

# The Clue in the Shrew (Revised)

## A Tumbling Trick

### Foreword

When I wrote this essay for the first time, more than five years ago<sup>1</sup>, I was trying to prove that in Shakespeare's play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, such as it appeared in the First Folio in 1623, we may find a considerable number of clues to Christopher Marlowe's death - or rather, non-death - in Deptford, on 30th May 1593, as well as reasonable evidence that he was the author of the plays in the Shakespearian Canon. I still believe that to be the case.

The official version of Marlowe's murder in Deptford<sup>2</sup> is improbable in the extreme, as has been amply demonstrated by researchers over the years<sup>3</sup>. As for the theory of a 'political murder' propounded, among others, by Charles Nicholl<sup>4</sup>, the idea that someone as powerful as the Earl of Essex was at the time (or indeed anybody with an ounce of common sense), would have thought of involving almost twenty people (including the Members of the Jury), to get rid of just one young man in a plague-ridden London, sounds even more unlikely than the official version<sup>5</sup>. On the contrary, my opinion is that 'the Lord' who was behind Marlowe's 'escape' was the Earl of Essex, which would explain the presence of his servant Nick Skeres in Deptford. In the last years I have found ample evidence to support my conjecture.

I believe we have generally been misled by the fact that Ingram Frizer was accused of the 'homicide,' so that it has been taken for granted that Frizer's master, Thomas Walsingham, was the Quixotic organizer of the Deptford charade. Walsingham, who was cousin by marriage to Essex, had in the past collaborated with his uncle, Sir Francis Walsingham, in Secret Service activities, but in 1593, three years after Sir Francis's death, Thomas had no political power that we know of, except through his relationship with Essex. Therefore he would not have had, by himself, the necessary clout to involve the Queen's Coroner, or even Dame Bull and Robert Poley in such a dangerous game. Essex, on the contrary, had not only the necessary power to influence the Queen; he was also notorious for his loyalty and generosity to his friends and dependants.

The logical purpose of the Deptford farce (presented as such in the Induction of *The Taming of The Shrew*), would have been therefore to protect one of Essex's valuable Secret Agents from a fanatical Archbishop of Canterbury, who seems to have been determined to destroy him. Thomas Walsingham,

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<sup>1</sup> First published in Marlowe Society Research Journal Vol. 1. See: <http://www.marlowe-society.org/pubs/journal/journal01.html>

<sup>2</sup> For a brief summary see: <http://www.marlowe-society.org/marlowe/life/deptford1.html> pages 1-7.

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Farey's webpage on the legal aspects of the Deptford incident: <http://www2.prestel.co.uk/reynquest.htm> and <http://www2.prestel.co.uk/reynquest2.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Nicholl, *The Reckoning* (Vintage, 1992). I believe he has somewhat modified his views in a revised edition of his book.

<sup>5</sup> In point of fact Walsingham was not even a knight until 1597, so he would not have been referred to as 'lord.' In his Dedication of *Hero and Leander* (1598), Blount addresses him as Sir Thomas Walsingham, Knight.

either out of friendship for Marlowe or a willingness to oblige his powerful cousin, or both, must have agreed for his servant Frizer to appear to do the dirty work. We know from an official document dated 15th June<sup>6</sup> that the Queen personally made sure that Frizer did not suffer for his apparent role in the proceedings. And this raises the question of how often did the Queen of England take the trouble to protect the servant of a private gentleman from uncomfortable severity at the hands of the Law.

Which brings me to the conclusion that the faking of Marlowe's death in Deptford was not a naive - and dangerous - act of friendship set up by Thomas Walsingham, as has been generally propounded by Marlovians, but a much more important - and logical - plan, approved at the highest level, to ensure that Christopher Marlowe could, without fear of the Archbishop, continue to do service to his Queen and Country, working for Essex' Secret Intelligence network as organized by the Bacon brothers. Whether it was included in the plan or not, he also contributed to feed the machinery of Tudor Propaganda: It is hardly by chance that the two plays dealing with - and justifying - Lancastrian usurpations, Richard II and Richard III, were the first to be published in Quarto (1597) after Titus Andronicus (1594). My reading of the mysterious Induction of The Taming of the Shrew, including the lines in Clue 15, below, seems to confirm my theory.

Therefore, and to sum up, I believe that Marlowe not only did not die in Deptford in 1593, but was moreover the author of the plays in the First Folio, some of which - though not the most important ones - he may have written in collaboration with various colleagues, not including William Shaxpere, who was obviously just a front-man for the 'dead' author. In order to sustain this theory, I shall comment the texts of the Inductions of both The Taming of A Shrew and The Taming of The Shrew, as applicable.

## 1. The Riddle in the Shrew

I have never encountered a critical essay on The Taming of The Shrew that does not comment on the riddle of the Induction such as it appears in the First Folio and to which I shall refer throughout this paper as SLY 2, as it narrates the strange adventures of Christopher Sly. The nearest to an acceptance of it that I have found is in the Penguin Edition, edited by G.R. Hibbard, who says that 'Sly's main function is to lead the spectator into the imaginary world of the play; and, once he has done that, he is no longer required.' One wonders why would Sly, or anyone, be required to lead the spectator into the imaginary world of this particular play and no other. Moreover, we have all seen

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth by the grace of God of England France & Ireland Queen Defender of the Faith &c to our well-beloved William Danby, Gentleman, Coroner of our household, greeting: Wishing for certain causes to be certified upon an indictment made in your presence concerning the death of Christopher Morley, upon view of the body of the same Christopher, at Deptford Strand in our County of Kent within the verge lying dead and slain, whence a certain Ingram Frysar, late of London, Gentleman, is indicted (as by the record thence remaining with you it fully appears) And whether the same Ingram slew the aforesaid Christopher in self-defence, & not feloniously or of malice aforethought, so that in no other wise could he avoid his own death, or not; we command you to send the tenor of the indictment aforesaid with everything touching it and whatsoever names the parties aforesaid in that indictment are known by, to us in our Chancery under your seal distinctly and openly without delay, & with this writ. Witness myself at Westminster on the 15th day of June in the year of our reign the thirty-fifth. June 15, 1593.

productions of *The Taming of The Shrew* where the Induction is totally omitted, without any need for Sly to lead us anywhere.

Because it would be repetitive to put the complete title of the Plays every time, while it is important to keep in mind the separate parts, I am using the following titles and abbreviations throughout this essay:

- **The Taming of A Shrew** means the complete play of that title, including its Induction.
- **SLY 1** means only the Induction of *The Taming of A Shrew*.
- **SHREW 1** means only the play about the Shrewish girl, in *The Taming of A Shrew*.
- **The Taming of The Shrew** means the complete play of that title, including its Induction.
- **SLY 2** means only the Induction of *The Taming of The Shrew*.
- **SHREW 2** means only the play about the Shrewish girl, in *The Taming of The Shrew*.

All Stratfordian academics admit to being baffled by SLY 2. Particularly so because of the existence of a perfectly valid and self-justifying Induction (SLY 1), such as was included in the earlier play, *The Taming of A Shrew* (1594), which Shakespeare could have used in the later play, but didn't. The result of their puzzlement ranges from Alexander Pope's re-shuffling the texts to include the SLY 1 lines in his edition of *The Taming of The Shrew*, to statements such as the one I find in the Introduction to *The Taming of A Shrew*, in the *Dramatic and Narrative Sources of Shakespeare*<sup>7</sup>, where we read 'It is hard to believe that Shakespeare left the play so, when one recalls his care to finish the framework of *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.' More to the point, in his book, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*<sup>8</sup> Harold Bloom admits: 'And yet, Shakespeare had some dramatic purpose in his Induction, even if we have not yet surmised it.'

