

Evidence that Marlowe was Gregorio

Summary of the Historical Evidence that Marlowe Lived After 1593, and Wrote the Plays Wrongly Attributed to William Shakespeare

Introduction

The evidence that William Shakespeare could not have been the real author of the plays and poems is circumstantial, but cumulatively enormous. His limited - if not lack of - education, the fact that he owned no books when he died and had no access to books when he was supposedly writing, his lack of travel experience in Italy or anywhere else outside of England, and his lack of acquaintance with the aristocracy is enough for me. The evidence in favour of other candidates, notably the 17th Earl of Oxford, is based on almost nothing except wishful thinking by anti-Stratfordians and some distant ancestors of the earl. In any case it is virtually precluded by the fact that he died long before several of the plays, or even their sources, were written and ignores the fact that many of the plays in the Folio had been extensively revised long after Oxford's death. The evidence for Bacon is equally based on wishful thinking, uncritical admiration of the man, and on ciphers supposedly to be found in the Folio. Stylistic and forensic evidence excludes Bacon from serious consideration. The evidence for other candidates is also based on imaginary ciphers and supposed life and/or literary parallels.

The evidence for Marlowe is scattered, and some is admittedly plausible conjecture, but it adds up. The core point, of course, is that if Marlowe did not die in 1593 as all the academic biographies assume, he would be the obvious candidate. He was, after all, the most famous playwright in England at the time (even though all his plays were "anonymous") and the literary parallels with Shakespeare's work are extensive¹. In fact, if it were not for the supposed murder in Deptford, the case for William Shakespeare as the real author would be very hard to defend.

Before proceeding further, I should acknowledge my debt to the extensive anagrams found (or created) by Roberta Ballantine². I hasten to add that "debt" does not mean that I depend on her anagrams to make the case, as will be seen below. Critics can point out, quite correctly, that anagrams are not unique, and the more letters that are available, the more possible sequences of words are possible. The fact that her anagrams contain a lot of alternative phonetic spellings, phonetic exclamations like "aiee" and abbreviations very similar to those used today in text messages ('n' for 'and', 'U' for 'you', UC for 'you see' and so forth) adds to the strength of the case against the uniqueness of her translations.

¹ Hoffman (1955), and Wraight (1995). For details of all works referenced see the Bibliography at the end of this article.

² Ballantine (2007)

On the other side, the fact that anagrammatic signatures can be found at the beginning of every play and many of the sonnets (she didn't have time to decipher all of them before her death), sometimes under both names, adds somewhat to her case, although far from proving it³. More to the point is the fact - and it is an undeniable fact - that, even allowing loose spellings, abbreviations and the occasional phonetic howl or screech, it is not easy to construct intelligible anagrams, and even less easy to construct a series that tells a story that fits into historical context. Sceptics are entitled to believe that Ballantine created the anagrams herself, rather than 'deciphering them'. It is an interesting debate, on which I could sometimes find myself on either side. But the decision doesn't matter. Why? *Because her anagrams have provided a number of useful clues that can be verified in other ways.* The most important of these clues, arguably, is the name *Gregorio de'Monti*, which appears in so many of her anagrams. The crucial point is that there is historical evidence of such a person, living in Venice, and that historical person has a 'profile' virtually indistinguishable from Kit Marlowe.

I will summarise the key evidence from other sources for the case that Gregorio was Marlowe (as well as Le Doux and others), without depending on any literary or forensic evidence. Before doing so, however, I need to make two other points:

- (1) that Kit Marlowe was a bastard, whose real biological father was a moderately high ranking person able to provide him with support and educational opportunities, even though he lived as a child with his mother and step-father in Canterbury;
- (2) that throughout his career, starting as an undergraduate at Cambridge, he was a part-time but important and valuable secret agent working for members of the Privy Council, in its on-going mission to protect the Queen from Catholic conspiracies.

Taking these items in order:

Parentage and Education

Chris Marlowe (Marley, Marlor, Marler, Merlin, Morley, etc.) was legally the son of a shoemaker in Canterbury. However, his real father was almost certainly a magistrate with money and influence, from a higher social stratum. The fact that Marley's legal father, John, was able to take two years off his apprenticeship as a shoemaker and that he received some legal favours, and possibly money, in setting up his own shoemaking business supports this hypothesis.

