Francis Meres Revisited

Wit, Design and Authorship in *Palladis Tamia* (1598)

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Abstract

Francis Meres' 1598 *Palladis Tamia*, subtitled in English 'Wit's Treasury', is a quintessential document in Shakespeare studies. With ten Shakespeare plays already in print anonymously, Meres' commonplace book for the first time identifies 'Shakespeare' as a playwright, and within weeks of Meres' book, the name 'Shakespeare' appears on the second quarto title pages of *Richard II* and *Richard III*, transforming 'anonymous' into 'Shakespeare' in a blink. This article analyses the methods of commonplace book arrangement used by Francis Meres, Master of Arts at both Cambridge and Oxford, to have his private say about Shakespeare. In his 1597 *God's Arithmetic*, Meres approves the opinion of Pythagoras who wrote over the door of the entrance to his school: 'Let none enter here that is ignorant in Arithmetic'. The ideas of *God's Arithemetic,* applied to *Palladis Tamia*, disclose Meres' meticulous mastery of erudite humanist design that is the hallmark of his pedagogic method and his 'post-Stratfordian' conclusions.

Keywords: commonplace book design, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, Francis Meres, Francis Meres and Shakespeare, Palladis Tamia, Shakespeare Authorship Question

> Let us take down one of those old notebooks which we have all, at one time or another, had a passion for beginning. ... Here we have written down the names of great writers in their order of merit; here we have copied out fine passages from the classics; here are lists of books to be read; and here, most interesting of all, lists of books that have actually been read, as the reader testifies with some youthful vanity by a dash of red ink.
>
> —Virginia Woolf, 'Hours in a Library'

Palladis Tamia ('The Steward of Pallas Athena'),[1] a 1598 commonplace book compiled by Francis Meres, Master of Arts at both Cambridge and Oxford, has long been considered an essential document for Shakespeare biography. To B. Roland Lewis, in his massive two-volume University of California Press *The Shakespeare Documents*, Meres offers 'the most elaborate statement about Shakespeare in all contemporary Elizabethan literature'.[2] Samuel Schoenbaum concurs that 'There is nothing in the [Elizabethan] age comparable to Meres'

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'Comparative Discourse' in the *Palladis Tamia*'.[3] More recently, Ian Wilson credits Meres with a work that would 'break new ground in the contemporary recognition of [Shakespeare's] contribution to literature' by penning 'a passage that has been of greater value to generations of literary scholars than [Meres] could ever have realized'.[4]

While Francis Meres (1565–1647) – made rector of Wing, Rutland in 1602 in recognition of his studies, after first having been ordained a Deacon in Colchester, Essex on 29 September 1599 – would doubtless be gratified by these plaudits, he would also have found them ironic. In addition to *Palladis Tamia*, his work, all published during the brief window 1597–1598, included the politically sensitive task of producing over 1,500 pages of translations of the Spanish Catholic mystic Luís de Granada.[5] His role in this project suggests that Meres was an insider to the Cecil political establishment, which used publishing, especially translations, to shape opinions favourable to the Elizabethan settlement. On 4 August, only a few weeks before the publication of *Palladis Tamia*, William Cecil (1520–1598), Lord Treasurer and Principal Secretary to the Queen, had died, leaving a lifetime of accumulated power in the hands of his son Robert (1563–1612).