As is so often the case, Bloom is absolutely right: the Induction in *The Taming of The Shrew* has a very specific purpose, and I have finally surmised it, even if Prof. Bloom may not accept my solution.

I am always bothered by riddles, such as this one, so I tried to focus on what the text of SLY 2 was telling us, and this was my first summary of it: A man called Christopher Sly, a tinker, after a brawl with a Tavern Hostess over the bill, is left in a ditch, having apparently been murdered. Having checked that the man is not dead, a Lord that is passing by, with his servants, has Sly

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<sup>7</sup> *Dramatic and Narrative Sources of Shakespeare*, Ed. George Bullough, (Vol. 1, London and New York, 1957)

<sup>8</sup> Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (Riverhead Books, New York, 1998)

taken to his, the Lord's, house, where Sly is fed and clothed and offered to watch a Comedy. While this Comedy is taking place, Christopher Sly silently disappears, and nothing is heard of him again.

And then it hit me. Could it possibly mean . . . ? Well, I thought it was at least worth looking into. Quite frankly, I expected to find just a couple of vague pointers, added to the coincidence in the name, leading to the strange disappearance of Sly, but, as I advanced in a detailed study of the text, I kept finding clues that systematically matched my tentative hypothesis. Some of those clues are more convincing than others, but I think that, more than each clue taken singly, it is the cumulative effect of all of them, which seems to me overwhelming.

And thereby hangs my tale. From now on, I will write Shakespeare or Shake-spear, when I mean the writer of the play/s, who I believe was Christopher Marlowe. As for William Shaxpere, from Stratford, I will refer to him as Shaxpere, or W. Shaxpere. Also, all italics in this text are mine.

## 2. The Taming of a Shrew

In 1594, a play was published under the title: 'A Pleasant Conceited History, called The Taming of A Shrew. As it was sundry times acted by the Right Honourable the Earl of Pembroke his servants. Printed at London by Peter Short and are to be sold by Cuthbert Burbie, at his shop at the Royal Exchange. 1594.' This play, contains two completely different stories:

1. An Induction, or play-outside-the-play, relating the 'dream of Sly' or Beggar's Tale, complete with beginning and end. (SLY 1); and:
2. A play, SHREW 1, which is the story of the wooing and taming of a shrewish girl called Katharina, by a spirited young man called Ferando, as well as the less important story of the wooing of Katharina's two sisters, by various suitors. The Induction, SLY 1, takes place in an undefined place in England; the play, SHREW 1, takes place in Athens.

### 2.1 The Induction: SLY 1

In The Taming of A Shrew, the entire Beggar's Tale (SLY 1) is contained in about five pages: The first scene, which takes two pages; three short Sly interventions that occur while the play SHREW 1 is in progress, and a final scene, taking one short page, at the end of it, when Sly wakes up again, having been put back in the street in his old clothes, to be found there by the same Tapster who threw him out to begin with.

The origin of the Beggar's Tale goes back to Haroun al Rashid, who relates a similar story in the Arabian Nights. But also, and easier to find by Shake-spear might have been S. Goulart's *Thrésor d'Histoires Admirables et Memorables*, which was translated into English by E. Grimeston, in 1607. (This would mean

that whoever wrote The Taming of A Shrew, would have had to read this tale in the original French, if not in Arabic.)

In Goulard's tale, Philip, the Good Duke of Burgundy, finds an Artisan drunk and asleep in the street; has him taken to his, the Duke's, Palace and, when he awakes, makes him believe he is a rich nobleman who had only been dreaming he was poor. At the close of the evening, after abundant food and drink, accompanied by music and the watching of players acting, the Artisan goes back to sleep and the Duke orders that he be put into his old clothes again, and laid in the street where he was found. The moral tale is finished with these words: 'He slept foure and twenty houres, other wicked men sometime foure and twenty thousand of houres. It is a little or a great dream; and nothing more.' (Not so different from the intention in Prospero's lines 'And our little life / Is rounded with a sleep.')

It seems obvious to me that the circular structure of the tale is essential to its meaning. Unless the Artisan - or Beggar - is sent back to the street where he was found, to puzzle over whether he is a rich man who often dreams of being poor, or the other way round, the tale makes no sense as a plot. But this is not a problem in The Taming of A Shrew, because the SLY 1 story is perfectly rounded and finished, with Sly telling his dream to the Tapster at the end, much as Bottom plans to tell Peter Quince about Bottom's Dream in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

So, it seems peculiar that while the complete Sly material in SLY 2 was re-written in such a way as to be almost three times longer than SLY 1, the lines corresponding to the original final scene and intermediate dialogues in SLY 1, are, in SLY 2, chopped off, leaving Sly nowhere and losing its moralizing justification.

## 2.2 The Play: SHREW 1

The Play, SHREW 1, apart from the different names of the characters, that Katharina has two sisters, and the fact that the story takes place in Athens instead of Padua, is also a farce about a shrewish girl, being won and wed by a strong-minded suitor. Among other confusions, one young wooer, being the son of a Duke, changes clothes with his servant in order to make sure that the girl (one of Katharina's sisters) does not love him for his rank only. The constant playing at mistaken identities will eventually lead to a wrathful Duke, who, when he finally arrives and finds that his son has married without his permission, with the assistance of a fake father and a fake friend decides to put the impostors in prison. (Needless to say, this doesn't happen and all ends happily.)

*Duke: Peace villaine; lay handes on them and send them to prison straight.  
(Phylotus and Valeria runnes away).*

The Duke's lines here, (and the stage direction), are followed by a curious dialogue between Sly and the Lord, whose name (as Sly's servant) has been declared to be Simon:

- Sly:** *I say we'll have no sending to prison.*
- Lord:** *My lord, this is but the play; they are but in jest.*
- Sly:** *I tell thee, Sim, we'll have no sending to prison; that's flat. Why, Sim, am I not Don Christo Vary? Therefore I say they shall not go to prison.*
- Lord:** *No more they shall not, my lord. They be run away.*
- Sly:** *Are they run away, Sim? That's well.*

There are two things worthy of note here. First: The repetition of the prison negative and the run away assurance. In *The Taming of The Shrew*, these lines cannot be spoken by Sly, who is no longer amongst us. Second: The fact that Sly's name, as a rich lord, becomes Don Christo Vary, which can hardly be a mere coincidence with the future name (in SLY 2) of Christopher. In SLY 2, Sly does not have a name, as a lord, different from his name as a tinker, whereas in SLY 1, he goes from simply 'Slie' to become Christo Vary, a variation of Christoforos, the Greek origin of the name Christopher, and a rather sophisticated linguistic somersault for a beggar. Particularly because the Greek word Christo means saviour or liberator, which makes it most adequate in this dialogue, but places the linguistic abilities of Droonken Slie very high indeed.

Moreover, if Don Christo Vary is the saviour of Phylotus and Valeria, we need to consider whether the name Sim (Simon), may not be a thinly disguised reference to Simon Peter, allegedly the most important of Christ's disciples. Which irreverently suggests that the name 'Christo' Vary is supposed to represent a Saviour who resurrected from the dead, on the third day. This short passage seems an early clue to the Deptford episode, even to the detail of the third day. Christopher Marlowe was 'killed' on May 30th, but the Inquest did not take place until June 1st - on the third day - once Marlowe was safely out of the Country. *The Taming of A Shrew* appeared in print one year later.

Another point of interest in the text of *The Taming of A Shrew* is the number of parallels, no fewer than 17, to be drawn from various Marlowe's plays, specifically *Tamburlaine The Great Parts 1 and 2*; *Dr Faustus*, and *Edward II*; as well as one parallel to *2 Henry VI*, which was published also in 1594, with the title: *The First Part of the Contention Betweixt the two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster*.

