallels. Finally, there is a prologue along with an epilogue requesting a *plaudite*, both features of Italian and academic dramas. Nevertheless, there is no major Italian source known for this play. In all probability, it is directly related to Italian comedy through translation, or indirectly connected, in whole or part, with Italian drama or a *novella*. In fact, there are three passages which seem to indicate translation: (1) *Signior* occurs in a stage direction in place of the usual *Maister*; (2) Bario explains that he ". . . must to the State house about a little common-wealthes businesse" (*State house* is not an ordinary Elizabethan term); and (3) the Doctor is given a different surname each time he is addressed as other than *Maister Doctor* in two specific scenes (202; 506). In the few passages which imply that the scene is London, the author may have been observing custom in localizing the setting of a translation.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, certain parallels in Latin and Italian comedy for the basic elements of the plot of *The Wit of a Woman* were suggested to me by Professor R. W. Bond in a letter of December 27, 1927, as follows:

Three plays at least of Plautus introduce a rivalry between father and son for the same girl—the *Asinari*, *Carsina*, and *Mercator*, and in all the design of the old man is defeated in favor of the young by the intervention of his wife, or friends, etc., . . . In none of these three, however, does the girl herself come to any treaty or parley on the matter with the old man.

In this essential respect, *The Wit of a Woman* differs widely from Italian and English comedy, and for this circumstance of the plot no source has been determined. For that matter, the only suggestion of authorship was made by Malone, who attributed ". . . this 'pleasant merry comedy' to the pen of Henry Chettle."<sup>29</sup> In the Stationers' Register, however, none of Chettle's printed works was ever licensed to the printer or publisher associated with the 1604 quarto of *The Wit of a Woman*. Chettle wrote

<sup>28</sup>*port* (325); the *Sunne* (1636), a tavern, the scene of play readings by dramatists, located on New Fish Street, not far from London's theatrical district; and *Cuckoldes Haven* (1461), a figurative allusion.

<sup>29</sup>Quoted in James O. Halliwell, *A Dictionary of Old English Plays*, p. 274.

many plays, most of them only slightly known and, subsequently, lost. However, Chambers cites for the Admiral's Men (1598-1603) one of Chettle's plays entitled *A Woman's Tragedy*,<sup>30</sup> which Bullen also recognizes as Chettle's, adding that "'A Woman's Tragedy,' July 1598 . . . has been absurdly identified with the anonymous 'Wit of a Woman,' published in 1604."<sup>31</sup> The play is also mentioned by Henslowe in the *Diary* as follows:

Lent vnto Harey Cheattell the 14 of July 1598 vpon a boocke called the playe of A womon<sup>n</sup> Tragedye the some of v<sup>l</sup> w<sup>h</sup> Robart shawe willed me to delyuer hime I saye . . . eather to dd the playe or els to paye the mony w<sup>h</sup> in one forthnyght . . . .<sup>32</sup>

Whether Chambers is right or not in thinking that Chettle failed to deliver the play,<sup>33</sup> there was no doubt, at least, in Henslowe's mind as to the nature of the piece—it was to be a tragedy and, therefore, the opposite of *The Wit of a Woman*. Chettle's only extant play, entirely his own work, is *The Tragedy of Hoffman: or A Revenge for a Father*,<sup>34</sup> and, although a printer mangled it as badly as another did *The Wit of a Woman*, the remnants of original style and characterization in both dramas differ widely. Hence, as Bullen earlier suggested, it is doubtful that there is any connection between *A Woman's Tragedy* and *The Wit of a Woman*.

There is another entry in the *Diary*, however, which may be related to *The Wit of a Woman*. Henslowe's notation reads as follows:

Lent vnto Robart shawe & edward Jube the 15 of June 1595 to geve m<sup>r</sup> Chapman in earneste of his boocke called the [.] ylle of A Womon . . . .<sup>35</sup>

The problem, here, is to determine a correct or plausible rendering of the title of the play to which Henslowe alludes. The recent editors of the *Diary*, Foakes and Rickert, note that Greg interprets the title as *iyllle of A Womon*, and Malone and Collier as *wylle of A Womon*. The editors themselves state that ". . . two smudges before *y* may conceal a letter (*i*, but hardly *w*), but nothing can be seen, and they may well be meaningless."<sup>36</sup> However, the context seems to favor the letter *w*, since *iyllle* is relatively uncommon in Elizabethan orthography, unless, of course, *i* should be construed as *j*, thus producing *jylle* or *Jille*, as the recent editors note.<sup>37</sup> Even so, the resulting title does not seem probable. On the other hand, the alternate *wylle*, producing *wylle of A Woman*, is credible, an allusion to which may occur in *The Wit of a Woman* in Giro's remark, ". . . to think that the will of a woman should rule the wit of a man." (85-86) However, no play of this title appears in Henslowe's other entries or is ascribed to Chapman in other records for this period. Taking into consideration the impermanent nature of the ink and the excessive

<sup>30</sup>Chambers, *op. cit.*, III, 265.

<sup>31</sup>A. H. Bullen, "Henry Chettle," *DNB*, IV, 208.

<sup>32</sup>R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (eds.), *Henslowe's Diary*, p. 93.