The fact that Kit Marlowe was qualified (in knowledge of Latin and Greek) and financially able to attend the private King's School in Canterbury for two years

³ Ibid.

is evidence of early education in some form beyond the primary ABC level⁴. It is virtually impossible that his illiterate father or mother could have taught him themselves, or paid for tutors. Moreover, from the King's School in Canterbury he moved on to Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he lived comfortably for three months *before his scholarship money became available*⁵. Who paid for that?

Finally, Chris Marlowe had his portrait painted in 1585 at the age of 21, at Cambridge, wearing expensive clothing of a sort that upper class students did wear on occasion, but poor scholarship students like him were not even allowed to wear. The existence of such a portrait supports the hypothesis that Kit Marlowe had a biological father, or Godfather, with financial resources that John Marley, the Canterbury shoemaker did not have. There is really no other way to explain that portrait, and it is surprising that academic biographers like David Riggs simply choose to ignore it⁶.

All in all, it seems very likely that Marlowe's biological father was a magistrate and knight named Roger Manwood. Manwood lived near Canterbury in Kent. He had been stationed in Dover at the right time to have impregnated Marlowe's mother Kate. He was sympathetic to the Puritans and a strong defender of the common law in cases where it conflicted with Crown or the Church. Inferential evidence supporting this identification includes the fact that Manwood was the judge who released Marlowe from arrest at least twice, and that Marlowe wrote a long eulogy (in Latin) after Roger Manwood's death, something Kit did not do for anyone else that we know of. The fact that Manwood did not recognise Marlowe as his son in his will, or otherwise, is explained by an hypothetical estrangement between them during the last year of Manwood's life (1592)⁷.

Employment by the State Secret Service (SSS)

Kit Marlowe was a part-time secret agent, operating in France, during his college years. There is no doubt about this. It is a documented fact that, contrary to college rules, he had been away from the university almost half of all the time he was registered as a student at Corpus Christi College (from 1581 through 1587) both as an undergraduate and as a master's student. Yet he was awarded his masters degree by the university of Cambridge, *in absentia*, against the rules of his college (Corpus Christi). This happened on account of a letter written to the Chancellor of the university and signed by a number of the members of the Privy Council. The letter, dated 29 June 1587,

⁴ Riggs (2004). The educational requirements and opportunities available in Canterbury for a boy of Marlowe's supposed parentage are described very well in David Riggs' biography. Riggs makes a case that Marlowe might conceivably have managed to get into the King's School thanks to some hypothetical tutoring and some hypothetical financial arrangement with the headmaster, but he fails to notice that the same difficulties would have applied to William Shakespeare, who never attended a preparatory school like King's, or attended any university.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ballantine (2007). That estrangement (explained in Ballantine's anagrams) also explains Marlowe's recklessness in the presentations by the Pembroke Players during the Queen's Christmas Revels of 1592-1593. However, while the story explains some of Marlowe's behaviour in 1591-92, it doesn't affect the main argument.

said that rumours that Marlowe had been seen in Rheims and might be converting to Catholicism should be ignored and that he was on the Queen's business:

“Whereas it was reported that Christopher Morley was determined to have gone beyond the seas to Reames and there to remaine, Their Lordships thought good to certifie that he had no such intent, but that in all his accions he had behaved him selfe orderlie and discretie wherebie he had done her Majestie good service, & desrved to be rewarded for his faithfull dealinge: Their Lordships request that the rumor thereof should be allaied by all possible meanes, and that he should be furthered in the degree he was to take up this next Commencement: Because it was not her Majesties pleasure that anie one employed as he has been in matters touching the benefitt of his Countrie should be defamed by those that are ignorant in th' affaires he went about.”

Signatories included the Lord Archbishop (Whitgift), Lord Chancellor (Christopher Hatton), Lord Treasurer (William Cecil), Lord Chamberlain (Henry Carey) and Mr Comptroller (James Crofts). Such a letter is incontrovertible evidence that he had been in France as a secret agent (spy), working directly for someone very high in the government, probably either Francis Walsingham or Lord Burghley.