Such parallels have been highlighted by Dr G R Proudfoot in his notes to the facsimile edition of *The Taming of A Shrew*, as published by The Malone Society<sup>9</sup>, Dr Proudfoot mentions one only further parallel, to a French poet,

<sup>9</sup> The Malone Society Reprints Vol. 160 (1998)

but no other parallels to any Elizabethan writer. So, whoever wrote this play was drawing his inspiration, other than from himself, almost exclusively from Marlowe; and since it is generally accepted even by Stratfordians that Marlowe 'collaborated' in the writing of the Henry VI saga, it seems that one parallel is also due to him. Moreover, in his notes, Dr Proudfoot says: 'Since the first known printed edition of Dr Faustus dates from 1604, the compiler (of The Taming of A Shrew) must have had access to performances or manuscripts of the play.'

I know that many remarkable borrowings from Marlowe by Shake-spear, have been sufficiently quoted, but the Marlovian parallels in The Taming of A Shrew are indeed surprising. I will quote one from each play, chosen at random out of the seventeen identified by Proudfoot<sup>10</sup>:

*I'll fetch you lusty steeds more swift of pace  
Than winged Pegasus in all his pride,  
Than ran so swiftly over the Persian plain.*

**The Taming of a Shrew, lines 125-7**

*A hundred Tartars shall attend on thee,  
Mounted on steeds swifter than Pegasus.*

**Tamburlaine the Great Part I, 1.2.93-4**

*Or were I now but half so eloquent,  
To paint in words what I'll perform in deeds,  
I know your honour then would pity me.*

**The Taming of a Shrew, lines 148-150**

*Ah, were I now but half so eloquent  
To paint in words what I'll perform in deeds,  
I know thou wouldst depart from hence with me.*

**Tamburlaine the Great Part II: 1.2.8-10**

*My future now I do account as great  
As earst did Cesar when he conquered most.*

**The Taming of a Shrew, lines 185-7**

*Which whiles I have, I think myself as great  
As Cesar riding in the Roman street.*

**Edward II, 1.1.171-4**

*Boy, oh disgrace to my person, souns, boy, of your face,  
You have many boys with such Pickadevantes,  
I am sure, sounds would you not have a bloody nose for this.*

**The Taming of a Shrew, lines 698-700**

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<sup>10</sup> For the full list of parallels identified between *The Taming of A Shrew* and Marlowe's work, see the table of references in Appendix A at the end of this article.

*How boy. Swowns, boy! I hope you have seen many boys with such pickadevaunts as I have; boy, quotha!*

**Dr Faustus (A Text), lines 360-1**

I think this will suffice. It seems difficult to believe that any one would take the trouble to plagiarize this last quotation from Dr Faustus, even if they had access to the manuscript. I have included the complete list of seventeen parallels below. Nothing more need be said about The Taming of A Shrew for the purpose of this paper and so I will leave it here, except as it may come up in reference to the later Play.

### **3. The Taming of the Shrew**

The play that we know as The Taming of the Shrew appeared in print for the first time in the First Folio of 1623. We all know the play; we may have seen it with the SLY 2 Induction, with the SLY 1 Induction and, oftener, without any Induction whatever. In fact, we are all embarrassingly aware of the fact that the Induction of The Taming of The Shrew (SLY 2), does not work onstage. It does not work for a number of reasons: a) because it makes no sense; b) because it's totally superfluous; c) because it is very difficult to stage properly.

Consider the stage direction of Scene 2 (Induction II, SLY 2):

*Enter aloft the drunkard with attendants, some with apparel, Bason and Ewer, & other appurtenances, & Lord.*

The word aloft implies the need for an upper stage, and the stage directions indicate it must be a proper stage, not just a simple gallery. This would mean a proper double stage: above and below. The word attendants, in the plural, means several people, as well as the Lord and, later, Sly's wife. And we need to put Sly into some sort of a bed, which again must go on the upper stage. Some experts have tried to define how such an upper stage could have been managed and, of course, it would represent no insoluble problem in our day, but I still believe that, for Elizabethan and Jacobean times, the staging of the SLY 2 scenes would have been a real teaser.

So, we have to admit that Shake-spear took the trouble to create these extremely complex, dramatically useless, two Sly scenes, one of them involving a lot of normally unavailable upper space. Why? Could it be that whoever wrote SLY 2 never meant it to be staged at all? Could it be that it had been written just as a puzzle, in which important and sensitive information had been encoded?

Let's consider now the characteristics of The Taming of The Shrew, starting with the fact that it is about one third longer than the former play and that it also contains two different sections:

- a) An Induction containing the unfinished Beggar's Tale, or Sly's Dream: SLY 2.



- b) A play, SHREW 2, telling the story of the wooing and wedding of a shrewish girl called Katharina, by a young man called Petruchio, and the story of the wooing of Katharina's one sister, Bianca.

The Induction, SLY 2, has been said to take place in Warwickshire, but that is not proven; so let's say it takes place somewhere in England; the Play, SHREW 2, takes place in Padua, Italy.

### 3.1 The Play: SHREW 2

The action of SHREW 2 takes place in Padua: (Padua, nursery of Arts), which seems to emphasize the University environment that justifies all the learning and teaching that will be part of the plot. The University of Padua, founded in 1228, was supposed to impart the Aristotelian doctrine, so the link with Athens (Platoes schooles and Aristotles walkes) in The Taming of A Shrew, has been maintained. Together with the University of Wittemberg (the one attended by Hamlet, Horatio, Rosenkrantz, Guildenstern and Faustus) Padua had a reputation for liberal thinking. Despite the fact that the Venetian Republic was a Catholic State, Padua was willing to accept Protestant students who seem to have flocked from all over Europe<sup>11</sup>. It may be of interest to point out that the most important subject of study at Padua University in the XVI and XVII Centuries was Law. In this respect, it is surely worth noting that the old anti-Marlovian tenet wielded by Stratfordians (!) and Baconians, that Marlowe had no legal training goes out of the window if, as could be suspected, he spent some time in Padua, an outcast, as Ovid<sup>12</sup>.

I believe the switch from Athens to Padua is explained in the first scene of SHREW 2, when an enlightening dialogue takes place between a young man, Lucentio, and his servant, Tranio:

*Lucentio: ...To study Virtue, and that part of philosophy  
Will I apply that treats of happiness  
By virtue specially to be achieved.*

*Tranio: Only, good master, while we do admire  
This virtue and this moral discipline,  
Let's be no stoics nor no stocks, I pray,  
Or so devout to Aristotle's checks  
As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured.*

Having moved from stoic Greece to epicurean Italy, Tranio is pressing his master to avoid both stoicism and the stocks, (a clear reference to punishment and restraint), but he is also asking him to strike a balance between the 'checking' discipline of Aristotelian Philosophy and the amorous

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<sup>11</sup> In the official University Publications, such as the Acta Gradum Academicorum, we often find the same names - as Rosenkrantz for instance - among the pupils of different decades, which means that some important European families would continue to send their sons to Padua, one generation after another, to follow their legal studies.

<sup>12</sup> Marlowe's name does not appear in the records, but he would have been using an alias. In any case, only those alumni who actually obtained a degree are listed. Roger Manners, the future Earl of Rutland, was there in 1596 for a while, but his name does not appear in the records either.

works of Ovid. It has often been said that Ovid was Shake-spear's favourite poet.

While Shaxper had 'little Latin and less Greek,' according to Ben Jonson, Marlowe translated Ovid's Elegies while in Cambridge, in the early 1580s. Only in Act 1 of *The Taming of The Shrew*, this Roman poet is directly or indirectly referred to three times. It is also relevant to remember that Ovid was banished, which I think gives a new meaning to the last line quoted above: As Ovid be an outcast quite abjured, a situation that would exactly correspond to Marlowe's after Deptford. Also in Act 1, we have two further references to Marlowe's works. In 1.1, line 151, Dido, Queen of Carthage is mentioned, and in 1.2, line 241, we find a line about Helen's 'thousand wooers,' an obvious reference to Dr Faustus' Helen, 'the face that launched a thousand ships.'