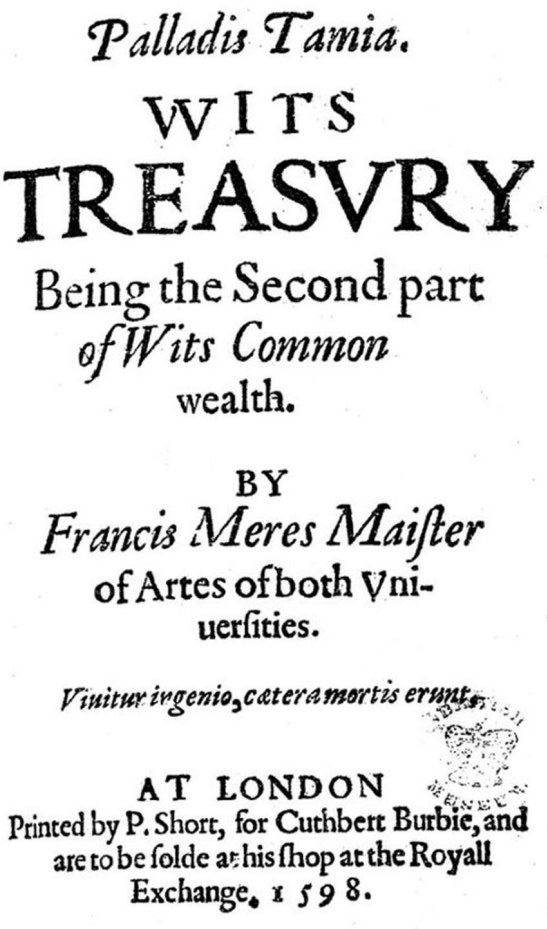
Strikingly, even though the Shakespeare quartos had been appearing in print since 1591, the name 'Shakespeare' does not appear on any play until autumn 1598, coincident with the publication of *Palladis Tamia*.[6] James Halliwell-Phillips was so intrigued by the synchronous registration of Meres' book and Burghley's death that he published a facsimile of the registration, explaining that 'the date of publication is a fact of so much interest that a facsimile of the copyright entry to Burby is here subjoined'.[7] Only after nine plays had been published anonymously (1591–1597) does the name 'Shakespeare' appear on the second 1598 quartos of *Richard II* and *Richard III* and then, some months later, *Love's Labour's Lost*.[8] Reflecting on this pattern, Lucas Erne confirms that 'it seems possible that Meres's promotion of Shakespeare to the top of the canon of recent and contemporary English poets is responsible for [Shakespeare's] name's appearance on the title pages' of these and later plays.[9]

But while Shakespeare biographers have celebrated Meres' testimony and partly investigated the circumstances of the book's production, they have also consistently deprecated his learning, ignored or belittled his other publications, and sometimes savaged his intellect. Surveying the critical damage in 1933, Meres' editor Don Cameron Allen approvingly summarised a tradition that already denounced Meres as 'untrustworthy', 'childish', 'naïve' and 'a mere compiler.'[10] According to Allen et al., Francis Meres was a simpleton, the product of an inferior tradition whose observations about Shakespeare are the trite, unimaginative and conformist products of a university system that rewarded dull copyists.

Yet Meres' contemporary, the epigrammatist Charles Fitzgeoffrey (1576–1638), calls Meres a 'theologian and poet' and casts him as the protagonist in an Elizabethan triumph in which Fitzgeoffrey himself desires to participate, presenting him as a priestly poet who has by the force of his oratory preserved a fractured commonwealth.[11] Following Lucas Erne's hint that it is a 'distinct

possibility that the emergence of "Shakespeare", the dramatic writer, in 1598 owed something to Meres' *Palladis Tamia*',[12] the article will show how Meres employed the symbolic logic of the commonplace and memory arts traditions to disclose a more complex and far more interesting story about Shakespeare than has previously been considered possible under long-prevailing assumptions. To accomplish this task, Meres, a graduate of both Cambridge and Oxford Universities, used a method so subtle that it has long escaped full detection.

Starting on the title page, *Palladis Tamia* is a book about comparisons, a book requiring comparative analysis by the reader: the title is given in both Latin and English, but the English translation is slyly inaccurate (Figure 1).


Palladis Tamia.

WITS

TREASVRY

Being the Second part
of Wits Common
wealth.

BY
Francis Meres Maiſter
of Artes of both Vni-
uerſities.

Viuitur ingenio, cætera mortis erunt.

AT LONDON
Printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, and
are to be ſolde at his ſhop at the Royall
Exchange. 1598.

Figure 1. Title page of the first (1598) edition of *Palladis Tamia* with Latin epigram. Image courtesy Wikimedia.

The Greek word *tamia* does not refer to the *treasury* (τάμιέιον) of Pallas, but the *treasurer, accountant* or *steward* (ταμίας).[13] In Herodotus the ταμίας refers to the 'controller of the sacred treasure in the citadel of Athens', and in Pindar the ταμίας κώμων was the 'master of the revels'.[14]

