

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Vinci
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Bunner Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Doré Dante Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Chekhov Pushkin Alcott
Newton



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The Noble Spanish Soldier

Thomas Dekker

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INTRODUCTION

THOMAS DEKKER

Thomas Dekker is believed to have been born in London around 1572, but nothing is known for certain about his youth. He embarked on a career as a theatre writer early in his adult life, the first extant text of his work being 'Old Fortunatus' written around 1596, although there are plays connected with his name which were performed as early as 1594. The period from 1596 to 1602 was the most prolific of his career, with 20 plays being attributed to him and an involvement in up to 28 other plays being suggested. It was during this period that he produced his most famous work, 'The Shoemaker's Holiday, or the Gentle Craft', categorised by modern critics as citizen comedy, it reflects his concerns with the daily lives of ordinary Londoners. This play exemplifies his vivid use of language and the intermingling of everyday subjects with the fantastical, embodied in this case by the rise of a craftsman to Mayor and the involvement of an unnamed but idealised king in the concluding banquet.

He exhibited a similar vigour in such prose pamphlets as the ironically entitled 'The Wonderfull Yeare' (1603), about the plague, 'The Belman of London' (1608), about roguery and crime, and 'The Guls Horne-Booke' (1609), a valuable account of behaviour in the London theatres.

Dekker was partly responsible for devising the street entertainment to celebrate the entry of James I into London in 1603 and he managed the Lord Mayor's pageant in 1612. His fortunes took a turn for the worse shortly after, when between 1613 and 1619 he was imprisoned, probably for debt; this experience may be behind his six prison scenes first included in the sixth edition (1616) of Sir Thomas Overbury's 'Characters'. He died in 1632 and was buried at St James', Clerkenwell.

HISTORY OF THE NOBLE SPANISH SOLDIER ('NSS')

The first clear reference to the play is dated as 16 May 1631 when an entry was made in the Stationer's Register, effectively licensing texts for publication. The entry, made for John Jackman, referred to manuscripts of two plays by 'Tho: Dekker', these being 'The Wonder of a Kingdom' and 'a Tragedy called The Noble Spanish Soldier'. A similar entry was made on 9 December 1633, this time for Nicholas Vavasour. The play was printed in a quarto version in 1634, probably by John Beale, on behalf of Vavasour, who initialled the foreword entitled 'The Printer to The Reader'.

Sources, Authorship and Date

These aspects of the play have attracted more critical attention than all others combined, reference frequently being made to the following known facts:

(1) Although the entries in the Stationer's Register refer unambiguously to Dekker as the author, the title page of the Quarto states that the play is written by 'S.R.', the only Jacobean playwright with those initials being Samuel Rowley.

(2) It has been observed, initially by nineteenth century scholar A. H. Bullen, that three sections of a play by John Day called 'The Parliament of Bees' are nearly identical to sections of NSS. Furthermore a further five sections correspond closely to parts of 'The Wonder of a Kingdom' which as is noted above, was registered alongside NSS in 1631.

(3) In 1601, theatre manager Philip Henslow made part payment for an anonymous play called 'The Spanish Fig', no text of which survives under that name.

(4) In April 1624 a poster appeared in Norwich advertising a touring play, being 'An excellent Comedy called The Spanish Contract' to be performed by Lady Elizabeth's men, a company with which Dekker is believed to have had connections.

(5) There is some evidence of confusion in how the play has been compiled for printing, in particular, a cast list which omits several significant characters, the late appearance of two pointless charac-

ters (Signor No and Juanna) and the delayed identification of Alanzo as Captain of the Guard. These have been argued to be evidence of revision of an earlier work.

(6) Dekker's 'The Welsh Ambassador' reworked much of the material in NSS, albeit in a comedic form. This is generally dated as c1623.

As may be imagined, these facts offer a considerable range of possibilities as to authorship and provenance of the play. Various critics, such as Fleay and Bullen, have tried to make sense of all of them by postulating, largely without evidence, a variety of permutations of collaboration and revision so as to give all of the authorship candidates a role in the production of the text we now have. The most persuasive contribution however, comes from Julia Gasper who, building on work by R. Koeppe, convincingly identifies the source of NSS as being Volume V of Jacques-Auguste de Thou's Latin 'Historiarum Sui Temporis', published in 1620 <1>.

The de Thou volume tells of how Henri IV of France reneged on a written promise of marriage to Hentiette d'Entragues, by marrying Marie de Medicis in 1600; both women bore sons by the King, who is later assassinated. This closely anticipates the marriage plot of NSS but the critical detail which seals the identification of de Thou as the source, is his reference to a soldier called Balthazare Sunica who acted against the King and was clearly, the original of the character Balthazar in NSS. This evidence demonstrates that the earliest date for composition of NSS is 1620. Furthermore, due to the likelihood that NSS predated 'The Welsh Ambassador' of 1623/4, a last possible date for the writing of NSS, can also be deduced and a composition date of around 1622 can be established with some certainty.