Then, at the end of Act 1, Scene 1, of *SHREW 2*, we have the very last lines of the entire Sly material. As I believe their meaning is related to the rest of the Induction, I will comment on those lines as part of *SLY 2*, below.

But let's go back to a general commentary of the Play, *SHREW 2*. Again we have the well-known story of the shrewish girl, wooed and tamed by a decided, young fortune hunter from Verona. The only Christian names that coincide in *SHREW 1* and *SHREW 2* are Katherine and Christopher (Christo Vary).

Curiously enough, we know that Marlowe's mother's name was Katherine, if that means anything and it probably doesn't. All other names have been changed. There is no Duke, only two rich fathers, who will be somehow duped, as is expected. At the start of the Play *SHREW 2*, one of these fathers, Batista (another coincidence is the fact that Marlowe's father was called John, and Batista is the Italian name for John the Baptist) is making only one condition for allowing his youngest daughter, Bianca, to wed one of her several suitors; that condition is that his eldest daughter, the difficult Kate, gets married first.

The arrival of bombastic, mercenary Petruchio, openly looking for a rich wife, triggers off the plot. So, while Petruchio is trying to woo Katharina, despite her vile temper, because she is rich, the other characters, (as was the case in *SHREW 1*), embark on a series of extremely confusing changes of clothing and character, by which a servant becomes a master, and a master becomes a servant, and two of the suitors become teachers that give lessons to Bianca; then one stranger becomes a father; the real father is treated as a stranger, and so on, and so forth.

All these confusions already existing, although in different form, in *SHREW 1*, seem now to emphasize that at least one of the purposes of *SHREW 2* is to tell us that nothing is at it seems to be. At this point, we need to be aware of one of the acknowledged sources of both *SHREW 1* and *SHREW 2*.

Supposes was A Comedy written in the Italian tongue by Ariosto, and Englished by George Gacoygne of Grayes Inne, Esquire, and there presented. (Ariosto's Comedy, Gli Suppositi, was performed in Ferrara, in 1506; Gascoigne's translation, Supposes, was presented at the Inn in 1566).

There seems to be no doubt among the scholars that both plays, but particularly SHREW 2, were heavily influenced by Supposes. The name of Petruchio, incidentally, is taken from one of its minor characters, but more importantly, there are a number of lines, which clearly indicate that Shake-spear was not only borrowing ideas, but also drawing special attention to that particular play. I shall quote here some intriguing lines from the Prologue or Argument of Supposes:

*" . . . Some other will suppose we go about to decipher unto you some quaint conceits, which hitherto have been only supposed as it were in shadows . . . . But understand this our suppose is nothing else but a mistaking or imagination of one thing for another. For you shall see the master supposed for the servant, the servant for the master; the freeman for a slave and the bond-slave for a freeman; the stranger for a well-known friend, and the familiar for a stranger. But, so what? I suppose that even already you suppose me very fond, that have so simply disclosed unto you the subtleties of these our supposes; where otherwise indeed I suppose you should have heard almost the last of our supposes, before you could have supposed any of them right. Let this suffice."*

Shake-spear seems to have taken a lot of trouble to draw the attention of the readers or spectators (at least the more informed ones) to Ariosto's /Gascoigne's comedy and its acknowledged purpose to offer 'supposes' that are simply a 'mistaking or imagination of one thing for another.' And, as one may have guessed, among all these supposes, a supposedly dead young man turns out not to be dead after all. However, Shake-spear does not use that particular 'suppose' in The Taming of The Shrew, although, from The Comedy of Errors and Twelfth Night, all the way to The Tempest and Cymbeline, he has got us used to reputedly dead siblings, parents, children, wives and husbands turning up, very much alive, at the drop of a hat.

### **3.2 The Induction: SLY 2**

So, we have finally arrived at the enigma that is the Induction (SLY 2), of The Taming of The Shrew. Dr Proudfoot, in his notes to The Taming of A Shrew, suggests that The Taming of The Shrew 'contained interruptions by Sly, which were marked for deletion when Act Intervals were introduced in the text of The Shrew by the King's Men, around 1605.' This is of course possible. There are no Act partitions in the earlier play, so we cannot say whether or not Sly's interruptions in it would correspond to Act Intervals; however, if we transpose the equivalent moments in the action from the second play to the first play, we find that Sly's interruptions do not correspond to the end of any of the Acts.

On the other hand, Dr Proudfoot's suggestion would imply that Sly's interruptions had the purpose of, as it were, giving some sort of internal

structure to the action. I find that, except for the first and last scenes (Sly being found and Sly being put back in the street), two of the interruptions in The Taming of A Shrew read very much like a simple reminder that he is around and will be dealt with in the end, with the third interruption, the Christo Vary dialogue, being the only one that seems to have any substance at all, and that substance of a very intriguing kind.

So, in my opinion, the idea that Shake-spear did put in a number of Sly interruptions that were so superfluous as to be later deleted, is just as unsupported as to assume that he wrote a closing Sly scene, which was omitted in the First Folio. What he may have done, (if we engage in guesswork), would have been to write a complete SLY 1/b, with a beginning and an end, as structured in the medieval tale and in The Taming of A Shrew, which SLY 1/b was later substituted for SLY 2, with its coded message, not as a mistake, but quite deliberately.

I think all the theories put forward by the divers critics and editors, including Dr Proudfoot, are so many efforts to explain the riddle of SLY 2, because they cannot really believe that Shake-spear could have been so careless as to leave the Induction as it was published.

### 3.2.1 Induction: Scene I

In The Taming of A Shrew, the first stage direction reads: 'Enter a Tapster, beating out of his doores Slie Droonken.' Instead of which, in The Taming of The Shrew, the First Folio reads: 'Enter Begger and Hostes, Christophero Sly.' So, this time we get the name Christopher right there, in line one.

And now for the numbered Clues:

**Clue 1:** The opening line in SLY 2 is:

*Sly: I'll pheeze you, in faith!*

In SLY 1, it is the Tapster who says the first three lines; but the very first of Sly's lines is:

*Sly: I'll pheze you anon.*

The expression, according to the OED, 1596, can mean various things. One of them would be 'I'll fix you.' The other can be related to a variant of the verb: To feaze (1568) one meaning of which is 'to unravel a rope or thread.'

As the verb to pheeze (or feeze or feaze) is an unusual one, the decision to leave this expression in Sly's first line, must have some meaning, considering that the rest of the scene was entirely re-written. Whether the intention here is a double pun: 'I'll fix you' (meaning the Sly scene) and/or 'I'll unravel you' (meaning the clues encoded in it), another purpose for using the expression could be to draw our attention to the contents of SLY 1, so that we take note of all the subsequent differences in the text.

**Clue 2:** The Tapster in SLY 1 has been changed to a Hostess in SLY 2. We know that the house, or tavern, in which Marlow was murdered, belonged to, or was run by, a woman: Dame Eleanor Bull.

**Clue 3:** Sly is outraged at the treatment he receives from the Hostess:

*Sly:* *Yare a baggage, the Slys are no rogues. Look in the Chronicles; we came in with Richard Conqueror. Therefore paucas pallabris, etc.*

The reference to Richard Conqueror is interesting. Apart from the obvious purpose of giving Sly pretensions to both education and birth distinction, (although he will later deny both), I can think of two other reasons for it:

- a) A reference to the well-known joke about the supposed rivalry between Richard Burbage and William Shaxpere, the actor-impresario, over a certain young woman, which ended in a bon-mot to the effect that William the Conqueror had arrived (at the lady's bed) before Richard III<sup>13</sup>;
- b) Because he could be referring to three historical Richards but only one Conqueror, it seems obvious that in the words Richard Conqueror, the name that is blatantly omitted is the name of William. So, we came with Richard Conqueror could mean: we did not come with William, or William did not bring us (the Slys), to life. Both these possible reasons for Sly's mistake, especially if taken together, may be pointing a mocking finger at William Shaxpere.

