



### Robert Prechter Responds

I'd like to briefly respond to several points made by Kurt Kreiler in his criticism of my article, "Hundredth Sundrie Flowres Revisited: Was Oxford Really Involved?" published in *Brief Chronicles II* (2010).

Kreiler argues that "the masterful narrative technique with the innovative content" of *The Adventures of Master F.I.* are strikes against Gascoigne's authorship of the story. In my view, (1) *F.I.* was indeed innovative, but this is not a strike against Gascoigne, several of whose efforts were innovative; (2) the narrative technique is no more "masterful" than anything else Gascoigne wrote; (3) Ward himself noted the similarities between *F.I.* and Gascoigne's *Dan Bartholomew*; (4) I noted in my paper, "The tedious opening paragraph of Gascoigne's *The Glasse of Government* (1575) is perfectly compatible with his authorship of *F.I.*"

Kreiler implies that we must conclude that the narrative is therefore Oxford's. But (1) Oxford, either as himself or Shakespeare, produced no prose fiction; (2) *F.I.* is below the standard of Oxford's prose writing of the time, per his introduction to Thomas Bedingfield's *Cardanus Comforte* in 1573; (3) Kreiler does not show that the prose in *F.I.* is in fact *Oxford's* as opposed to Gascoigne's or someone else's.

Kreiler reiterates that the fourth section of *Flowres* claims authorship by diverse poets, and that there are various mottoes attached to poems in the third, fourth and fifth sections, arguing that "from this we see clearly that the third and the fourth sections of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres* were not solely written by the author of the fifth section (Gascoigne)." But Gascoigne in his follow-up book, *The Posies of George Gascoigne*, states that the earlier volume is his. We cannot take both books' claims at face value, because only one can be correct. Kreiler admits of the first book, that the fifth chapter in effect contradicts the introduction to the fourth chapter. But nothing in *Posies* is self-contradictory. If consistency prompts a conclusion, then we must side with Gascoigne's comments in *Posies*. But there are many more bases for a decision on the issue, as detailed in my article.

Kreiler says, "Furthermore, we find a clear difference in style between 'divers excellent devises of sundry Gentlemen' and 'certayne devises of master Gascoyne.'" I don't see any substantive differences, Kreiler does not make a case to that effect.

He states that "Master F.I." and "Si fortunatus infoelix" are the same individual, so F.I.'s identity "has, once and for all, been decoded." Elizabethan printers used *I* for

J, and “F.I.” here means “F.J.,” according to both the “Freeman Jones” name cited originally in *Flowres* and the “Ferdinando Jeronimi” name cited later in *Posies*. Yet *even if* F.I. had indicated the same person (real or imaginary) as “Si fortunatus infoelix,” the connection wouldn’t much matter, and I don’t see any “code.”

I do like his connecting one of the lines in a poem from *Flowres* featuring “G.G.” to lines from *Richard III*; each excerpt speaks of “G” and uses nearly the same term in “crists crosse rowe” vs. “cross-row.” But other aspects of the poem—the elevation of God and Gold, and its mincing cuteness, for example—are contrary to Oxford’s usual manner. A brief echo in Shakespeare, unfortunately, is not definitive. As noted in my article, Oxfordian scholars have had difficulty telling Oxford’s and Gascoigne’s verse apart, no doubt partly because Oxford and Gascoigne read each other’s work. Boas, for example, said that Shakespeare is much “indebted...to Gascoigne’s *Supposes*” for *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which “certain features of the under-plot...have their exact parallel in *Supposes*.” (Boas, *The Taming of a Shrew*, 1908, p.xxi) So, a single parallel instance of language no more argues that Oxford wrote the “G.G.” poem than that he wrote *Supposes*. Moreover, it still seems that “G.G.” is more likely to be George Gascoigne than anyone else, particularly since these initials appear in a book in which the only names cited are George Gascoigne, Francis Kinwelmarsh and “Chr. Yelverton.” But Kreiler avers: “The logical conclusion: either Gascoigne wrote in the role of the Earl or the Earl wrote in the role of Gascoigne,” which, to begin with, is a vague conclusion. But there is another valid option, which is that one of them—who was well versed in the other’s work—happened to write a line that sounds like a line by the other.