With respect to the relationship with other plays, any connection with the 'The Spanish Fig' would seem to be ruled out on the grounds that it pre-dates the publication of de Thou's *Historiarum*. In the case of the later play 'The Spanish Contract', a connection is possible although any theories that may be advanced little more than conjecture. One such theory, put forward by Tirthanker Bose <2>, is that 'the Spanish Contract' is a version of NSS, reworked as a

comedy and thus is an intermediate stage on the road to 'The Welsh Ambassador'.

The more pressing matter, the question of the connection with 'The Parliament of Bees', is also addressed by Julia Gasper. The crucial evidence here relates to instances where details, meaningful only in the context of NSS, have become embedded in the text of 'The Parliament of Bees'. The most significant example of this occurs in Scene 1, Line 29 of 'The Parliament of Bees' where a character asks 'Is Master Bee at leisure to speak Spanish / With a Bee of Service?'. There is no connection between 'The Parliament of Bees' and Spain or indeed, the Spanish language, so it would seem strong evidence that NSS was the source for 'The Parliament of Bees' and not the other way around. This evidence is supplemented by an analysis of NSS, Act 2 Scene 1, a scene common to both plays, when Balthazar sets out his credentials of loyal service in seeking to advise the King. Gasper points out that this scene in NSS contains elements from de Thou, not to be found in The Parliament of Bees, principally the need to intervene on behalf of Onaelia. The only plausible order of composition for the plays therefore places NSS before 'The Parliament of Bees'. Furthermore as Day's name has never been associated with NSS, there is no reason to suppose he was involved in its composition. The likelihood is therefore that he was lifting dialogue from an earlier work by another writer in order to serve his own convenience.

The remaining question to be considered concerns the relative claims to authorship of Dekker and Rowley. In weighing the evidence, it is important to consider that the first records, those on the Stationer's Register, unequivocally record Dekker as the sole author. Furthermore, textual scholarship is happy to place NSS within the Dekker cannon, while, as Hoy says 'no scholar has ever succeeded in demonstrating Rowley's share in the play' <3>. Given that it has been established that the play post-dates 1620, the possibility of a Dekker revision of an earlier Rowley text would appear to be implausible. The attribution to 'S.R.' remains unexplained, although it may be noted in passing that the initials are the final letters of Dekker's names, so it may just be a coded reference to Dekker. More likely perhaps, it could be the result of the editorial confusion which also pervades the compilation of the cast list.

Performance

There is no firm record of the play being performed, although the foreword does make mention of it being enthusiastically received. Such references are not, of course, to be taken at face value as they would hardly be expected to say anything else; nevertheless, it does strongly suggest that the play has been staged. In practice, the printing of a text suggests either high popularity, in which case sales could be expected to compensate for possible plagiarism, or else relative unpopularity in which case publication was a last attempt to generate some financial return before the play was discarded. In this instance, the later circumstance is likely to obtain, especially in view of the gap between writing and publication dates.

ACTION OF THE PLAY

The sub-title given to the text in the Quarto edition is 'A contract Broken, Justly Revenged'. Although this title is likely to have been added by the printers, it does succinctly sum up one aspect the play, the theme of revenge which is reminiscent of Elizabethan revenge plays such as Thomas Kidd's 'The Spanish Tragedy'. Revenge plays however, are generally patterned around a revenger and what may be termed a 'revengée', while the action of NSS revolves around a power struggle between two factions both of whom are concerned with violent intent. In reality, the play reflects the seventeenth century fashion for mixing elements of tragedy and comedy in a style first identified by Sir Philip Sydney in 1579 as being 'mongrel tragic-comedy'⁴; thus while death intrudes on the final act, it only strikes unsympathetic characters. There is also regular light relief provided by two comic characters, Cornego and Cockadillio, as well the cameo appearances of Signor No and Medina as a French Doctor.

The two groups of characters at the centre of the play are on one hand, the ruling cabal, that is the King, his Italian Queen and their supporters, including the Italian Malateste and on the other a number of disenchanted Spanish noblemen who are in sympathy with the King's former betrothed lover, Onaelia. This later faction, led by the Duke of Medina, eventually includes the key figure of the patriotic soldier Balthazar, a man who has earned respect for his martial exploits and whose 'nobility', as celebrated in the title to the play, is a tribute earned by action rather than by birth or inheritance. He is thus differentiated from the King, whose nobility of birth is cancelled out by the dishonesty of his character.