However, the most important clue in this speech is the one included in the injunction: Look in the Chronicles! I must thank my colleague Cynthia Morgan for sending me the information<sup>14</sup>. It appears that on page 5 of the second volume of Grafton's Chronicle at Large (1568), Morley is listed as one 'of the Gentlemen that came in with William Conqueror' and on page 4 of the third volume of Holinshed's Chronicles (1586) there appears one Morleian Maine in The roll of Battell abbeie, following a 'Catalog of such Noble men, Lords, and Gentlemen of name, as came into this land with William the Conqueror.' It may be the case that the Shaxperes had come with Richard Conqueror, but it seems it was the Morleys who had come with William.

**Clue 4:** Next, in the same paragraph, we have two clear references to Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy: First: Paucas pallabris, (instead of Kyd's correct Spanish words Pocas palabras or the Latin version, used by Shake-spear in

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<sup>13</sup> The one contemporary source I have traced for the anecdote, is in the Diary of a lawyer named Manninham, whose entry for March, 13th 1602, says that, as Richard Burbage was at the time playing Richard the Third, William Shakespeare justified his presence in the lady's bedroom saying that 'William the Conqueror was before Richard the Third.' (The Facts about Shakespeare, page 44, by W.A Neilson and A.H Thorndike The Macmillan Company, 1939) Some Editors, however, seem to have taken for granted that Sly's malapropism refers to Richard Lionheart.

<sup>14</sup> Morgan quotes this information from Louis Ule's book: Christopher Marlowe (1564 - 1607), sadly out of print. Apart from the references in the Chronicles, Ule writes the following on pg 177: 'When his good friend Robert Greene died, Nashe expanded upon Greene's story of Velvet Breeches and Cloth Breeches in Greene's News from Heaven and Hell with a witty confutation of Marlowe's boast that his ancestors had come in with the Conqueror, confirming the fact that Marlowe both was Velvet Breeches and wore them.'

Love's Labour's Lost: *Pauca verba*), meaning Few words. This is a clear (and apparently inexplicable), injunction to secrecy. Second: Another warning: 'Go by, Saint Jeronimy' this expression which, in Kyd's play, is 'Hieronimo beware; go by, go by' is used by Hieronimo, advising himself to be cautious when he is planning his revenge. These two references to Kyd's Spanish Tragedy, following close upon each other, both advising secrecy and both pronounced by Sly within the first seven lines of the Induction, suggest there may have been a specific intention. In my opinion, Marlowe is simply telling Kyd to shut up.

As we know, the Privy Council had authorized a thorough search among the possible suspects of having written the Mar-prelate texts against the Archbishop of Canterbury. When Kyd's rooms were searched, a series of documents arguing on both sides of the Arian Heresy were found. Placed on the rack, Kyd confessed the documents belonged to Christopher Marlowe who had shared his rooms for a while. As the rack (and other unspeakable forms of torture) were used in order to obtain confessions confirming what the interrogators wished to hear, it may be arguable that Kyd was tortured until he implicated Marlowe. That the author of *Dr Faustus* and a former student of Divinity, would have been interested in the Arian - and any other - heresy, without necessarily being an Arian heretic, I think we might take for granted.

The fact that Kyd had accused Marlowe, a friend and colleague, under the pressure of torture, is surely forgivable. But we know that he continued putting his accusations in writing afterwards, although, it must also be said that, by the time he did that, Marlowe had been declared dead. So Kyd, who needed to save his own neck, may have thought he could do Marlowe no further harm. Sly/Marlowe is telling him otherwise. As Kyd died in 1594, probably as a result of the interrogation methods of the Star Chamber, we would assume that the Ghost of Marlowe could not mean to be revenged on him. Or could he? Well, if we continue with *The Spanish Tragedy*, we realize that the Ghost of Don Andrea, even after he knows that all his enemies are dead, is still planning revenge on them.

*Ghost:*                    *Then sweet Revenge, do this at my request:*

And the Ghost goes on to name every single one of his dead enemies, describing for each of them a specific form of eternal torture, taken from the Classical Myths. After which, Revenge replies:

*Revenge:*                *Then haste we down to meet thy friends and foes:  
To place thy friends in ease the rest in woes;*

I would like to point out that putting his friends in ease would be one of the objects of the exercise of writing SLY 2.

**Clue 5:** In SLY 1, the explicit reason why the Tapster throws Sly out into the street, is that Sly, is very drunk and vomiting. He is told to empty your drunken paunch somewhere else. However, in SLY 2 we have - as I anticipated - a discussion over money. Sly is being asked to pay for some broken glasses; as we all

know, the cause of Marlowe's death was an alleged brawl over the reckoning. Both these alterations between SLY 1 and SLY 2: the reason for the quarrel and the Tapster having been turned into a Hostess, are too pointed to be a coincidence.

**Clue 6:** On line 9, the Hostess threatens to summon the local police (the third-borough) and Sly replies using a pun and adding: 'I'll answer him by law; I'll not budge an inch'.

Indeed, the corpse left behind after Marlowe left, as a pawn for the reckoning<sup>15</sup> could not budge an inch.

At this point, we are told, Sly falls asleep and the Lord arrives with his Huntsmen.

**Clue 7:** In lines 14 to 22, we have the following:

**Lord:** *Hunstman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds (à)  
Saw'st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good,  
At the hedge corner, in the coldest fault?*

**1st Huntsman:** *Why, Belman is as good as he, my lord,  
He cried upon it at the merest loss,  
And twice today picked out the dullest scent.*

On this subject of the hounds, we get no fewer than 14 lines altogether (instead of the 4 lines dedicated to the same subject in SLY 1), in which the Lord and his Huntsmen, enthusiastically extol the qualities of several hunting hounds, with suspiciously human nicknames, for their ability to pick cold scents. It would be interesting to see if the nicknames: Merryman, Clowder, Silver, Belman and Echo could be attached to possible human hounds, that may have been conspicuous at the time, for being on Marlowe's track.

In The Tempest (Act IV, scene 1, lines 254 on) we have the following, starting with stage directions:

*A noise of hunters heard. Enter divers Spirits, in shape of dogs and hounds, and hunt them about, Prospero and Ariel setting them on.*

**Prospero:** *Hey, Mountain, hey!*

**Ariel:** *Silver I there it goes, Silver!*

**Prospero:** *Fury, Fury! there, Tyrant, there! hark! hark!*

*Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo, are driven out.*

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<sup>15</sup> Ben Jonson, *Every Man Out of His Humour*. I owe this insight to my Marlovian colleague, Daryl Pinksen, who first brought Jonson's play to my attention.

**Ariel:** *Hark, they roar!*  
**Prospero:** *Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour  
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies:  
Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou  
Shalt have the air at freedom: for a little  
Follow, and do me service.*

So, Silver is still around in 1611, but the other dog names have changed. We have many echoes of the Induction of THE SHREW here, not just the hounds. Trinkulo and Stephano, for instance, are two names applicable to Droonken and Stephen Sly. Some of the plays (Othello in particular) are explicit as to the damaging influence of wine in the 'Marlowe' characters. In this scene, Prospero (the redeemed Faustus), like the Ghost of Marlowe in the Induction, is about to get his revenge from all his enemies, including the three characters that represent the lower side of his nature; these he drives away by means of the hounds that he calls Mountain, Silver, Tyrant and Fury.

