

The Two Gentlemen of Verona and Henry
Wotton's *A Courtlie Controuersie
of Cupids Cautels*

by

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Shakespeare's major source for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* has yet to be determined. Until recently, scholars generally have accepted Jorge de Montemayor's *La Diana Enamorada* as an immediate source for the Proteus-Julia episode, some believing Shakespeare's play to have been a reworking of *The History of Felix and Philomena* (1584), a theory which accounts for only a fraction of the entire plot of *TTGV*.¹ Others have cited such works as *Comoedia von Julio und Hyppolita*, for its similarity in theme to *TTGV*, in spite of an obvious tragic dénouement;² Arthur Broke's *Tragicall History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), for its rope-ladder incident;³ Bandello's *Apollonius and Sylla*, translated into English by 1581;⁴ Sidney's *Arcadia* (1580), for its connection with the outlaw sequence in *TTGV*;⁵ and numerous, yet minor, analogues to the love-friendship theme of *TTGV*;⁵ mainly those occurring in Lyly's *Euphues* (1578-80) and *Endimion* (1586); and in Barnabe Rich's tale of Apollonius and Silla in *Rich his Farewell to Militarie Profession* (1581).⁶ It was Dorothy Atkinson's study which called attention to the plot similarities between the Fifth Histoire of Henry Wotton's *A Courtlie Controuersie of Cupids Cautels* (1578), a translation from the French of Jacques d'Yver's *Le printemps d'Yver* (1572), and Shakespeare's play.⁷ She argued that *Cupids Cautels* supplied the items essential to both plot and theme which are conspicuously lacking in Montemayor's *La Diana Enamorada*—the sworn friend, false in love; and the *second* of the "two gentlemen." She

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1. Sir E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, II, p. 106; IV, p. 160. It is listed in the Revels Accounts for this year as "The history of felix & philomena . . . by her maisties seruautes on the Sondaie next after newe yeares daye."

3. William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (The University Society), p. 3.

3. A. Tolman, *Questions on Shakespeare*, II, p. 285.

4. W. J. Rolfe (ed.), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, p. 10.

5. William Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (The University Society), p. 3.

6. Sir E. K. Chambers, *William Shakespeare*, I, p. 331.

7. Dorothy Atkinson, "Source of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*," *Studies in Philology*, XL (1944), pp. 223-34. The text of the Fifth Histoire is contained in the British Museum copy of the 1578 edition of Wotton's book, the text upon which this present study is based. Two other copies of this work are in existence, one at the Bodleian Library, Oxford; the other, at Sion College, London. The full title page is reproduced as follows: "A Courtlie Controuersie of Cupids Cautels / Containing fiue tragicall Historyes by 3 -- / gentleman & 2 gentle women translated out of / French by Hen. Wotton & dedicated to his sister / the Lady Dacre of the South. At London Imprinted / by Francis Coldock & Henry Bynnerman. 1578."

concluded that Shakespeare joined the Wotton theme of the "sworn friend, false in love" to the love-friendship episode from *La Diana Enamorada* to produce the love-friendship plot of *TTGV*. In her attention to the plot of *Cupids Cautels*, however, it is possible that she may have overlooked additional, striking parallels between the two works which would have strengthened her original contention. This present study is an exposition of these additional discoveries, to be discussed in the following order: (1) the "Padua insertion;" (2) the plot similarities between the two works; and (3) the specific situations in *Cupids Cautels* and their bearing upon the dialogue of *TTGV*.

The Padua Insertion. Inconsistencies and obvious errors in factual materials in this play are responsible for much editorial commentary. One problem suggested by the Atkinson study, but not fully developed within it, concerns the *errata* in *TTGV*. For example, the head of the court to which Valentine travels is five times referred to as *emperor* and three times as *Duke*, appearing as well, as *Duke* in scene-headings and in the *dramatis personae* of F₁.⁸ This error, generally known as the Padua insertion or problem, was initially considered by J. Dover Wilson, who offered two explanations for the use of *Padua* (II.v.1) where the text obviously calls for *Milan*; *i.e.*, the work of either an adapter or an abridger of the original text.⁹ T. W. Baldwin, at the same time, thought it likely that Shakespeare may have intended his scene as Padua rather than Milan.¹⁰ On the other hand, Shakespeare may have intended *Milan* but carelessly inscribed *Padua*. Certainly, Padua serves him in three other plays (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *the Merchant of Venice*, and *Much Ado about Nothing*), although it is true that *TTGV* antedates these works. Finally, the *Padua* error may have derived from Shakespeare's method in adapting his source materials. Haste, perhaps, or a lack of attention to geographical accuracy and logical continuity of script, or a combination of the two, may have prompted him to write *Padua*, a place-name which would have appeared to him in the Fifth *Histoire* of Wotton's *Cupids Cautels*:

You shal then understand (honourable company) not long since in the Citie of *Padoua*, uerye famous, aswell for the antiquities thereof, as for the learned Uniuersitie maintained therein by the *Venetians*, two scholars grew in acquaintance, the whiche (as ordinarily countrymen meeting among straungers) allied their amities so firmly, as they became sworn brethern.¹¹

The Plot Similarities. A summary of the Fifth *Histoire* of Wotton's *Cupids Cautels* is necessary to an understanding of the following exposition:

8. J. Dover Wilson (ed.), *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, p. 88.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

10. T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure*, p. 763.

11. Henry Wotton, *The Courtlie Controuersie of Cupids Cautels*, p. 273.

Two young scholars, Claribel and Floradine, are studying at Padua, when Claribel is summoned home by the death of his father. Later, he marries Margarite, a maiden from his village, but leaves her for a journey to Paris. Floradine, too, is called home by his father. He stops in the village in which Margarite lives. At a party, he encounters her, falls in love, and woos her. When his hostess informs him that Margarite is Claribel's wife, he argues the question of love and friendship, deciding in favor of love, and takes Margarite for his own. A second summons from his father cuts short his visit, and he departs for home, leaving Margarite. Claribel eventually returns from Paris to discover a letter from Floradine to Margarite. He is so grieved by his wife's infidelity that he secretly departs for the country. In his travels, he meets Sirena, whom he seduces and later forsakes under false pretenses. Time intervenes. Floradine, now at home, takes a wife who turns out to be the fair Sirena. Learning that she is with child, obviously not his own, he deserts her and travels into the country. Fate ordains a meeting between the two young men. Joyous in their reunion, they suddenly realize that each has been the other's undoing. They consider themselves equal in their respective injuries and forgive one another, as well as their wives, vowing to live happily thereafter.

Shakespeare's indebtedness to Wotton's *Cupids Cautels* in matters of plot becomes clear in at least six distinct instances, classified as follows: (1) The Discourse on Travel; (2) The Introduction-Separation of the Two Friends; (3) Julia's Discovery of Love; (4) The Separation of the Lovers; (5) The Desertion of Julia; and (6) The Love-Friendship Theme.

The Discourse on Travel. In both *Cupids Cautels* and *TTGV*, a travel discourse serves to introduce the main plot. In *Cupids Cautels*, it entails an account of how society determined travel to be essential to the training of a young gentleman. In *TTGV* (I.i.iii), it extols the benefits of travel.

The Introduction-Separation of the Two Friends. In both works, this situation develops out of the discourse on travel. In *Cupids Cautels*, the two young scholars rationalize their imminent separation and promise to visit one another. In *TTGV* (I.i.56-60), they minimize their sorrows and promise to exchange letters. Actually, in *TTGV*, the travel discourse is an integral part of the separation theme which directly jeopardizes the friendship. There is, therefore, a plot similarity between the two works: first, a discourse on travel; secondly, an introduction of the two friends; and thirdly, a separation.

Julia's Discovery of Love. A third parallel concerns a young maiden's discovery of a new love and her eventual decision to requite her lover. In *Cupids Cautels*, she is Margarite; in *TTGV* (I.ii.104-29), she is Julia. Margarite realizes not only that she loves Floradine, but that she also owes him her love. Similarly, in *TTGV*, Julia realizes that she loves Proteus.