Nevertheless, Balthazar is something of a problematic figure and in many ways an unconvincing hero for a play with ostensibly, a strong moral theme. His basic character is presented as that of an honest uncomplicated soldier; in his first appearance(2.1), he has already been slighted by the Dons, and presents an unkempt appearance and rails against the 'pied-winged butterflies' of the effete court who put appearance before patriotic duty. Nevertheless, subterfuge seems to come too readily to him as we see in 2.2 when he makes a false offer to assassinate the King to test Onaelia, again in

3.3 when he pretends to agree to murder Sebastian and Onaelia in order to placate the Queen and finally in 5.1 when he tells the King that the murder has been carried out. Scene 3.3 shows a further unedifying side of Balthazar when he bursts in on the King and stabs a servant and refuses to express remorse as the servant is a mere groom. On a different note, the character is also used to comic effect, especially in 4.2 when he acts out bawdy dialogue with Cornego. His last significant act is to dissuade the faction from attempting to assassinate the King, before being reduced to a minor role in the closing scene where he only has five short speeches and plays no significant part in the denouement. The character then, is something of a patchwork affair, playing different roles as the play progresses before being effectively jettisoned at the conclusion.

The King by contrast maintains a degree of consistency, notwithstanding his formulaic deathbed renunciation of evil. As we have seen, his Queen is Italian, but he may be associated with Italy by more reasons than his marriage. In Act 5 Scene 2, Daenia says that 'There's in his breast / Both fox and lion, and both those beasts can bite' This is a direct reference to the works of the Italian courtier Niccol Machiavelli who wrote in his work on statecraft 'The Prince': 'A Prince must know how to make good use of the beasts; he should choose from among the beasts the fox and the lion; for the lion cannot defend itself from traps and the fox cannot protect itself from wolves.' <5>. Although the book from which this extract was taken, 'The Prince', had yet to be published in English, the ideas it contained (or at least a caricature of them) had been in circulation for many years following its initial publication in Italy in 1531. These were often treated with profound suspicion by the English who saw the advocacy of the use of manipulation and deception in order to maintain power as being the idea of a disreputable foreign country. Indeed, Machiavelli was seen as a satanic figure who was known as 'Old Nick', a still-used reference to the devil, and the machiavel became a stock figure on the early modern stage, a tradition which the portrayal of the King is drawing on.

The other interesting opposition within the play is between the two claimants to the title of Queen, the current incumbent and Onaelia. There is little doubt that it is Onaelia who is the representative of virtue, her behaviour often rising above that of the 'noble'

Balthazar. In Act 1 Scene 2 she makes a fearless statement in defacing the King's portrait, this being an act of treason <6>. Despite her strong feelings however, she does not rise to Balthazar's bait when he introduces the possibility of assassinating the King; the remnants of her love for him and her concern for the stability of the realm rule this possibility out. She is not however prepared to accept her treatment without protest and, in Act 3 Scene 2, engages a poet to propagandise on her behalf. His refusal, on the grounds of self-preservation is denounced in striking terms when she accuses poets generally of being 'apt to lash / Almost to death poor wretches not worth striking / but fawn with slavish flattery on damned vices / so great men act them'. The effective conclusion of her involvement as early as the end of 3.2 impoverishes the rest of the play. The Queen's less admirable character is highlighted by the way she is prepared to condone the taking of life in order to secure her position. Her ruthless outlook is punished when she is deprived of her position and forced to return to Italy.

The final scene of the play utilises a dramatic technique that had played an important part in 'The Shoemakers' Holiday': the banquet scene. Planned by the King in an attempt to achieve reconciliation and remove the threat of Onaelia by marrying her off, it represents a means of bringing almost the entire cast on stage in order to witness the meeting out of justice. It is ironic that the King's scheme is undermined, not by his political rivals but by his allies, The Queen and Malateste, who do not believe that the marriage will provide a stable settlement and instead seek to pursue a deadlier course of action. The banquet provides the context for the unwinding of this plot as vengeance consumes itself, bring about the regime change that justice demands.

EDITORIAL PRACTICE

The text is based on the 1634 Quarto, as reproduced in Tudor Facsimile series in 1913. Spelling has been modernised, except in instances where to do so would change a word's pronunciation. Punctuation has also been modernised and has been used lightly in an attempt to reflect contemporary speech patterns. Contractions to words have been eliminated where this is possible without upsetting the verse rhythm; for example, 'baked' replaces 'bak'd' in 4.2.

Names have been retained as originally set out except that of the central character whose name was spelt in the original as 'Baltazar'; Balthazar is the modern Anglicised version of the same name. The cast list has been newly compiled from the text of the play, rather than by reference to the one appearing in the Quarto.

All lines have been left justified, including those cases where characters share a line of verse. The speeches of Balthazar in the early part of 2.1 and again in 4.1 appear as verse in the Quarto but have been rendered as prose in this edition. This appears to make more sense of the speech patterns and has the additional effect of making Balthazar and Cornego, the two non-aristocratic figures, the consistent prose speakers throughout the play.