Another indication of his continuing connection with the secret service is an historical fact that is virtually impossible to explain otherwise. Two years after graduation Marlowe was in Flushing, part of Holland, apparently working with a goldsmith and an ex-priest named Richard Baines. Baines accused Marlowe (who was there under another name) of a very serious offense, namely counterfeiting - 'uttering' - coins. The legal penalty for counterfeiting was death. He was duly arrested, taken before the Governor Sir Robert Sidney, and shipped back to England as a prisoner. See the transcript of letter from Sir Robert Sidney to Lord Burghley⁸. Yet on arrival back in England he was immediately released with no trial or punishment. The only reasonable explanation for this is that he was in Flushing on secret but official business. Baines' purpose in denouncing Marlowe at the time is unclear, though the same man tried again, later (as an agent of the Archbishop, Whitgift) to get Marlowe convicted and executed.

Further confirmation of Marlowe's SSS connection is the fact that all three of the men who were with him in the house of Dame Bull, on the evening of his supposed death in Deptford, 30th May 1593, were known to be part-time agents of the two branches of the secret service. There is documentary evidence that the senior of the three, Robert Poley, was "on her majesty's service" continuously between 8th May and 8th June, 1593, *so during his presence at Dame Bull's house on 30th May, he was on active duty.* (Farey 2000). His presence there is very hard to explain unless he was there as part of the some high level plot, either to kill Marlowe, or to help him escape.

⁸ See text of this letter on Peter Farey's website at: <http://www2.prestel.co.uk/rev/flushing.htm>

As pointed out long ago by Calvin Hoffman and others, the coroner's report by the Queen's coroner, Sir William Danby - which had been kept secret for 400 years - tells a story that is very hard to believe, or even to take seriously. The coroner's report, in Latin, was discovered and translated by Leslie Hotson (Hotson 1925). The killing was allegedly due to a disagreement over who should pay the bill ("the reckoning"), which led to a quarrel and a fight. None of the biographers has explained why Marlowe was on bail, on his own recognizance, rather than in prison - like Thomas Kyd - waiting interrogation or torture.

It is equally hard to explain why Marlowe was in Deptford "socializing" with Robert Poley, and two other occasional secret agents (Nicholas Skeres and Ingram Frizer) on a day he was supposed (by some historians, at least) to be interrogated by the Privy Council, acting as the Star Chamber (for the third time), on charges of heresy, teaching atheism and other sins. It was on that same day that the incriminating Note by Richard Baines was put in evidence.

Among other strange things about the coroners report was the fact that the householder (Dame Bull) was not interviewed and that the local Deptford coroner was not even present, contrary to law. (Normally the death would have been reported to the local coroner who, in turn, might invite the Queen's coroner to be present.) It is curious that the injury (a stab wound above the eye) that supposedly killed Marlowe "instantly" was not of a sort that is usually fatal in a matter of seconds or minutes⁹. The killing was ruled "self-defence" by the Queen's coroner, William Danby, and this ruling was accepted two weeks later by the Chancery Court and two weeks after that by the Queen, resulting in the prompt release of the supposed killer. That person was Ingram Frizer, an employee of Thomas Walsingham, the nephew of Sir Francis Walsingham. Tom Walsingham was Kit's host during this period (because of plague in London) and a former secret agent himself. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the most famous playwright in England would have been buried in an unmarked grave.

It is also hard to believe any of the far-fetched explanations of Nicholl, Riggs and other as to why Marlowe might have been murdered, i.e. to prevent him from saying damaging things about powerful people¹⁰. But, as Peter Farey has shown, those conspiracy theories leave far too much unexplained¹¹. All of the above suggests (to me) that it was the State Secret Service (SSS), under orders from Queen Elizabeth herself, and Lord Burghley, that organised Marlowe's escape and exile. No other explanation really fits all the facts, including the otherwise inexplicable presence of Robert Poley, who was supposedly out of the country on urgent business at the time.

⁹ Virtually instant death can occur if (and only if) the carotid artery, is cut. Otherwise, death is delayed and usually caused by infection.

¹⁰ Riggs (2004) and Nicholl, (1992).

¹¹ Farey

The question then arises: why not simple exile, without the murder charade? The answer is probably that Archbishop Whitgift, arguably the most powerful man in the realm, really wanted Marlowe dead (preferably burned at the stake) *pour encourager les autres* and that he tried to hire an assassin to do the job. That selected assassin, the same Robert Poley, didn't dare refuse such an assignment from the powerful Archbishop. Another possibility, suggested by Peter Farey is that the Queen also wanted Marlowe silenced, but that they agreed that exile would be sufficient, *provided* Marlowe could never again write under his own name. Either way, it was necessary for Marlowe to be officially dead, not just out of the country.