The Separation of the Lovers. In *Cupids Cautels*, this action involves Floradine and Margarite; in *TTGV*, Proteus and Julia. In both works, there are four inter-dependent movements of the plot: (1) the father's decision to extend his son's education; (2) the speed with which this de-

cision is enforced; (3) an indifference on the part of the father to the consequences of such a decision; and (4) the farewell and leave-taking. In each case, Floradine (*Cupids Cautels*) and Proteus (*TTGV*) depart upon the day following the parental edict. Floradine's leave-taking is a two-fold action: (1) the first summons from the father and the subsequent departure from Padua; (2) the second summons and departure from *Poytiers* with a merchant caravan. In *TTGV*, the leave-taking is also two-fold (I.iii.39-44) with Proteus joining a company of young gallants bound for the court. Furthermore, in both works there is a parental indifference, not only to the summons, but also to its effect upon the young men concerned. Neither Wotton's nor Shakespeare's father realizes that he is the direct cause of the separation of the lovers (*TTGV*, I.iii.78-87). In both works, the farewell scenes are similar. In *Cupids Cautels*, Floradine gives Margarite a ring; she, in turn, offers him a jewel. In *TTGV* (II.ii.1-18), there is an exchange of rings, a vow of fidelity, a promise of return, a kiss, many tears, and a final, silent parting.

The Desertion of Julia. In *Cupids Cautels*, upon deserting his adulterous wife and expressing a loss of respect for all womankind, Claribel encounters Sirena, whom he at first distrusts, but whom he eventually courts in hopes of forgetting Margarite. In *TTGV* (II.iv.192-95), Valentine meets Silvia. In each work, the action involves the major love-friendship theme and points to a dénouement.

The Love-Friendship Theme. In *Cupids Cautels*, Floradine, in love with Margarite, spends a night in anguish attempting to decide whether his friendship for Claribel or his love for Margarite should prevail. His conflict is treated in two ways: first, as a period of indecision during which he weighs the probable outcome of his love for a woman who is his friend's wife; and secondly, as a period of rationalization in which he appeases his conscience and reaches a decision to forsake friendship for love. In *TTGV*, Proteus also encounters indecision before yielding to love (II.iv.203-14; vi.19-30).

Three of these six episodes also contain parallels in dialogue. It has already been shown that both authors make use of a travel discourse. Under closer study, these passages reveal similarities in thought and phraseology indicative of Shakespeare's indebtedness to Wotton. Whereas *Cupids Cautels* negates the concept of travel as a necessary adjunct to gentleman's education, *TTGV* affirms it, as these parallel texts reveal:

Cupids Cautels

So as being wearye of labouring at home, they haue bin desirous to see some nouelties abroade
Yet am I constrained to blame the foolish estimation, which the most

*TTGV*¹²

Home-keeping youth haue ever homely wits / I rather would entreat thy company / To see the wonders of the world abroad / Than, living daily sluggardiz'd at home, /

12. The text hereafter followed is that of Hardin Craig (ed.), *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*.

part make of straunge fashions: principally of the Italian toyes, esteeming no manne cunningly cousayned, who beeyng hatched in Fraunce, hathe not beene Italionated by some uoyage ouer the mountains. (CC, 272-73)

Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness. (I. i. 2; 6-8)

I have consider'd well his loss of time, And how he cannot be a perfect man, / Not being tried and tutor'd in the world. (I. iii. 19-21)

In the "Desertion of Julia" sequence, there is further evidence of similar phrasing between the two works:

Cupids Cautels

. . . whereof our Pilgrime . . . perceyued hir sodainelye: whereof after hee hadde debated the matter in his minde, in fine gaue gained occasion unto Loue, and determined not to shewe hymselfe a cowarde, hoping that the new woulde chace away the old euil, as one naile driueth out an other. (CC, 303)

TTGV

Even as one heat another heat expels, / Or as one nail by strength drives out another, / So the remembrance of my former love / Is by a newer object quite forgotten. (II. iv. 192-95)

Herein, the parallelism has advanced beyond the stage of mere thought similarities. Although "nail driven out by nail" is proverbial, it is not likely that this idea, occurring in both texts in similar plot developments, is the result of chance.¹³

A final parallel may be detected in the love-friendship theme, involving the Floradine-Proteus decision to permit love to triumph over friendship, a passage of identical plot development in both works. Like his counterpart in *Cupids Cautels*, Proteus, unable to "check his erring love," forsakes friendship and justifies his action by rationalization. While this sequence produces no parallels in phraseology, the structure, thought, and general pattern of Shakespeare's dialogue suggest that he was familiar with Wotton's *Cupids Cautels*.

13. Cf. *Coriolanus*, Aufidius's final speech, IV.vii.