**Clue 8:** In SLY 1, when the Lord and his attendants find Sly lying in the street, we read a very adequate line:

**Lord:** *Fie how the slavish villaine stinks of drink!*

Whereas, in SLY 2, we find the following (lines 28 to 39):

**Lord:** *What's here? One dead or drunk? See, doth he breathe?*

**2nd Huntsman:** *He breathes my lord, etc.*

**Lord:** *O monstrous beast, how like a swine he lies!  
Grim death, how foul and loathsome is thine image!*

This is absurd. The Lord has just been told that the man is not dead, so why mention grim death's image? Besides, the strange reference to a swine, followed by foul and loathsome, suggests some sort of gory corpse, slaughtered like a swine, probably covered in blood, and of repellent aspect. The sleeping Sly, no matter how drunk, hardly justifies these two lines, which expressly refer to someone who is horribly dead.

The Lord seems to be describing a real scene, with a really dead man, really looking foul and loathsome, perhaps with one side of his face disfigured by the effects of the terrible wound through the eye that supposedly killed Marlowe. It is just such an image that is conveyed in these lines, which are otherwise inexplicably out of all proportion for a sleeping man who is just drunk. And as we are told that Sly is not dead, the corpse described by these lines must be somebody else's; a corpse perhaps covered in swine's blood to disguise the fact that it has been dead for many hours.

**Clue 9:** The following lines bring in the dream aspect, originally central, to the Sly plot. We are induced to believe that the full, circular structure of the Sly dream will be enacted:



*2nd Huntsman: It would seem strange unto him when he waked.*

*Lord: Even as a flattering dream or worthless fancy.*

Here it is announced what is likely to happen when Sly wakes, and we expect to see it, (as is the case in SLY 1), so that the dream-like fabric of our life is exemplified by his change-and-change-again fortune. But the lines turn out to lead nowhere, because Sly will vanish from our sight before we know what happens to him, or how he feels, when he wakes up.

**Clue 10:** Next, we must consider the puzzle about the number of years that Sly is supposed to have been absent in his mind. In line 120, of the Induction, Scene I, we are told it's seven years; in line 78 of the Induction, Scene II, we are told it's fifteen years, and in line 113 of the Induction, Scene II, the Page playing the role of Sly's wife says: The time seems thirty years to me.

Now, it is surely worth noticing that between 1593, when Marlowe was supposed dead, and 1623, when the First Folio was published, we have exactly thirty years. However, Greg<sup>16</sup> tells us that all the Comedies except The Winter's Tale were printed by October 1621. Moreover, my own opinion is that Marlowe died in 1621, after having personally revised at least the Comedies, and completely re-written his old play The Moor of Venice, and turned it into The Tragedy of Othello.

This might mean either that the thirty years is just a coincidence, or that the Editors of the First Folio always intended to have it published in 1623, which seems unlikely. However, before dismissing the issue of the years as meaningless, it may be worth noticing that seven years, from 1593, brings us to 1600, the year when the largest number of Quartos were published, while fifteen years brings us to 1608, the year when the 1st Quarto of King Lear appeared, after a publishing silence of nearly four years (since the 2nd Quarto Hamlet). So, by coincidence or not, it is true that as far as Marlowe's absence may have been perceived by his contemporaries, the years 1600, 1608 and 1623, were highly significant. As I do not think the author was in England in 1600, nor in 1623, I must believe either that Greg is mistaken and not all the Comedies were printed in 1621, (so that someone like Jonson could have later altered some texts in the Induction), or that the seven, fifteen, and thirty years are just a most extraordinary coincidence.

### 3.2.2 Induction: Scene II

**Clue 11:** Here, in line five, Sly himself gives us his Christian name: Christophero. Although the name has appeared in the very first stage direction, given above, it is only now that he fully introduces himself. He explains that he is old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker.

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<sup>16</sup> W.W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1955)

This is totally inconsistent with his pretensions to noble birth, particularly because the Lord is now addressing him as a mighty man of such descent, at which Sly, completely astonished, exclaims: What, would you make me mad? That he is a son of old Sly of Burton-heath may be a reference to the fact that his character derives from Drunken Slie, the Sly of The Taming of A Shrew and SLY 1. Because in SLY 1 he has no acknowledged occupation surely we must read something in the fact that he is now given not one, but several. Among the meanings of the word tinker, we find applied to itinerant beggars or performers generally, 1561 (OED). In fact, it is the sort of adjective that a poet, playwright, actor, or secret agent (an itinerant actor of sorts), with a sense of humour, might apply to himself. Likewise, might he, if he were Marlowe, describe himself as a bear-herd, keeping in mind Edward Alleyn's famous performances of Tamburlaine, and that character's ferocious speeches. Moreover, Alleyn was a bear-baiter as well as an actor, for which he had been known as the Master of the Bears<sup>17</sup>.

Then we have: by education a card-maker. It has taken me some years to find that one John Cardmaker, a Franciscan friar, was executed on 30th May(!) 1555 for heresy, by order of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Like another famous heretic that Marlowe had much in mind, Sir John Oldcastle, John Cardmaker had tried to escape in 1554 but he was caught and brought before the Star Chamber on 4th November of that year. Cardmaker's confession of faith is recorded in Foxe's Acts and Monuments.

As to the meaning of Burton-heath, it may refer to Barton-on-the Heath, as has been proposed by the Stratfordians, but it could also mean something entirely different. I suggest that the name refers to Burton-on-Trent, and that the association meant here is a link to Burton Ale. This association, supported by the word heath (heather ale having been brewed in the British Isles since the Dark Ages), encompasses two different clues: 1) A reference to Sly, who is significantly drunk in both plays. (In fact the entire Beggar's Tale and Sly story is based on the fact that he is drunk), and 2) A reference to the Babington Plot, in which at least three (Marlowe, Poley and Skeres) of the four men principally involved in the Deptford affair had taken part. As devised by Sir Francis Walsingham and organized by these men (among others), the letters exchanged between Mary, Queen of Scots, and Anthony Babington, while Mary was in prison, were conveyed to and fro, hidden in casks of Burton Ale. Sir Francis Walsingham was thus able to read both sides of the correspondence. As a result of these letters, Queen Mary and Babington were executed. From a professional point of view, Marlowe, Poley, Skeres (and perhaps even Frizer, on behalf of Thomas Walsingham, who might also have been involved), would have naturally looked upon this sinister affair as a patriotic service, successfully accomplished and a link between them.

Otherwise, why would Shake-spear misspell the name of a village in Warwickshire, (where we are told one of W. Shaxpere's aunts lived), while he

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<sup>17</sup> A.D.Wraight, *Christopher Marlowe and Edward Alleyn* (Adam Hart (Publishers) Ltd, Chichester, Sussex, England, 1993) - p411.

had no problem spelling the foreign names of all the Italian places mentioned in the play? Or was Barton-on-the Heath called Burton-heath, in the seventeenth century? If, on the other hand, the idea is to prove that Sly is so abysmally ignorant as to be incapable of even remembering the correct name of a neighbouring town, that fact does not tally with the rest of the man's speeches and lines. Even the malapropism in reference to Richard Conqueror is insignificant compared with such a blunder.