An exceedingly rare prefatory epistle, dated 19 October 1598, survives in no more than two copies of the first edition of *Palladis Tamia*.[15] Meres dedicates the book to Thomas Eliot of the Middle Temple, in honour of Eliot's 'virtuous disposition', which inspired in Meres 'an incredible desire, and singular affection to accomplish something, as a publicke pledge of my true zeal and faithful heart unto you' ($A4^{r}$).[16] Meres does not specify the 'something' that he aspires to accomplish but he does compare Eliot's virtue to 'the Load-stone', which 'by a certain secret and unknown force doth draw iron toward it' and further declares that if he finds as much favour from Eliot 'as Antimachus the poet found in Plato, it shall be *instar omnium* [equal to all the rest] to me' ($A3^{v}$). *Instar omnium* means 'the image of all', and Meres' use of this technical term of philosophy alludes to his source – the encyclopaedic Johannes Textor (1562) – for the favour Plato showed towards Antimachus: 'Antimachus poeta fuit Colophonius, qui dum quoddam poema obscurum in auditoria recitaret, omnesq; propterea discederent, excepta Platone: Legam, inquit, nihilominus, quoniam unicus Plato est mihi pro omnibus', which means, Antimachus was a poet of Colophon, who once when he was reciting a certain obscure poem in an auditorium, caused everyone, on the account of its obscurity, to get up and walk out on him, except Plato. 'I have carried away the honours, nevertheless', Antimachus said, 'because to me one Plato equals all the others (*est mihi pro omnibus*)'.[17]

Meres' comparison of himself to Antimachus Colophonius is one early sign of the deliberate purpose behind the selection and arrangement of data in *Palladis Tamia*. Adam Smyth explains that the author of a commonplace book pursues an 'idea of literary creativity [that is] resistant to post-nineteenth century expectations', namely the practice of seeing 'excerpts' as 'blocks out of which a new text or discourse might be built'.[18] In recycling fragments of past wisdom, Meres hopes to activate in the present a 'secret force' – a magnetic transference – able to tie the commonplace bookmaker to the many sources through which he will ventriloquise his method and message. Should he find success, Meres declares, he will be a 'happy wit', successfully having marshalled the rhetorical trinity of sentences, similes and examples in order to accomplish his 'something'.

Pallas and the Palladium

The name Pallas Athena, cognate with the Greek verb παλλω (to shake or brandish) or the adjective παλτος (a brandished or hurled [spear]),[19] refers to the patron Goddess of Athens, the birthplace of the classical theatre. Pallas has long been associated with the image of a goddess of statecraft who 'shook her spear' to ward off danger.[20] By the time of the foundation of her temple on the

Aventine in Rome in 207, she was also explicitly the patroness of the Roman theatre under her Roman name Minerva.[21] The Aventine guild honoured the cult's founder Livius Andronicus not as a mere *poeta* or 'maker', but as a *vates* or 'bard', one 'who could be represented', write Kenney and Clausen, 'as having appeased Juno's anger by the composition and successful performance of a Carmen, a "spell" for an expiatory rite'.[22]

In the widely influential version of the renowned mystic and inquisition martyr Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), published in England in 1583, Minerva 'is the *mens*, the divine in man reflecting on the divine universe. She is memory and reminiscence, recalling the art of memory'.[23] As Daniel Martin explains, she was 'the divine protector of the homeland, but unlike Mars, she employs feints and masks to deceive the enemy to bring home Victory'.[24] Francis Bacon explains that the 'monstrous fable' of Pallas herself even contains a 'secret of empire':

> the advice that kings should first consult counselors, but then take the matter back into their own hands, and make it appear to the world, that the decrees and final directions (which, because they come forth with prudence and power, are resembled to PALLAS Armed,) proceeded from themselves; and not only from their authority, but (the more to add reputation to themselves) from their head and device.[25]

Bacon's association of Pallas Athena with the *arcana imperium*[26] is as old as Homer's *Odyssey*,[27] and throughout the Renaissance was still embodied in that most potent symbol of antiquity, the Palladium (Grk. Παλλάδιον), a sacred statue of Pallas whose mystique was said to preserve a city or empire from destruction.[28] Stolen from Troy and smuggled back to Greece by Ulysses and Diomedes, eventually the icon of Pallas arrived in Rome as the beneficent omen of peaceful empire. To Ben Jonson, the Palladium signified the underwriting of empire by religion.[29] Thus, the first word of Meres' title summons the theatrical goddess of political and martial guile, who avoids the direct combat of Mars in favour of achieving her purposes by 'feints and masks'.[30] She is the goddess of subtle diplomatic argument and her persona is a symbolic rubric for political guile; her statue, to Meres and his sixteenth-century readers, a hallowed talisman of subtle statecraft.