Endnotes have been provided only to explicate words or terms of unusual obscurity. Numeric references to such notes are enclosed within angled brackets.

Stage directions may be identified as being a line of text preceded by a blank line, rather than by a character's name. These have been added to occasionally to ensure that all essential movements apparent from the text are set out. Where significant additions have been made, these are enclosed within square brackets. Scene divisions within acts have been deduced from the movements of characters.

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THE TEXT

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

King of Spain

Cardinal, advisor to the King

Count Malateste of Florence, confidant of the Queen

Roderigo, Don of Spain, supporter of the King

Valasco, Don of Spain, supporter of the King

Lopez, Don of Spain, supporter of the King

Duke of Medina, leader of the Faction

Marquis Daenia, member of the Faction

Alba, Don of Spain, member of the Faction

Carlo, Don of Spain, member of the Faction

Alanzo, Captain of the Guard, member of the Faction

Sebastian, illegitimate son of the King

Balthazar, a Spanish soldier

Cornego, servant to Onaelia

Cockadillio, a courtier

Signor No

A Poet

Queen of Spain, Paulina, daughter of Duke of Florence

Onaelia, niece to the Duke of Medina, mother of Sebastian

Juanna, maid to Onaelia

Ladies in waiting

Attendants, guards

THE PRINTER TO THE READER

Understanding reader, I present this to your view, which has received applause in action. The poet might conceive a complete satisfaction upon the stage's approbation; but the printer rests not there, knowing that that which was acted and approved upon the stage, might be no less acceptable in print. It is now communicated to you, whose leisure and knowledge admits of reading and reason. Your

judgement now this Posthumous <1> assures himself will well attest his predecessor's endeavours to give content to men of the ablest quality, such as intelligent readers are here conceived to be. I could have troubled you with a longer epistle, but I fear to stay you from the book, which affords better words and matter than I can. So the work modestly depending in the scale of your judgement, the printer for his part craves your pardon, hoping by his promptness to do you greater service, as convenience shall enable him to give you more or better testimony of his entireness towards you.

N.V.

ACT 1 SCENE 1

Enter in magnificent state to the sound of loud music, the King and Queen, as from church, attended by the Cardinal, Count Malateste, Marquis Daenia, Roderigo, Valasco, Alba, Carlo, and ladies-in waiting. The King and Queen with courtly compliments salute and part. She [exits] with one half attending her. King, Cardinal and the other half stay, the King seeming angry and desirous to be rid of them. King, Cardinal, Daenia and others [remain].

KING

Give us what no man here is master of:
Breath. Leave us pray, my father Cardinal
Can by the physic of philosophy
Set all again in order. Leave us pray.

Exeunt [King and Cardinal remain].

CARDINAL

How is it with you, sir?

KING

As with a ship
Now beat with storms, now safe. The storms are vanished
And having you my Pilot, I not only
See shore, but harbour; I to you will open
The book of a black sin, deep printed in me.

Oh father, my disease lies in my soul.

CARDINAL

The old wound sir?

KING

Yes that, it festers inwards.

For though I have a beauty to my bed
That even creation envies at, as wanting
Stuff to make such another, yet on her pillow
I lie by her, but an adulterer,
And she as an adulteress. She is my queen
And wife, yet but my strumpet though the church
Set on the seal of marriage. Good Onaelia,
Niece to our Lord High Constable of Spain
Was precontracted mine.

CARDINAL

Yet when I stung

Your conscience with remembrance of the act
Your ears were deaf to counsel.

KING

I confess it.

CARDINAL

Now to untie the knot with your new Queen
Would shake your crown half from your head.

KING

Even Troy, though she has wept her eyes out,
Would find tears to wail my kingdom's ruins.

CARDINAL

What will you do then?

KING

She has that contract written, sealed by you,
And other churchmen witnesses unto it.
A kingdom should be given for that paper.

CARDINAL

I would not, for what lies beneath the moon,
Be made a wicked engine to break in pieces
That holy contract.

KING

'Tis my soul's aim
To tie it upon a faster knot.

CARDINAL

I do not see
How you can with safe conscience get it from her.

KING

Oh I know
I wrestle with a lioness. To imprison her
And force her to it, I dare not. Death! What King
Did ever say 'I dare not'? I must have it;
A bastard have I by her, and that cock
Will have, I fear, sharp spurs, if he crow after
Him that trod for him. Something must be done
Both to the hen and the chicken. Haste you therefore
To sad Onaelia, tell her I'm resolved
To give my new hawk bells, and let her fly.
My Queen, I'm weary of, and her will marry.
To this, our text, add you what gloss you please;
The secret drifts of kings are depthless seas.