<sup>33</sup>Chambers, *op. cit.*, III, 265: ". . . July 1598, but apparently unfinished."

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, III, 264.

<sup>35</sup>Foakes and Rickert, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, fn. 1.

<sup>37</sup>*Loc. cit.*

handling which the manuscript has undergone, it is conceivable that a pen stroke originally cutting through *ll* to form *tt* and, thereby, *wytte*, a common Elizabethan spelling, is no longer visible. Hence, Henslowe's *earneste* to Chapman may have been for a play called *the wytte of A Womon*. The fact that no entries in the *Diary* reveal further payments to Chapman for a play of comparable title may also indicate that the work was never completed or that Chapman never released it to Henslowe. Entries occurring on the same page in the *Diary* show that Munday was also writing for Henslowe at this time, and it should be noted that the [.]*ylle* entry is the only one in this part of the *Diary* bearing a date of 1595, the rest being payments for work received in 1598, the suggested date of composition for *The Wit of a Woman*.

A likely candidate for the authorship of the play is Anthony Munday, a dramatist of some merit and occasional collaborator with Chettle, Chapman, and others. He was also a pupil of Claudius Hollyband (De Sainliens), who came to England from France in 1568 and from whom Munday may have learned French and, perhaps, Italian.<sup>38</sup> In October, 1576, Munday was apprenticed for a period of eight years to John Allde, stationer.<sup>39</sup> However, he never completed the term, but went to Rome, presumably in the spring of 1578, professing a desire to see foreign lands, although the evidence shows that he may have been upon a mission ". . . to make literary capital out of what he could learn to the detriment of the English Catholics abroad."<sup>40</sup> At least, when he returned to England, he revealed that he may have been gathering material for a publishing venture involving Allde and, perhaps, Charlewood and White. Furthermore, he was once again engaged in the theatre by 1580 (having been on the stage prior to the time of his apprenticeship to Allde), and soon afterwards was writing plays.<sup>41</sup> Between 1584 and 1602, he was connected with the writing of some eighteen dramas, as well as with every other kind of literary work popular at the time, often with marked success.<sup>42</sup> He made translations from several languages, namely, from the French, Spanish, Low Dutch, and Italian.<sup>43</sup> Among his many Italian translations was at least one play, *Fedele and Fortunio*.<sup>44</sup> Obviously, Munday was well qualified to adapt Italian plays to the English stage, and it is significant that the period of his Italian translations includes the year, 1598, the probable date of the composition of *The Wit of a Woman*. Drake notes that Munday's translations had a certain popularity with the half-educated English public, although the products themselves were lacking in style and fidelity, the very characteristics of *The Wit of a Woman*.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the confidential relationship which Munday enjoyed

<sup>38</sup>Thomas Seccombe, "Anthony Munday," *DNB*, XIII, 1888.

<sup>39</sup>Celeste Turner Wright, "Young Anthony Mundy Again," *SP*, LVI (1959), 150.

<sup>40</sup>Seccombe, *op. cit.*, p. 1888.

<sup>41</sup>Celeste Turner Wright, "Young Anthony Mundy Again," p. 156; also, Eustace Conway, *Anthony Munday and Other Essays*, p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>Seccombe, *op. cit.*, p. 1888.

<sup>43</sup>Conway, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup>Celeste Turner Wright, "Young Anthony Mundy Again," p. 163; Edward Arber (ed.), *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London: 1554-1640*, II, 202.

<sup>45</sup>Nathan Drake, *Shakespeare and His Times*, I, 547. "Labouring for those who possessed an eager and indiscriminating appetite for the marvellous, he was not greatly solicitous about the preservation of the manners and costume of his original, but rather strove to accommodate his authors to the taste of the majority of his readers," p. 548.

with certain London publishers infers that they were pleased, no doubt, to be associated with the publication of any of his works related to the Rome mission. As a matter of fact, Alde did print some of his French translations, and although White (not Alde) was the printer of the 1604 quarto of *The Wit of a Woman*, Alde's printer's ornaments were used in the book, as Greg and McKerrow have shown.

There is further evidence of Munday's possible connection with this play. He was, apparently, a member of Pembroke's Men in 1598, when that company launched a foreign tour, for, as scholars have pointed out, Marston satirized him in *Histrionmastix* (1598/99) as a pageanter, a former ballad writer, a person who ". . . ought to be employed in matters of state, great in plotting new plays that are old ones, and [one who] uses no luxury or blandishment, but plenty of old England's Mother words."<sup>46</sup> Marston also alluded to "Posthaste Munday" as a "translating scholar," the last in connection with a harsh treatment of Jonson. It was Jonson, one recalls, who nicknamed Munday as "Antonio Balladino" in *The Case Is Altered* (1599) and sneered at Meres' remark about Munday's being the "best plotter."<sup>47</sup> Jonson's coining an Italian name for Munday probably reflects the latter's reputation as a translator, among other things. Although there appears to be no allusion to Jonson in *The Wit of a Woman*, the play does make use of the expression, *the case is altered* (455).