Places and comparisons

Palladis Tamia is perhaps best described as a pedagogical manual of commonplace book methods; two Caroline-era reprints are advertised, first, as 'More particularly published for the use in schools' (1634),[31] and later as 'set forth for the benefit of scholars' (1636).[32] A commonplace book was used to collect 'commonplaces or passages important for reference … hence, a book in which one records passages or matters to be especially remembered or referred to'.[33] As a commonplace book, then, *Palladis Tamia* embodies a 'treasury' of pithy wisdom sayings or logic statements ('sententiae'), cast in the form of similes

or analogies, designed to record ideas worthy of remembrance and embody wit that 'lives' beyond the grave. These are ordered thematically, and divided in the index into 326 alphabetised categories, for example 'God', 'patience', 'silence', 'poetry' or 'the use of reading many books'.

A commonplace book is distinguished from a 'miscellany' by the application of organisational principles, a distribution within *places*.[34] Over the centuries this exploration of the theory and techne of 'places' involved many variations and many theorists, including Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Cicero (106–143 BCE), Quintilian (35–96 CE), Boethius (477–524 CE), John of Salisbury (c. 1110–1180 CE), Raymond Lull (1232–1316 CE), and Erasmus (1466–1536), all contributing strategies and techniques for the arrangement and organisation of data into memorable schema. Both for invention and memory, in either dialectic or rhetoric, these practices applied the association of an *idea* or an *image* with a *place* or *topos*. From this core concept grew both the 'commonplace book' and the 'memory palace' as explained by Francis Yates:

> The first step was to imprint on the memory a series of loci or places. The commonest, though not the only, type of mnemonic place system used was the architectural type ... The images by which the speech is to be remembered [for example] an anchor or a weapon – are then placed in imagination on the places which have been memorized in the building.[35]

Until the seventeenth century, Yates shows, *memory* was still the widely respected fourth part of rhetoric, and since ancient times it had been intimately tied to the foundational idea of *place*. Originally, then, a commonplace book was a technology of analytical memory, an exercise in classification, a gathering of things *worthy to be remembered*, organised through a flexible and dynamic method of distributing those things to the imaginative places where they would be best stored *and* remembered. Commonplace books thus applied the concept of *place* and the art of *placement* to problems of memory.

This association between memory and the theory of places, inherited through ancient and medieval theory in grammar and cosmology, applying mnemonic praxis in dialectic (arguments about universals), as well as rhetoric (arguments about specifics or suited to a specific *kairos*), was reinforced not only through university study but also social protocols in which proximity to a monarch or other authority figure was a marker of status. The distribution of *social* 'place' was, thus, a subject of controversy and competition, and social ranking was carefully gradated and reinforced through sumptuary laws, protocols of address, and other symbolic forms of social distinction that limited mobility and reinforced social cohesion. In the arts as well as in society, *the centre* became a place for a monarch or at least a 'central feature'.[36]

These social factors of placement or 'position' drew support from theology and natural history. From the Middle Ages onwards, both in Christianity and Judaism, the tradition of biblical exegesis 'taught the habit of regarding the most serious literature as *numerically constructed*, and of giving special attention to *the centre* verses or chapters'.[37] The idea of the 'privileged centre'[38] became a guiding formula for a vast amount of early modern literature[39] im-

itating 'triumphal forms'. A 'triumphal form' is a work of art or an event that takes inspiration from the ancient Roman triumph. Like the Greek paean, a song of praise to Apollo, the triumph in the European tradition was both a celebration of glad tidings and an honorific to the 'triumphant'. 'The influence of triumphal processions and royal entries on the arts [of the sixteenth and seventeenth century] is incalculable', notes Alastair Fowler, and 'an outstanding feature of triumphal motifs is their emphasis of the centre'.[40]

From ancient times, the commonplace book's pedagogical standard of excellence had been clear and consistent: let the bookmaker gather the treasures of many books, as the honeybee harvests diverse nectars from flowers of many colours, and then 'arrange' the findings 'in order and make it a coherent whole'.[41] This 'coherent whole' was a creative product of the compiler's imagination and constructive talents as well as the available materials. Copying was elementary; more advanced study required a thorough assimilation of the originals before they could be reassembled to express a present tense invention. The standards were high. The new work should exhibit the divine proportions of a honeycomb and taste as sweet to the reader.