So who was the body and was he killed by the plotters? David More has suggested that the wounded body shown to the coroner's jury was probably that of John Penry¹². Penry was a Puritan preacher and pamphleteer who had been convicted of treason (for opposing some of the policies of the established church) and sentenced to be hanged on 25th May. Unaccountably, his scheduled date with the hangman was cancelled. Then, without notice he was hanged on May 29, at a place only two miles from Deptford. Moreover, his body mysteriously disappeared after the hanging. It is also interesting that William Danby, the Queen's Coroner was also the coroner of Marshalsea Prison, where Penry had been incarcerated, so he could have been responsible for the disposal of Penry's body. Frizer and Skeres could have moved the body to Deptford, undressed it, and wrapped it in a sheet to disguise the rope marks on the neck, before *rigor mortis* set in. The knife wound and some blood - from a chicken? - would have been needed to impress the jurors. All this must have been arranged the night after the hanging and before Marlowe's supposed death on 30th May.

Peter Farey has provided a detailed scenario to explain how Danby - who lived a few miles away, might have been conveniently on hand, "accidentally" waiting at Sayes Court, the home of the Lord of the Manor of Deptford, Christopher Browne. From there, Danby could naturally have taken charge, being "within the verge" (less than 12 miles from the Queen's current residence, which was Greenwich Castle). Danby, in turn, would have sent a message to the Bailiff-of-the-Hundred, who would have been told to arrange for guards to conduct Ingram Frizer to gaol, guard the body, and start to round up the necessary coroner's jury for the next day.

In short, there is very good reason to doubt the conventional view that Marlowe was killed, in 1593, whether in an argument about who should pay the bill (the reckoning) or whether he was deliberately murdered, as others suggest. We think he survived, instead, with a little help from his friends on the Privy Council¹³.

¹² More (1997)

¹³ There is really no way all of this could have been arranged by Marlowe's friend Tom Walsingham, as Calvin Hoffman naively believed. Tom Walsingham simply did not have the clout. In fact, he had already retired from active service with the SSS after he inherited the estate where he was living from his deceased older brother. He certainly had no way of knowing about Penry's delayed execution or contacting William Danby or Robert Poley or probably even Skeres. His only 'contribution' to the charade

Marlowe's Second Life

What do we know about Marlowe's life after 1593? There is a surprising amount of evidence, and it adds up. Here are the main items:

- The person identified as "Louis Le Doux" in correspondence found in Anthony Bacon's papers, discovered twenty years ago, and also in recently-discovered Dutch records, was almost unquestionably Kit Marlowe. Their "profiles" are absolutely identical. The only thing missing is a document with Marlowe's signature. "Le Doux" was evidently working in 1595-96 for Anthony Bacon (for the Earl of Essex). A man by the same name - and similar characteristics - was later working as a diplomatic courier for the French ambassador to Holland, the Seigneur de Buzenval, during 1598-99. Both the nature of his work and the contents of his trunk (which somehow found its way to Anthony Bacon) strongly suggest that Le Doux's work was highly confidential, that he still had links to the Secret Service, and that he possessed source material for several "Shakespeare" plays¹⁴. The contents of the trunk also included dictionaries for several languages and dialects, *but no English dictionary*. This strongly suggests that "Le Doux" was actually native English, not French. Buzenval's diplomatic papers describe "Le Doux" as a very trustworthy diplomatic courier, capable of representing his employer in very sensitive problems. He was even given the responsibility to move large sums of money (soldiers' wages) from Paris to the Netherlands on behalf of King Henri IV of France. Le Doux was trusted to deliver many of the letters from Buzenval in person, either to the King himself or to his Secretary of State¹⁵. This profile fits Kit Marlowe like a glove.
- The person who called himself "John Mathew" when registering at the English Catholic Seminary at Valladolid, Spain 20/30 May 1599 was probably Kit Marlowe¹⁶. (In fact, somebody has written "a.k.a. Christopher Marlowe" on a margin of the registry document, still visible). What he was doing there as a trainee priest, probably working for Robert Cecil, was almost certainly the same thing he had been doing for Walsingham or Burghley in Reims fifteen years earlier. The same person (Matthew) was recognised and later arrested in 1604 on entering England as a priest. And yet, Mathew was quickly released from prison under the name of Marley. The bill for his expenses in prison was sent to Sir Robert Cecil, the Secretary of State and head of the SSS at that time. Matthew/Marley/Morley clearly had important friends. This Christopher Marley was later "pardoned" (presumably for being a pseudo-priest) by the Archbishop himself.

was his servant, Ingram Frizer. The whole thing has Burghley's and Robert Cecil's fingerprints all over it, as well as Lord Essex's fingerprints, and probably the Queen's passive or active support.