Kreiler also shows how a few lines from some of the other poems in *Flowres* are like some lines from Shakespeare. Such citations are not lost on me. They seem to confirm at least that one writer read the other. But let’s face it: Out of *hundreds* of pages by acquainted poets with similar sensibilities, we should be stunned if we didn’t find any like lines. Nevertheless, if one were to do a *thorough* analysis of this type, linking certain poems to Oxford’s writing and *contrasting* them to Gascoigne’s accepted writing, it might constitute a good case that Oxford is behind some poems in *Flowres*. But as I pointed out, some of the lines in these poems also match others from Gascoigne’s accepted work and/or are contrary to Oxford’s usual manner, so I doubt such an exercise would produce the conclusion at which he drives.

Kreiler mentions the use of *Ver*, but I covered that.

He repeats the assertion that Ward “deciphered” an acrostic in one poem to read “Edward de Vere,” but I carefully countered that claim. He says, “Up to now, nobody has proven Ward’s interpretation to be incorrect,” but I also cited a paper to that effect by Genevieve Ambrose from 1927.

He credits the “My Lucke is losse” poems from *Paradyse of Dainty Devises* to Oxford and states that “‘My Lucke is losse’ is the English variation of ‘Master Fortunatus Infoelix’ (=THE FORTUNATE UNHAPPY from *Twelfth Night*).” I am not convinced that his conclusion follows, and if it did, I am not sure it would constitute any evidence with respect to the authorship of Gascoigne’s book.

Some of his Kreiler’s arguments utterly escape me, for example, this paragraph:

In Humphrey Coningsby's collection of handwritten poems (BL, MS Harl.7392, fol. 19) the poem "If fortune may enforce" is ascribed to "RO. LOO." and (written in a woman's handwriting) "Balle." The cipher "Ball(e)" identifies the Earl of Oxford as being the author of five other poems in MS Harl.7392, also signed "Ball". ...The abbreviation "RO. LOO.," comparable to "Lo. Ox." from MS Harl. 7392, fol. 18v, must be read as "Robert Lord Oxenford." As there is no Robert Oxenford and because the word "Balle" emphasises the identification, we can safely assume that Edward Oxenford is meant. In other words; Humphrey Coningsby's assignation identifies "My lucke is losse" = "Master Fortunatus Infoelix" as Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford.

His statement that Harvey's 1578 speech calls Oxford one who is fortunate but unhappy might provide a wisp of information supporting the case that Oxford is somehow behind the "Si Fortunatus Infoelix" poems in Gascoigne's book. But the contra-indications listed in my paper trump this far-removed datum. Regardless, the Flowres-Oxford myth holds that the posy refers to *Christopher Hatton*, which I showed to be highly unlikely, and Kreiler seems to agree with that conclusion.

Kreiler prints the poem "This tenth of March" from the *Spreta tamen vivunt* series in Gascoigne's book next to Oxford's "Sitting Alone" poem. As already noted in my paper, this is "Perhaps the poem in *Flowres* most suggestive of Oxford's composition." I ultimately argued against that assignment for five particular reasons, and I repeat that the two authors probably read and drew from each other, possibly making Gascoigne's poem a model for Oxford's, or vice versa. Nevertheless, even if (repeat, *if*) one were able to confirm that one or more of Oxford's poems ended up in Gascoigne's book, it would not follow that Oxford even knew his poems were being published, that *F.I.* was scandalous, that Oxford is *F.I.*, that he wrote *F.I.*, published *Flowres*, did so clandestinely, hid his name in an acrostic, hated Christopher Hatton, sought to embarrass Hatton, demanded a coverup, or that Hatton hated Oxford, or that there is truth to any of the other baggage that Ward's myth carries with it.

He charges, "Prechter doesn't realize that Oxford and Gascoigne deliberately try to confuse us by changing roles." He's right; I definitely do not realize this. In a comment worthy of Ward's claim about the supposed dual authorship of Gascoigne's matching "rain shower" comments, Kreiler says, "What Prechter overlooks is that both men are referring to a line that Chaucer wrote in "The Wife of Bath's Tale.'" But doesn't it make more sense that one man would refer to the same story? Especially if that man claimed Chaucer as his main influence, as Gascoigne did? Also, if that man's name is the only one connected to the publication under scrutiny?