To the early modern scholar, then, the commonplace book was a map of places ('topoi') that could be used in an argument. The same principles of logic, relevance and exactness, not to mention proportionality, arrangement and aesthetic wholeness, used to evaluate an argument could also be applied to the commonplace book. Such practices, Daniel Martin suggests, functioned 'not merely to help us *remember*, but, principally, to also *classify*, *differentiate*, *distribute*, and *label* data. They serve, not only as an aid to remember things which already exist, but also to synthesise new things, in the places (*l'endroit*) to which they correspond'.[42] Together with the idea of place, the study and classification of likeness and difference not only allowed the storage of words, phrases or ideas in memorable arrangements, but established epistemic relationships akin to those used today in well-structured idea or argument maps.[43] The commonplace book supplied tools for invention, examples to be imitated, principles for elaboration, and human wisdom to be considered. In this tradition, moreover, 'the fully adequate signifiers are not words alone, but words enhanced as concepts inscribed at the top of blank pages waiting to be filled, and 'the way to read through to the lessons embedded in these various types of composition is by relating them to commonplaces.'[44]

Starting from the title's play on the distinction between τάμιέιον (treasury) and ταμία (steward), *Palladis Tamia* is full of 'feints and masks'. The Latin title refers not to *a thing*, but a symbolic personage – an *accountant* of Pallas's wise sayings. Together with the double Latin-English title, this subtle mistranslation foregrounds the book's comparative structure and announces its esoteric appeal to the idea of *calculation* or *counting* as an essential dimension of the art of comparison. Along with the concept of place, the idea of *comparison* is essential to Meres' method; his chief strategies of instruction, as we shall see, include word puzzles involving comparison. In this practice, he was adapting the techniques and practices of the age for his own unique and highly expressive purposes. As Colin Burrow clarifies, 'cross-cultural comparison was a deep

part of both history and literary history in the sixteenth century'.[45] The role of comparison (Grk. συνκρισις) as an essential tool of thought was especially reinforced for Elizabethans through the widespread influence of Plutarch's *Lives*, a book predicated on the concept of comparing the lives of famous Greeks with their corresponding Roman types. First through the influence of the Jaques Amyot's 1559 French translation and then later the English translation based on Amyot by Sir Thomas North (1579), the book exerted a broad and deep influence in Elizabethan England.[46] Composed under the influence of such models, *Palladis Tamia* models a pedagogy of comparison; the mistranslation of *tamia* for *treasury* is the first of many clues to Meres' 'darker purpose' of creating an instruction manual for rhetorical encryption by means of comparison. A dedicated neo-Pythagorean, Meres believes that number is the essential building block of creation. *Accounting* will be required.

Francis Meres and Shakespeare

Both the text of *Palladis Tamia* and its historical context confirm its prime importance as an essential document for Shakespeare studies. Until its publication, 'Shakespeare' had not been mentioned as a playwright of any kind in print or in any surviving manuscript sources, but Meres identifies him nine times as a playwright and a poet and for the first time names twelve plays attributed to him (six comedies and six tragedies). All nine allusions are included in the sixteen-page section of *Palladis Tamia* titled 'A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets' (sigs Nn7–Oo7). The fourteen-word title is unprecedented in a book in which the average chapter title is less than two words long. The section is also the only one to lay obvious emphasis through its title on the concept of 'comparison', even though comparisons have been used consistently through the previous 278 pages of *Palladis Tamia*. Finally, it is the only directly 'topical' chapter of Meres' book, the only one specifically designed to include information about contemporary persons or events. The 'Comparative Discourse' does, however, follow the template used throughout the rest of the book, of organising data into a series of symmetrical similes, now concerning the allotment of contemporary authors to different literary genres and their comparison to Greek, Roman or Italian counterparts writing in the same genres.

In *Palladis Tamia* anyone could now read for the first time of the popular dramatist 'William Shakespeare', learn the names of his six comedies and six tragedies, of his odd relationship to Ovid, and of his 'sugared sonnets' among his 'private friends'.[47] Before Meres' publication, the name had only appeared in print in the dedications to *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594), and in dedicatory verses in the enigmatic and pseudonymous 1594 *Willowbie His Avisa*. It had not previously been associated in any significant way with drama or theatre,[48] even though Shakespeare plays had been steadily appearing in print, anonymously, since 1591 (Table 1).

Table 1. The ten anonymous play quartos by 'Shakespeare', 1591–early 1598.

