Reading Shakespeare's Readers: or, Shakespeare Unbound

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7 March 2020

1. 'Renaissance plays seem compulsively to turn to scenes of writing, to letters and documents, to written discourse as the mode of action.'

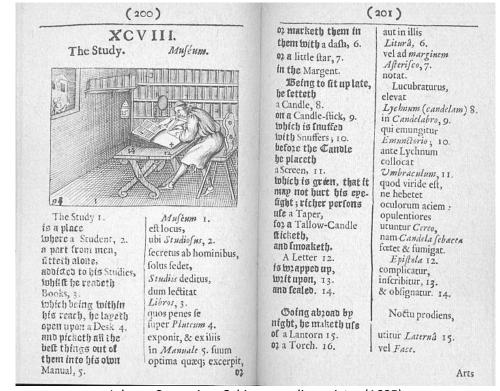
Stephen Orgel, 'The comedian as the character C', in Michael Cordner, Peter Holland and John Kerrigan (eds), *English Comedy*, pp. 36-54, p. 37

2. As an unperfect actor on the stage
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart.
So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.
O, let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
Who plead for love and look for recompense
More than that tongue that more hath more express'd.
O, learn to read what silent love hath writ:

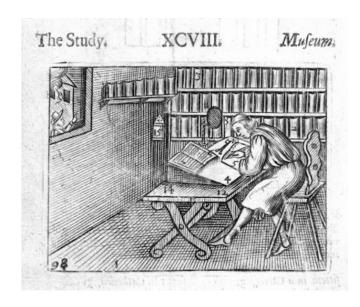
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

Shakespeare, Sonnet 23

3.



Johann Comenius, Orbis sensualium pictus (1685)

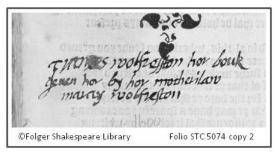


4. To the great Variety of Readers

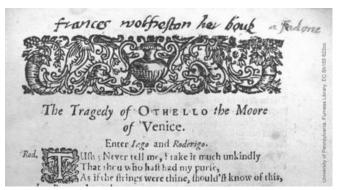
From the most able, to him that can but spell: there you are number'd. We had rather you were weighed; especially, when the fate of all bookes depends upon your capacities and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique, & you wil stand for your priviledges wee know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth best commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soever your braines be, or your wisedomes, make your licence the same, and spare not. Judge your six-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, whatever you do, Buy. Censure will not drive a Trade...And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the Stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock-pit, to arraigne Playes dailie, know, these Playes have had their triall alreadie ... [Shakespeare's] mind and hand went together: And what he thought, he uttered with that easinesse, that wee have scarse received from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our province, who onely gather his works, and give them you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him...Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to understand him...

John Heminge. Henrie Condell. Shakespeare, First Folio (1623)

5.



Annotation by Frances Wolfreston (1607-1677) in copy of Works of Chaucer (1550), in Folger Shakespeare Library



Othello, third quarto (1655), Folger Shakespeare Library

ENGLANDS Parnaffus:	A Table of all the special matters contained in this Booke.
Turnujjus:	
O R The choyleft Flowers of our Moderne	A CAre 24 Angels, Pag. 1.2 Chaftite 25
Poets, with their Poeticall comparisons. Descriptions of Bewties, Personages, Cassles, Pallaces, Mountaines, Groues, Seas,	Ambition 3 Children 28 Affliction 7. vid. pouertie. Christ 28 Art 9 Cyprus 353
Springs, Rivers, &c. Whereunto are annexed other various discourses,	Audacitie 8 Cymbia 355 August 20 Cupid 357
both pleasannt and profitable.	Antumnus 368 Ceston 40.7 Apollo 372 Confusion of languages, 384
albook .	Assault 375 Care of children 462 Adam 372 Chaunge 20
	Astronoment 462.446 (baunce 30) Astrologie 345 Counsaile 31 Arribmeticke 345 Combat 347
	B Concord 32 BEautie, 13.385.465 Conscience 33
	Balofuluesse 21 Country.Commonweale. 37 Blisse 21 Content 38
	Battaile 23 Court 41 Battaile 345 Courtier effeminate 352 Eeasts 498.486 Courage 39.448
Imprinted at London for N. L. C. B. and T. H. 1600.	Byrds 487 Courtefie 45.439 Cruline

Robert Allot, Englands Parnassus: or the choysest flowers of our moderne poets, with their poeticall comparisons (1600)

OF OVR ENGLISH POETS. 297

Or capable of any forme at all.

Ch. Marlow.

I know not her that willingly with maiden-head would W. W. (die.

Vse.

Use make things nothing huge, and huge things no-G. Chapman, (thing, Foule cankering ruft the hidden treasure frees,

Foule cankering raff the hidden treature frees,
But gold thats put to vie, more gold begets,
W. Sb.

Warre.

Laftly flood warrein gliftering armes yelad, with vilage gtimme, flerne lookes and gattly hood, In his right hand anaked swordhee had, That to the hilts was all with bloud imbrude, And in his left that kings and kingdomes rued, , of Famine and fire he had, and therewithall Hee rased townes, and threw downe towres and all Cities hee fackt, and realmes that whilome flowred In honour, glorie, and rule about the beft, Hee ouerwhhlm'd, and all their fame denoured, Consumde, destroyde, wasted, and neuer ceast, Till hee therewith their name and all opprefix His face forhued with woundes, and by his fide, There hung his targe with gathes deepe and wide, In midft of which depainted there wee finde Deadly debate, all full of fnakie hayre, That with a bloudy fillet was ybound,

Out

1

Allot, *Englands Parnassus*, p. 297, recycling (*is this the right word*?) *Venus and Adonis* lines 767-8

8.

'So in thyself thyself art made away;
A mischief worse than civil home-bred strife,
Or theirs whose desperate hands themselves do slay,
Or butcher-sire that reaves his son of life.
Foul-cankering rust the hidden treasure frets,
But gold that's put to use more gold begets.'

'Nay, then,' quoth Adon, 'you will fall again Into your idle over-handled theme: The kiss I gave you is bestow'd in vain, And all in vain you strive against the stream; For, by this black-faced night, desire's foul nurse, Your treatise makes me like you worse and worse.'

Venus and Adonis, excerpt (lines 763-74)

AS / March 2021