¹⁴ Wraight, op.cit, and Farey op.cit.

¹⁵ Gamble, (2009), citing Vreede, (1846)

¹⁶ Baker, (2005)

Up to this point we have strong evidence:

- (1) that Marlowe was not dead, and:
- (2) that he had both high level enemies (the established church hierarchy) and high level connections in England, mainly with both branches of the State Secret Service (SSS).

Was he still writing plays and poems and sending them back to England to be performed under the name of William Shakespeare? What one can say about Kit Marlowe is, that being the compulsive writer he was, he probably did not stop writing. Why would he stop? Moreover, it is possible to identify numerous links between the plays that were being written and events in Marlowe's life, but that gets into literary analysis which I purposely avoid.

A new public persona appears in 1604, under the name of *Gregorio de'Monti*. He is working as a secretary for the newly appointed English ambassador to the Republic of Venice: Sir Henry Wotton. There can be no doubt that Gregorio de'Monti was a real person working in Venice as secretary to the English embassy after 1604. He is mentioned many times by name in internal Venetian documents, in Harry Wotton's dispatches, in the long correspondence between Dudley Carleton and John Chamberlain, in a letter by Bishop Gessi to Cardinal Millino, and so on. That he was a very senior and trusted English agent is proved by the fact that he acted twice as *locum* in the ambassador's absence, and communicated directly with the secretary of state in England regularly. He often testified on behalf of the embassy to the Council of Ten, which ran the Venetian government. He received a formal "patent" to undertake a major action on behalf of Venice, to protect against certain threats by the Viceroy of Naples, Duke Osuna. Details follow:

- Evidence that he was in Venice in 1593 comes from a letter written by Berlingerio Gessi, Bishop of Rimini and Papal Nuncio at Venice, to Cardinal Millino¹⁷:

"I have received from you the orders of his holiness upon the proposals of Gregorio di Monti, secretary of the English embassy, and to throw all the light I can upon what may be expected from his activity and his offer. I have the fullest information about him, as I have frequently heard him discussed since I came to Venice, and I have even considered whether anything can be got out of him for the services of his holiness. He is a Venetian clerk and for some time served the cavalier Guarino, after which he entered the English embassy, where he lives entirely, both eating and sleeping there. He declares that he does not eat forbidden food on the days set apart by the Holy Church, and that he is a good Catholic, but his close and intimate relations with the heretics makes this very doubtful. He is a very astute man, and those who know him do not believe he may be trusted, and as regard his present offers, I think it very likely he would play a double game if a bargain were struck. All those who

¹⁷ The letter was written on 28 January 1617. The English text is in (Hinds 1909) CSP Ven. Vol.15, 1617/19 p.596, Appendix I

know him think the same, I believe, especially considering his intimacy with the ambassador and the great affection he bears him and the affairs of the king ... (Italian)”

The underlined sentence is worth emphasizing both to confirm his association with Battista Guarini (repeatedly mentioned in Ballantine’s anagrams) and because it confirms that *in Venice he was assumed to be a Venetian*. Yet, as will be clear later, he was quite certainly English. This is evidence of a linguistic and acting ability far beyond the ordinary. Evidently Gessi distrusted him mainly because of his close association with the English, without doubting his Venetian origins.

- In 1604 Gregorio was hired by Harry Wotton, the newly appointed Ambassador to the Republic of Venice, as “Secretary of the language or compliments”. Wotton’s biographer devotes a full page to him¹⁸.
- Gregorio did some moonlighting to help English captains with legal problems. One example is documented in a book about Flemish merchants in Venice¹⁹. Curiously, he pretended not to speak English and needed a translator (for his services, which paid him 100 ducats).
- He is repeatedly mentioned in letters between Dudley Carleton (Wotton’s temporary successor) and Carleton’s friend John Chamberlain in London²⁰.
- Letter sent from Domenico Domenici: Senato, Dispacci Firenze, filza xxix, cc. 132 r.—134 v. Venezia: 23 July 1614: “Monsu de’Monti’s marsigliane have captured at Tunis an English [pirate] ship which was coming from Algiers with a great quantity of reales. He has also taken another good ship [a "buonavita"] and a petache. He is at Malta, and "is said to be arming all the vessels which he takes, and he thinks it to be to his advantage, as in the case of the English ship, that they should have 22 pieces of artillery; and that he intends to procure the abandonment of the affairs of Barbary."²¹
- Venetian diplomat Domenico Domenici from Firenze to the Senate²². The letter, dated 23 July reads:

“Monsu di Monti’s marsigliane have captured at Tunis an English [pirate] ship which was coming from Algiers with a great quantity of reales. he has also taken another good ship and a petache. He is at Malta, and is said to be arming all the vessels which he takes , and he thinks it to be to his advantage,

¹⁸ Pearsall Simith, (1907) - Appendix III.

¹⁹ Franceschi, Davos and Bruoz, (1986)

²⁰ Lee, (1972)

²¹ Poorly translated copy held in English State Papers, calendared SP Venetian 1614.

²² Hinds, CSP Ven. Vol.14

as in the case of the English ship, that they should have 22 pieces of artillery; and that he intends to procure the abandonment of the affairs of Barbary”

- Marsigliane were sailing ships fitted out for war. Reales were Spanish gold coins. The same event was mentioned in a letter from Ambassador Carleton to John Chamberlain, dated 15 July: *“We hear of an English ship, the Tiger, taken at Tunis by two marcilianes sent out against pirates.”*²³ Anagrams suggest that Gregorio took his ships to Bermuda as part of an effort to help the starving colonists, and that Gregorio had hoped to be appointed governor and take his family there to live. There is no direct evidence. However, it is known that the Bermuda Company shareholders met on 15 March 1616, and that changes were made. A few weeks later Dudley Carleton wrote to John Chamberlain *“If you can give Gregorio any comfort I shall be very glad, because the poor man doth much languish after it.”*²⁴ Note that Carleton was hoping for some comfort from the English side. None was forthcoming.
- Two years later, after Wotton had returned to the ambassadorship, he wrote to English Sec’y of State, Ralph Winwood, on 16 Oct 1616, presenting his expense account and requesting an allowance for Gregorio of 30 ducats per month, *for loyal service and “some hazards he hath run here, besides the spoiling of his fortunes for ever in all other places of italie by this dependence.”* Wotton also asked Winwood to request the King to send Gregorio a letter to provide some protection *“which will give him security and courage in his service”*. King James did send a letter, of which a copy exists, but no reward. However, a few months later, after another exchange, King James did send a “patent” confirming his service. Harry Wotton turned it over to the Collegio on 22 March 1617.²⁵
- On several occasions both Harry Wotton and Dudley Carleton asked the English government for recognition and reward for his services to the crown. There is evidence - not conclusive, but fairly convincing - that Gregorio was finally (1621) knighted for these services *in absentia*. This rules out any possibility that Gregorio was a native Venetian citizen, even though outsiders often assumed that he was. The “thank you” letter Gregorio wrote to Secretary of State Naunton (who had replaced Winwood) follows:

*“Illustrious Lord, my most Reverend Lord
With the mail of this week I have received a letter from your Most Illustrious Lordship of the 28th of last month [28 Dec 1620], which has given me the greatest contentment, for it testifies that my humble services are viewed with favour by His Majesty. For this I render thanks first to God, then to His*

²³ Lee (1972)

²⁴ Ibid - p.195

²⁵ Hinds, op.cit. - CSP Ven. Vol.14, item 701, p.473.

*Majesty who has deigned to bestow upon me such great honour, and I shall remain eternally obliged to Your Illustrious Lordship for what you have done on my behalf in securing the great favour of which I am the recipient. Thus I pray God I may be allowed to come and attend in person this ceremony, and humbly kiss his Majesty's feet. Meanwhile I beg to remain in your good graces and to commend now my humble family to the benevolence of our Gracious Patron.
Of your Most Illustrious Lordship I am now your most humble and obedient
Gregorio de'Monti*

The letter was written in Italian (as all Gregorio's official communications to London were) and included among Wotton's papers²⁶. Although the word is not used, the only "great honour" that would entail a ceremony and would justify a trip to England to kiss the feet of the King, would have been a knighthood. So it seems clear that Gregorio was knighted in late 1620 or early 1621, although *in absentia*. The trip to England was not approved, and Naunton suddenly found himself in the bad books of Francis Bacon, who was still very influential. Bacon was very angry at Gregorio for his role in providing support for Southampton in the impeachment trial. It seems that Gregorio died of poison a few months later in 1621, after a visit to the embassy by one of Bacon's agents. Another of Bacon's agents visited while Gregorio was dying, or after his death, and took with him all of the manuscripts in his possession. This is conjectural, but plausible. It is also plausible that Bacon was the chief architect of the Folio, with Ben Jonson as his agent-in-charge. However, there is no firm proof of these conjectures.