Play		Attribution
1.	*The Troublesome Raigne of John King of* England (1591) [1]	Anonymous
2.	*The Second part of the Troublesome Raigne of John King of England* (1591)	Anonymous
3.	*Titus Andronicus* (1594)	Anonymous
4.	***Taming of a Shrew* (1594)[2]**	**Anonymous**
5.	*The First Part of the Contention betwixt the Two Famous Houses of York and Lancaster* Q1 (1594) (That is, *2 Henry VI*)	Anonymous
6.	*The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke* Q1 (1595) (that is, *3 Henry VI)*	Anonymous
7.	*Romeo and Juliet* Q1 (1597)	Anonymous
8.	*Richard II* Q1 (1597)	Anonymous
9.	*Richard III* Q1(1597)	Anonymous
10.	*1 Henry IV* Q1(1598)	Anonymous

[1] The folio play of ***King John*** 'was regarded as commercially identical with its predecessor' play, *Troublesome Raigne* (*CF&P* I:365).
[2] The folio play of ***The Taming of the Shrew*** and the quarto ***Taming of a Shrew***, 'were regarded commercially as the same' (*CF&P* I:323).

According to Lucas Erne, '*Palladis Tamia* and the Shakespearean playbooks of 1598 seem to have initiated a whole series of attempts to capitalize on the name of Shakespeare'.[49] Erne's phrase 'the playbooks of 1598' refers to the two 1598 editions of *Richard II* and *Richard III*. These plays had first appeared in anonymous quartos in late 1597, but when they were reprinted a year later, both title pages were reset to include an author's name on them for the first time (Figure 2).

The empirical data corroborates Erne's hypothesis that the publication of *Palladis Tamia* was an activating factor in the dramatist 'Shakespeare', and this helps to explain the motivation for Meres' intricate methodology. The reattribution of a formerly anonymous play, Erne observes, is anomalous: 'there are few exceptions to the rule that once a play had been published anonymously, it remained so in the following editions'. For this reason, the conventions used in the second quartos of the Richard plays are 'unusual and in need of explanation'.[50] The contrast in the *before* and *after* publication patterns of the Shakespeare quartos is remarkable. During the two years immediately following *Palladis Tamia* (1599–1600), eight out of twelve Shakespeare play quartos are now correctly attributed to Shakespeare. Only four – all previously published anonymously – remain anonymous (Table 2).

Table 2. Shakespeare Quartos starting in autumn, 1598, coincident with Meres.

11. *Richard II* Q2/Q3 (1598)	By William Shake-speare
12. *Richard III* Q2 (1598)	By William Shake-speare
13. *Love's Labour's Lost* Q1 (1598)	By W. Shakespere
14. *I Henry IV* Q2 (1599)	Newly Corrected By W. Shake-speare
15. *Romeo and Juliet* Q2 (1599)	Anonymous
16. *II Henry IV* Q1 (1600)	Written by William Shakespeare
17. *Midsummer Nights Dream* Q1 (1600)	By William Shakespeare
18. *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster* Q2 (1600)	Anonymous
19. *The True Tragedie of Richard Duke of York* Q2 (1600)	Anonymous
20. *Merchant of Venice* Q1 (1600)	By William Shakespeare
21. *Much Ado About Nothing* Q1 (1600)	Written by William Shakespeare
22. *Henry V* Q1 (1602) – grandfathered by *Famous Victories* (1594)	Anonymous

This invention of the playwright, 'William Shakespeare', thus coincides with the publication of Meres' book in October 1598. *Richard II* had been entered into the Stationer's Register on 29 August 1597, and *Richard III* on 20 October 1597, and both plays were first published with no name on the title page near the end of 1597.

It is unlikely that the sales of the first quarto would justify a reprint before the autumn of 1598, a year after their first issue. Meanwhile the 'Comparative Discourse' (Nn7–Oo6^{v}) was written during the summer of 1598, shortly before its publication in late October. Having been registered on 7 September 1598, *Palladis Tamia* appeared in bookshops and on bookstalls with a rare dedication[51] to Thomas Eliot[52] dated 19 October. All the available evidence thus points to a reissue of the two quartos with the name 'Shakespeare' on them that is coincident with (i.e., within weeks if not days of) the publication of Meres' book.

Meres' 'Comparative Discourse' (279^{r}–287^{v}) prints fifty-nine paragraphs comparing contemporaneous English writers with Greek, Latin and Italian writers. We shall examine several to better ascertain Meres' purpose and design. Shakespeare biographers and bibliographers have long cherished par. 24 of the 'Comparative Discourse'. Here, for the first time in any surviving document, Meres announces Shakespeare as a playwright, favourably comparing him to the ancient Roman playwrights Plautus and Seneca:[53]

> As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for comedy, witness his Gentlemen of Verona, his Errors, his Love Labours Lost, his Love Labours Won, his Midsummer's Night Dream, & his Merchant of Venice; for tragedy, his Richard the 2, Richard the 3, Henry the 4, King John, Titus Andronicus, and his Romeo and Juliet.[54]