**Clue 12:** From line 22 onwards, the Lord's style becomes absurdly elaborate, speaking to Sly in an exaggeratedly flattering style, while poor Sly still doesn't seem to know what's hit him. The contrast between the Lord's obsequious words, and Sly's insistence that he is no rich nobleman but only old Sly's son of Burton-heath, is very funny. Now the Lord advises Sly to call home thy ancient thoughts from banishment. If the word banishment is always suspicious in relation to Christopher Sly, it gets worse when one realizes just how Marlovian in style is the rest of the Lord's speech. As when he tells Sly:

*Lord: Say thou wilt walk; we will bestrew the ground,  
Or wilt thou ride? Thy horses shall be trapped,  
Their harness studded all with gold and pearl.*

Such words Tamburlaine might have used to court his beloved Zenocrate. As, for example:

*Tamburlaine: Thy garments shall be made of median silk,  
Enchased with precious jewels of mine own.*

**Tamburlaine the Great Part I, 1.2.94-5**

The whole speech could be interpreted as if the Lord were making fun of the poor man, if it weren't for the fact that we have just heard him, the Lord, expressly warning the Players (who will perform the SHREW 2 Play) not to laugh at Sly.

*Lord: But I am doubtful of your modesties,  
Lest over-eying of his odd behaviour -  
For yet his honour never heard a play -  
You break into some merry passion  
And so offend him ... etc*

So, every time the Lord talks to Sly - not so to his own servants or the Players - he adopts an elaborate tone, closely resembling Marlowe's most famous style. Moreover, the line For yet his honour never heard a play, referred to Sly/Marlowe, would have been quite funny for those who knew who Sly was meant to represent. This particular line can have no other justification, because the Lord has just met Sly and so he really can have no idea whether he, as Sly the tinker, has ever heard a play or not. Nor can we forget that Sly was quoting The Spanish Tragedy earlier on.

**Clue 13:** The meaning of Marion Hacket, the fat ale wife of Wincot is most baffling. The orthodox Shakespearians make a great thing of the fact that the action in SLY 2 appears to take place in Warwickshire. A place called Wincot is, indeed, a few miles from Stratford and I have not yet found another clue for the name. If, however, a reference to Warwickshire is really intended here, it looks as if Shake-spear would be again drawing attention to William Shaxpere, as a fat ale wife who will vouch for Sly being penniless. I don't suppose the fact that Shaxpere's mother's name was Mary means anything. A colleague of mine has also suggested a possible pun: A fatale wife, whose name is Mary (Marion). In any case, we don't know whether Marion Hacket has anything to do with Cecily Hacket, who appears later (Clue 15). At a pinch, Marion and Cecily Hacket might be two persons that, at different times, had come to Marlowe/Sly's aid, in which case, Marion Hacket could well be William (Mary's son) Shaxpere.

**Clue 14:** Next, we come to yet another dialogue which does not exist in The Taming of A Shrew, even in shorter form: The description, by the Lord's Servants, of three paintings, all three having as subject matter different episodes of Ovid's Metamorphosis. (One of these paintings, Io and Jupiter, would be by Correggio, and Shake-spear could only have seen it either in Milan (the original) or (the only copy in England) at the earl of Rutland's Belvoir Castle<sup>18</sup>. Given the fact that Rutland was one of Essex's closest friends and allies, I find the description of this painting here particularly suggestive, though this is not the place to extend myself on that subject. The style and language of the dialogue is, again, ludicrously elaborate for the scene, and most unlikely coming from the Servants. I take this to be a double clue:

- a) A reminder of Marlowe's admiration for, and identification with, Ovid, and:
- b) that a metamorphosis is precisely what both Sly and Marlowe are undergoing; Sly only for the night, but Marlowe perhaps indefinitely, as an exiled poet.

**Clue 15:** And now comes the most intriguing dialogue of all, and one that yields unexpected riches. Starting in line 77, the 2nd Serving man is overjoyed that Sly has his wits restored.

*2nd Servingman: These fifteen years you have been in a dream,  
Or when you waked, so waked as if you slept.*

*Sly: These fifteen years! By my fay, a goodly nap.  
But did I never speak of all that time?*

*1st Servingman: O yes my lord, but very idle words,...  
Sometimes you would call out for Cicely Hacket.*

*Sly: Ay, the woman's maid of house.*

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<sup>18</sup> John Michell, *Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (Thames & Hudson, 1996) p225.

*3rd Servinman: Why sir, you know no house, nor no such maid,  
Nor no such men as you have reckoned up,  
As Stephen Sly and old John Naps of Greece,  
And Peter Turph, and Henry Pimpernell,  
And twenty more such names and men as these,  
Which never were nor no man ever saw.*

Well, well, well! What have we here? Allow me to propose a meaning for these lines: Sly/Marlowe has been asleep (absent) for fifteen (?) years, during which years, when he waked (re-appeared), it was as if he slept (because incognito). During those fifteen years, he did speak, but very idle words (those he wrote in the plays) and sometimes called out for (asked for help to) Cicely Hackett, who is not a maid that he knows, but someone else (the identity of whom I have not yet discovered)<sup>19</sup>. In fact, he knows no house, (Marlowe would have had no house of his own), nor no such maid, nor no such men as he has reckoned up (invented), which never were nor no man ever saw (because they are fictional characters).

The fact that Sly is told you know no house just when he is being asked to believe that he is the owner of the Lord's house, where this is taking place, does not make sense. And now, let us see who those fictional characters might be.

- **Stephen Sly:** I believe this to be our friend Christopher Sly. Steep'n or Drunken Sly, See OED: To steep: To soak in alcoholic liquor; also to deaden, stupefy (one's memory, senses). 1592. The names, Stephano, Boracchio and Trinkulo, are names used by Shake-spear as variants of Drunken.
- **Old John Naps of Greece:** but perhaps old John Naps of Grease, vg: John Falstaff. See OED. Nap: A surface resembling the nap of cloth. Napless: Having no nap, worn, threadbare. As in The Napless Virtue of Humilitie (Shakes.)
- **Peter Turph:** This one is far less obvious, but I find two possibilities:
  - a) Peter Quince, from A Midsummer Night's Dream. Turph is a synonym of Turf, which read backwards is FRUT. The quince, as we all know, is a fruit. The prefix frut is used in fruit-related words, such as frutage, frutex and, more interestingly frutify used by Shake-spear in The Merchant of Venice, II, 2, 138, for notify. Which gave basis for the inclusion of the word in OED, as Frutify: A comic blunder put into the mouth of an illiterate person.

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<sup>19</sup> I am, however, tempted to think of Robert Cecil, a man on whose help Marlowe may have counted until Cecil died in 1612, if, as is highly probable, both Cecils, father (Lord Burghley) and son, had to some extent been involved - or at least acquiescent - in Marlowe's escape. The word house, or House (Parliament), and maid a reminder of maiden speeches, may justify the surmise that Cecily Hackett could be a politician. Otherwise I admit I am defeated by the identity of the Hackett women.

b) In Hamlet Act IV, 5, Ophelia sings:

*He is dead and gone, lady.  
He is dead and gone.  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.*

Peter means stone. This song was already included in the 1Q Hamlet.

- **Henry Pimpernell:** I think this colourful name refers to the entire Lancastrian Saga, which means, at least: 1 & 2 Henry IV, Henry V, and all three Henry VI plays. The symbol of the Lancastrians was a red flower, and, as we know, the pimpernel (also known as the scarlet pimpernel) is a red flower. This conjecture would also fit with Sir John Naps of Grease being Falstaff.

So, if my reading of this dialogue is correct, we are being told who wrote the historical plays above mentioned, as well as probably The Merry Wives of Windsor; The Taming of the Shrew; A Midsummer Night's Dream, (if Peter Turph is indeed Peter Quince), and/ or Hamlet. I assume Richard II, with the coronation of Lancastrian Bolingbroke, and Richard III, with the ascent of Henry Tudor, also a Lancastrian on his mother's side, are probably included in Henry Pimpernell. As for the rest of the plays, the line: And twenty more such names and men as these would cover for any number of Shakespearian characters.