He ascribes a poem to Oxford beginning thus:

Amid my Bale I bath in blisse  
I swim in heaven, I sink in hell:

I find amends for every misse,  
And yit my moane no tongue can tell.

However, we have no evidence that Oxford wrote sing-song verse in tetrameter, whereas Gascoigne did. Moreover, as Kreiler admits, Gascoigne outright claimed the poem, saying, “once I song, I *Bathe in Blisse*, amide my weary *Bale*.” Consider also: There are four pairings of *bathe* and *blisse* in Gascoigne’s book. Wouldn’t a reader conclude that the poet was fond of this pairing? But rather than ascribe all references to “bathe in blisse” to one writer, Kreiler concludes that two authors are involved, that Gascoigne (for no stated reason) in two cases is “claiming Oxford’s poems for his own,” and that Gascoigne later in *Posies* inexplicably “signs Oxford’s poem...with his own motto: ‘Fato non Fortuna.’” To make his scenario work, he must further assert, “Both authors use the name ‘Ferenda Natura’; Oxford uses it as his posy and Gascoigne uses it as a name for the powerful object of his love; Queen Elizabeth.” Oxford had posies? Gascoigne was in love with the Queen? Gascoigne purloined one of Oxford’s poems despite being heroically prolific? Gascoigne and Oxford used the same phrase for different purposes? In one book? With Gascoigne’s name attached? Kreiler’s claims seem to be an exercise in affirming the consequent rather than using Occam’s razor.

Kreiler asserts that Gascoigne’s lines in “Dan Bartholomew” beginning “Syr *Salamanke* to thee this tale is tolde” is an “expression of gratitude that he addressed to his co-author and publisher of *A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*.” Yet nothing in those lines indicates any co-author or publisher, much less the Earl of Oxford. He makes no case as to why Gascoigne would call Oxford “Syr *Salamanke*.” Granted, there is no proof that the lines are *not* addressed to Oxford, and it would be nice to think that our hero encouraged Gascoigne’s efforts. But even if this were the case, how does Gascoigne’s expression of gratitude become evidence that Oxford—or anyone else—*wrote* part of Gascoigne’s book? If anything, his words indicate precisely the opposite, because in this poem Gascoigne thanks only a *reader*, someone who “dydst first *behold*/The rewoffull rymes,” who “made me *leave behind*/Some leaves,” who praised “*My babies*,” causing him “To *set in shewe* a thing so litle worth.” Gascoigne does ask his friend “to correct” and “to amend/That is amisse,” but there is no indication that the friend did so. Nor does Kreiler therefore argue that said friend simply did some editing, and no one has ever argued that Oxford merely corrected a few of Gascoigne’s lines. The Ward myth is much grander and more nefarious than that. Remember, the story requires that Oxford be a cad who manipulated Gascoigne for despicable purposes. Yet the cited lines, if in fact they did show Gascoigne thanking Oxford, would contradict the whole myth of Oxford’s ill intent and support the case that he was innocent. All ways, Gascoigne’s thank-you lines challenge the Flox myth and even Kreiler’s more limited theory that Oxford wrote part of *Flowres*.

Kreiler asserts of Gascoigne and Oxford, “The two authors bounce ideas off each other at whim— this is too much for a reader such as Prechter who likes to work with labels and etiquettes rather than form and content.” You will find discussions of form and content in my paper, but on one point he is correct: I am indeed unable in this case to discern “two authors” who “bounce ideas off each other at whim.” Form and

content are important, but so is coherence. For the record, I have done extensive work separating co-authors, both real and pseudonymous, from each other in numerous works; an example is my current article on *Willobie His Avis* in this volume of *Brief Chronicles*.

Kreiler ends with this summary: “Oxford, alias ‘Meritum petere grave’ [yet another posy] played an epic game of hide and seek, with the soldier-poet, George Gascoigne as his accessory.” For some reason, followers of Ward’s theory don’t stop at suggesting that some of the poems in the book are Oxford’s; they spin intricate tales of intrigue around it. My hat is off to those who can derive “an epic game of hide and seek” from the pages of *Flowres* and *Posies*.





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