Especially due to this passage, *Palladis Tamia* has long been celebrated by Shakespeare scholars. Of the twelve plays here named by Meres, at least two (*Two Gents* and *Dream*) are unknown from any other source in November 1598,[55] thus corroborating Meres' reputation as an insider to the theatrical scene of the

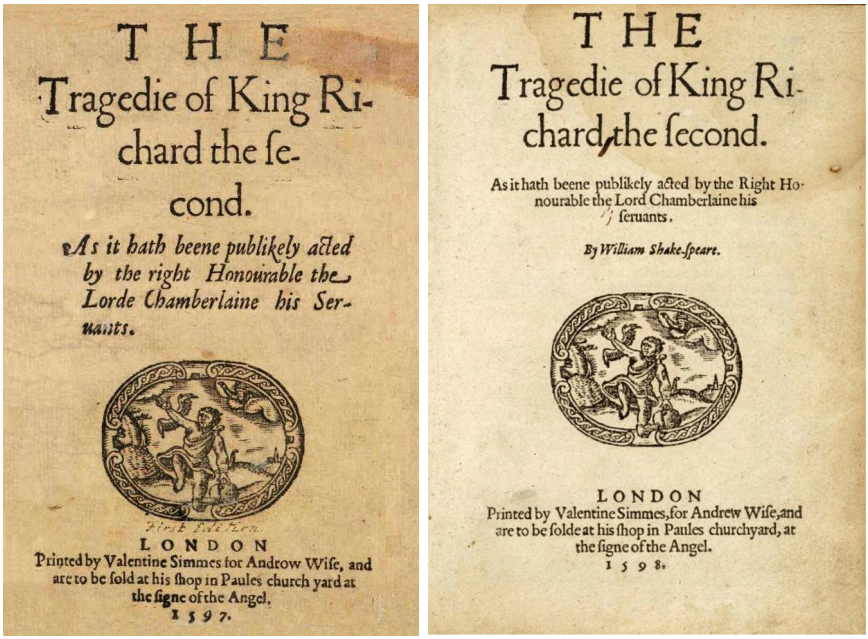

THE
Tragedie of King Ri-
chard the ſe-
cond.
As it hath beene publikely acted by the right Honourable the Lorde Chamberlaine his Seruants.
LONDON
Printed by Valentine Simmes for Andrew Wiſe, and are to be ſold at his ſhop in Paules church yard at the ſigne of the Angel.
1597.
THE
Tragedie of King Ri-
chard the ſecond.
As it hath beene publikely acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his ſeruants.
By William Shake-ſpeare.
LONDON
Printed by Valentine Simmes, for Andrew Wiſe, and are to be ſolde at his ſhop in Paules churchyard, at the ſigne of the Angel.
1598.

Figure 2. Richard II Q1 (left) in 1597 and Q2 (right) in 1598, showing the addition of an author's name in place of the attribution to the Lord Chamberlain's Men and reduced font for the record of performance by that Company. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

mid-1590s. But other inferences can be drawn from the passage: observing that the six comedies balance with the six tragedies, E.M. Jolly sees the passage as one illustrating that 'Meres is committed to symmetry, and the two sets of six plays are ... balanced lists and a continuation of Meres's appositive style'.[56]

The symmetrical puzzles of Francis Meres

The first sentence of Meres' rare dedication to Thomas Elyot invokes the essential formula of *Palladis Tamia* (Figure 3).

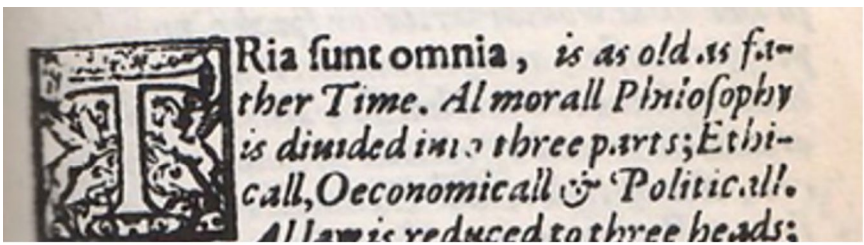

Ria ſunt omnia, *is as old as fa-*
ther Time. All morall Philoſophy
is diuided into three parts; Ethi-
call, Oeconomicall & Politicall.
All law is reduced to three heads:

Figure 3. Tria sunt omnia ('all things come in threes') from the *Palladis Tamia* dedication to Thomas Eliot. Image courtesy Allen (1938).