In discussing Munday's lost plays, Chambers refers to an entry in Henslowe's *Diary* related to a certain "Comodey for the corte," for the completion of which Drayton was surety, August 1598, but observes that ". . . the entry was cancelled, and presumably the play was not finished, unless it is identical with *Chance Medley*."<sup>48</sup> It is conceivable that this entry has significance for *The Wit of a Woman*, since Munday would have been a likely candidate for its authorship in 1598. That he eventually became the continuator of Stowe's *Survey of London* attests to his familiarity with the topography of the city and its environs and may explain the natural manner in which certain scenes in *The Wit of a Woman* have been localized by English setting. Furthermore, it is known that Munday's father was a draper and that Munday himself followed that profession for a time, a knowledge of which trade may emerge in Balia's speeches concerning various materials and their uses.<sup>49</sup> In addition, there are a number of so-called Shakespearean passages in *The Wit of a Woman*, a distinct feature of the plays known to have been written by Munday—for example, *John a Kent and John a Cumber*.<sup>50</sup> For that matter, Shakespearean pages and fools are recalled by several characters in *The Wit of a Woman*.<sup>51</sup> Munday also had a habit of combining tendencies of Italinat and English drama, of including fragments of Latin in his dialogue, and of using proverbs liberally throughout his plays. These traits are also

<sup>46</sup>Seccombe, *op. cit.*, p. 1889.

<sup>47</sup>Conway, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-47.

<sup>48</sup>Chambers, *op. cit.*, III, 448.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. Balia's speech, 1062-1071.

<sup>50</sup>Conway, *op. cit.*, pp. 51; 62.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 43.



manifest in *The Wit of a Woman*, along with the tendency to indulge in balanced discourse, a stylistic device in which Munday delighted. Finally, there are frequent discussions in the play relating to the training of young women at Balia's school, all of which recall distinctly "The Reading Lesson" and "The Writing Lesson" in *Campo di Fior* (1583), Hollyband's exercise book which Munday could have known from his early studies with this man.<sup>52</sup>

Textual evidence of *The Wit of a Woman* also seems to point to Munday as the author of this play. For example, Thompson explains that the only contractions to be found in Munday's writings are those concerned with *m* and *with*, usage that is found, as well, in *The Wit of a Woman*.<sup>53</sup> He notes Munday's habit of doubling medial vowels in words like *proove*, a pattern which is found in the play. He observes that, while most authors of the time were inconsistent about the use of *u* and *v*, Munday employed *u* medially and *v* initially, at least within those portions of *Sir Thomas More* ascribed to him.<sup>54</sup> So also did someone in preparing the text of *The Wit of a Woman*. In fact, for the most part, distinct spelling and punctuation tendencies characterize the work of Munday and the author of *The Wit of a Woman*, and Pollard thinks ". . . it is in the highest degree unlikely that these are due either to the printer or to any intermediate copyist."<sup>55</sup> In other words, the compositor probably followed copy in setting the text of the play. Essentially, Wilson agrees with Pollard.<sup>56</sup> In addition, Byrne has discovered that the compositors for Charlewood and Allde closely followed Munday's copy and that he, unlike most dramatists of the time, was a consistent speller, thus making it possible for one to venture comments upon the spelling in *The Wit of a Woman* with relative confidence. Certainly, the plays of other dramatists which came from Allde's press during the time of the printing of *The Wit of a Woman* demonstrate these characteristics only in a very moderate degree.<sup>57</sup> Thus, *The Wit of a Woman*, containing the Allde ornaments, must have been printed with attention to the author's copy, the spelling in which conforms to Munday's standards. Finally, there is a scene in the play involving Ferio and a Priest in which there may be a reference to Munday, recalling Marston's description of him as one who uses "plenty of old England's Mother words." When the Priest incorporates a number of Latin phrases in his conversation with Ferio, the latter remarks, "I praye thee leaue thy latine, and in plaine mother-tongue, doe that I will entreate thee to . . ." (1548-1549) Should there be a veiled allusion to

<sup>52</sup>*Campo di Fior, or else the Flourie Field of Foure Languages of M. Claudius Desainliens, alias Holiband: For the futherance of learners of the Latine, French, English, but chieftie of the Italian tongue, printed in 1583, containing four parallel texts: Vives' Latin, followed by Italian, French, and English translations. The passages noted above are given in English in The Elizabethan Home Discovered in 2 Dialogues by Claudius Hollyband and Peter Erondell, ed. by M. St. Clare Byrne.*

<sup>53</sup>Sir Edward M. Thompson, "The Autograph Manuscripts of Anthony Mundy," *Transactions of the Bibliographical Society*, XIV (1915-1917), 341.

<sup>54</sup>*Loc cit.*

<sup>55</sup>A. W. Pollard and Others, *Shakespeare's Hand in the Play of Sir Thomas More*, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>57</sup>M. St. Clare Byrne, "Anthony Munday's Spelling as a Literary Clue," *The Library*, IV (1923), 9-23.

Munday in Ferio's remark, it is, indeed, a subtle one, considering Munday's notorious exposé of English Catholics abroad in *An English Roman Life*. Thus, the evidence assembled points, in most cases, to Munday as the probable author of *The Wit of a Woman*.

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