There was one final mention of de'Monti as a spy. It occurs in an anonymous letter dated 29 November 1621 received by a Venetian spy named Gerolamo Vano. The letter, translated from Italian by historian Jon Walker, reads:

*"Your lordship is the most worthy general of spies for the lords Inquisitors of State, known as such not only in this city but throughout the State. The company of spies begs your lordship to provide a replacement for Gregorio de'Monti, a recently deceased member of our company, so that the service does not suffer. Your honour as general of spies demands it."*²⁷

Walker thinks the letter was a sinister joke at Vano's expense, but its purpose is not relevant. What is relevant is that de'Monti was well known in Venetian "spy" circles as late as 1621.

Was Gregorio a Poet or Playwright?

Obviously, if Gregorio was Marlowe, he would have devoted most of his writing energies as "Shakespeare" up to the fire at the Globe and

²⁶ Roxburgh Club (1855), translation by Charles Re

²⁷ Walker (2002)

Shakespeare's retirement in 1613. That Gregorio de Monti was also a playwright and actor is confirmed in several ways. He met and eloped with the female star of the visiting (to Naples) Spanish acting troupe, Micaela de Lujan, who was well known on the Spanish stage. She had previously been the mistress of Lope de Vega, the most famous Spanish poet of the time. Lope's letters confirm this.

A series of letters from Lope de Vega to his patron, the Duke of Sessa includes one (the sixth in the series) complaining that his long-time mistress (Micaela Lujan) has abandoned him, having fallen in love with "Gregorio". In fact he goes on to say (in Spanish):

"Mucho ologaria de ver un papel de aquel ahgel d palaacio; que despues que vi la moranzia de Don Gregorio, me parece posible qualquiera enreda ..."

which means, approximately:

*"I would very much like to see some writing by that angel of the palace; for after seeing the ignorance (?) of Don Gregorio, any entanglement seems possible ..."*²⁸

This confirms several points, including the name of Gregorio's wife (Micaela Lujan, who was Lope de Vega's ex-mistress), and that she thought him the world's greatest playwright. It also suggests that he (Lope) was rather jealous, which is not surprising.

- Gregorio probably wrote some short stories *Noches d'Invierno* (Winter Nights) in Spanish under another name (Antonio Eslava), published in 1609. At the time he wasn't fully comfortable at writing in Spanish, which is probably why he published under a *nom de plume*. Those stories are acknowledged by Shakespeare scholars to have been the primary source of *The Winter's Tale* by William Shakespeare, yet no English translation existed at the time! That is pretty strong albeit inferential evidence that Gregorio (Marlowe) was the real author of *The Winter's Tale*. Moreover, *Noches* - a series of stories - also includes a story with the main plot of *The Tempest*.
- Gregorio wrote a dedication (in Italian) to Battista Guarini's posthumously published comedy *Idropica*, published by Giorgio Ciotti (1613). This book has been digitized by the University of California Press.
- In March 1616, Gregorio submitted an edited volume of encomiums (in Italian) for his friend Guarini to the Ciotti press²⁹. He probably wrote most or all of them.

²⁸ Barrera (1890)

²⁹ De'Monti (1616)

- Finally, Gregorio de'Monti wrote a play *L'ippolito* in Italian, which was published by Pietro Baba, in Venice. It is a comedy, which seems to have been a vehicle for Gregorio's wife, Micaela Lujan, playing the part of Ippolito (or it might have been of Margharita).

The first printing of *L'ippolito* seems to have been in 1613. There is a copy of the third impression (1620) in the Folger Shakespeare Library - one wonders how it got there - as well as one in the Venetian Biblioteca and the Academia Filodramatici in Milan. It has never been translated as far as I know. However, I have recently obtained a copy (electronically scanned) and am seeking a translator. I think that the translated version may provide convincing - albeit strictly literary - evidence that Gregorio de'Monti was (or was not) the real author of the works of "William Shakespeare".

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