**Clue 16:** Among the most interesting of all the clues I find in SLY 2 there is one that might be hidden in lines 120-122. Here we have a Page who is playing (in the Lord's household) the role of Sly's wife, but who is nevertheless a boy, (not just a boy-actor playing the Page, but also a boy-Page playing the wife). So, when Sly asks him/her to get into bed with him, the Page refuses in apparent kindness:

*Page-Wife: For your physicians have expressly charged,  
In peril to incur your former malady,  
That I should yet absent me from thy bed.*

Of course, once Sly is told by the Lord that he has a loving wife, the Page playing such wife will need to say something like this to keep out of Sly's bed, but I cannot help remembering here that Marlowe's former malady, and one that nearly killed him, (that is, one of the malicious accusations brought up by Baines against him), was that he loved boys. In which case, the Page is making a very obvious - and risky - joke; a joke however that would be in appalling bad taste, unless the accusation was so outrageous that both Marlowe and his friends could laugh at it.

**Clue 17:** And now we come to the end of the scene, starting with the Lord's speech. He informs Sly that a pleasant comedy will be played:

**Lord:** *Frame your mind with mirth and merriment,  
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.*

I suggest that the pleasant comedy that lengthens life is the Deptford charade, by which Marlowe's life was certainly lengthened. Sly's reply seems to confirm this:

**Sly:** *Marry, I will. Let them play. Is not a Comonty a Christmas gambold or a tumbling trick?*

**Page:** *No, my good lord; it is more pleasing stuff.*

**Sly:** *What, household stuff?*

**Page:** *It is a kind of history.*

A kind of history, indeed. And here we have three intriguing words:

- **Comonty:** the First Folio uses this word, and with a capital C. Most editors and commentators take for granted that it is either a printing error, or Sly's mistake, for comedy. I don't see why we shouldn't look more closely at the word, as it was printed. The OED gives as a first meaning for this word the commonalty (1600). Now, the Lord has just announced a pleasant comedy, and yet Mr. Malaprop Sly immediately makes the mistake of calling it a Comonty, with its suggestion of commonalty, making a kind of portmanteau word which might mean comedy played by the commons; that is to say, the Deptford charade played by the Earl of Essex' and Thomas Walsingham's servants, the Queen's Coroner and the Local Jury of Deptford.
- **Gambold** means a caper, but it also sounds like gamble, which is what they were all doing at Deptford.
- **Tumbling trick** is a delightful touch: A first meaning of the expression would be something like the trick of an acrobat. However, the OED gives us other possible meanings, such as: To come by chance, stumble, blunder, into, on, upon. 1565. Which fits only too well with all I have said and it reinforces the connexion with Gascoigne's Supposes: 'Some others will suppose we go about to decipher unto you some quaint conceits, which hitherto have been only supposed as it were in shadows.'

**Clue 18:** Finally, at the end of Act 1, Scene 1, we have the last of the Sly dialogues:

**Lord:** *My lord, you nod, you do not mind the play.*

**Sly:** *[coming to with a start]  
Yes, by St Anne, do I. A good matter, surely  
Comes there any more of it?*

**Page:** *My lord, it's but begun.*

**Sly:** *It is a very excellent piece of work, madam lady.  
Would it were done!*

*They sit and mark*

The first Scene of SHREW 2, is, as we have seen before, perhaps too learned for poor Sly. Even the manservant, Tranio, quotes Terence, makes puns with the Greek doctrines, and seems to be well versed in Ovid. So, we cannot be too surprised that Sly is beginning to doze off, even at this early stage of the Comonty. But the players are supposedly in his house, and therefore at his service, so this mixture of polite and rude comments seems strange. The two lines: '*It is a very excellent piece of work, madam lady. / Would it were done!*' make a curious contrast, unless '*Would it were done!*' could be an aside, which it is not; the stage directions in this scene are very clear. So, I would like to propose an interpretation for these lines.

I have said, in Clue 15, that Sly's goodly nap of fifteen (?) years might be interpreted as physical absence. In the same way, I suggest that Sly's dozing off at this point in the action is also to be interpreted as Marlowe preparing to leave the scene in Deptford. Naturally he has kind and encouraging words for the players that have to stay behind and continue with the performance; but it is hardly surprising that he wishes it were done.

The exclamation 'by St Anne' also seems to have a meaning. It has been said that when Martin Luther was a young man he was once so frightened by a bolt of lightning that he exclaimed: Help, St Anne, I will be a monk! It is possible that Marlowe knew this anecdote, and it is probable that he also knew that, in 1521, after the Diet of Worms and immediately before the Emperor Charles V issued the Edict declaring Martin Luther to be a heretic (the consequences of which verdict would have been the usual burning at the stake), Luther disappeared. He was whisked away, apparently kidnapped, by a company of masked men. However, the kidnapping was organized by Luther's friend and Patron, Frederick Prince Elector of Saxony, who took him to Wartburg Castle, in Thuringia, where Luther hid for about a year during which it was rumoured that he was dead.

And this is all. Allow me to recap once more: Apart from Clue 15, which I find truly startling, what we are being shown in the Induction of The Taming of The Shrew, could be summarily described as follows:

A man called Christopher Sly, a tinker (of plays), and a Cardmaker (heretic) by education, after a brawl with a Tavern Hostess (Mrs Bull) over the bill (the reckoning), was left in the street, looking as if he had been murdered. But Sly is not dead, and a Lord (the Earl of Essex and Thomas Walsingham), assisted by his servants (Frizer, Skeres and Poley), had Sly taken to his, the Lord's, house, where he was told that he was a great man who had been asleep (absent) for several years. During those years, he spoke idle words (he wrote plays). Finally, the tinker was offered to watch a Comonty (a kind of history in which nothing is what it seems to be), played by law (by the Queen's Coroner



and the Commonalty of Deptford). While our attention is being distracted by this trick, (the meaning of which is left for us to tumble upon), Christopher Sly 'softly and suddenly vanished away.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark. Fit the Eighth*

## Appendix A: Marlowe - A Shrew Parallels

The parallels between The Taming of A Shrew and Marlowe's plays, including the version of *2 Henry VI* entitled *The First Part of the Contention betweixt the two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* (referred to below as *Contention*), as given by Dr Proudfoot, in the Malone Edition above mentioned, are listed in the following table:

<b>The Taming of A Shrew (Ref)</b>	<b>Marlowe Play Parallel</b>	<b>(Ref)</b>
Lines 9-10	<i>Contention</i>	Lines 875-7
Lines 17-20	<i>Doctor Faustus (B Text)</i>	Lines 227-31
Lines 125-7	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	1.2.93-4
Lines 148-50	<i>2 Tamburlaine</i>	1.2.9-11
Lines 185-87	<i>Edward II</i>	1.1.171-4
Lines 196-8	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	3.3.117-20
Lines 237-9	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	5.1.74-9
Lines 256-60	<i>2 Tamburlaine</i>	3.2.18-21
Line 530	<i>Doctor Faustus (A Text)</i>	Line 1233 (?)
Lines 537-8		Lines 1243-4 (?)
Lines 593-5	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	3.2.18-21
Lines 605-6	<i>Doctor Faustus (B Text)</i>	Line 169
Lines 661-2	<i>2 Tamburlaine</i>	3.2.123-4
	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	3.1.42-4
Lines 679-80	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	1.2.87-9
	<i>2 Tamburlaine</i>	1.1.111
Lines 687-90	<i>1 Tamburlaine</i>	1.2.95-6 and 194-5
Lines 698-701	<i>Doctor Faustus (A Text)</i>	Lines 361-2
	<i>Doctor Faustus (B Text)</i>	Lines 341-3
Lines 896-8	<i>2 Tamburlaine</i>	4.3.12-16
Lines 1169-70	<i>Doctor Faustus (B Text)</i>	Lines 597-9
Lines 1346-7	<i>Doctor Faustus (B Text)</i>	Lines 1449-50