The three primary elements of the book, Meres explains, will be *sentences*, *similes* and *examples*. He hopes to see 'Truth arrayed in sentences, fitting the taste of Philosophers; invested in Similitudes, loved of Oratours; and approved by Examples, the rule and jewel of the unstayed and raging multitude' (V2^{v}). These sentences, similitudes and examples are distributed within the superstructure of Meres' chapter sections, based on general topics (categories), corresponding to the renaissance formula by which data should be 'stored and arranged in a repository, in some container, framework, or dwelling'.[57] The categories ('containers') interact with sentences, similes and examples in *Palladis Tamia* to create *design*. Each simile is characteristically printed as its own paragraph and always includes an 'as' side joined to a 'so' side, as illustrated in an entry under Philosophy on the topic of the relationship between overt and covert knowledge:

> *As* the soule is hid in the body whence very part hath his vigour and motion; and the mysteries, which are the best part of those holy thinges doe not lie open, but to those that are initiated to them: *so* the precepts of philosophie are knowne to everybody, but that which is best in philosophy lyeth hid.[58]

The 'as' can be *implied*, as illustrated in this variation from the section on 'Reading of Books':

> Those things that live long do not soon spring up*: so* that work that thou wouldst have always to be read, ought to be thoroughly laboured in, and seriously scanned.[59]

Many variations on this analogical pattern are introduced over the 333 pages of *Palladis Tamia*. In them, Meres goes far beyond the superficial commonplace practice of compiling old saws into categories and is instead constructing a pedagogical puzzle book designed to challenge the mind in some fashion on every page. His book must be 'seriously scanned'. In two paragraphs Meres underlines the value of his principle of symmetrical design when he compares the unsymmetrical similitude to an unbalanced ship that risks sinking on account of its poorly distributed load (Table 3).

Table 3. Francis Meres on balancing the ship.

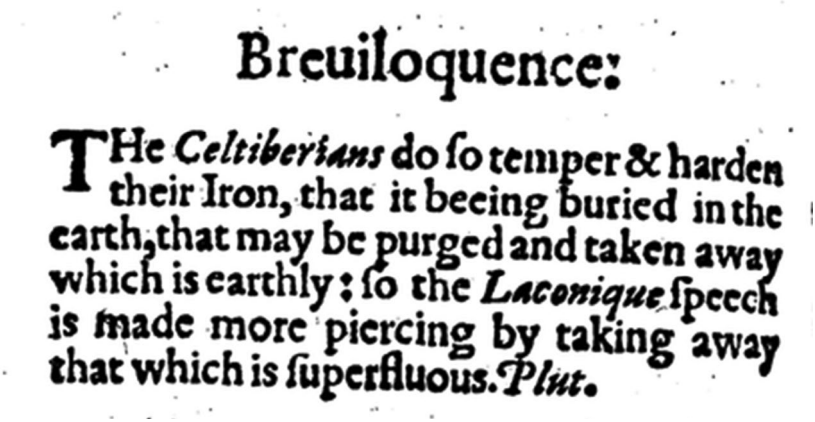
A.	B.
As it is dangerous, if all incline and run to one side of the ship, but then the ship is well peysed, when one bends one way, and another another: so, dissention and discord among Orators, Rhetoricians, Lawyers, and Plaiers, do make the state of a Citie more safe. Plut. in Moral. (Kk2^{r})	As that ship is endaungered, where all leane to one side, but is in safetie, one leaning one way, and another another way: so the dissension of Poets among themselues, doth make them, that they lesse infect their readers. And for this purpose our Satyrists, Hall, the Author of Pigmalions Image, and certaine Satyres, Rankins, and such others, are very profitable. (Nn5^{v})

Paragraph B, Meres' own apparent invention based on Plutarch's example, defends the corrective role of satirists to balance against the corruptions of government, vanity of persons, or pretensions of experts. Writing on the eve of the so-called 'Bishop's Ban' (1599), which cracked down on several genres of literature, including recalling and burning already published books by Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey, Meres' defence of satire in a paragraph of his own construction testifies to his conscientious support for a pluralist society that could recognise the corrective role of satire.[60] But for Meres, 'balancing the ship' is not merely a matter of sound civil policy, but also an expression of his religious conviction and humanist commitment. Citing the Catholic mystic Louis de Granada, whose works he had recently translated into English, Meres illustrates the theological implication:

> Even as a ship is not safe without balla[st] or lastage, for it is easily tossed with euery wind, now on this side, & now on that, to the great dāger of the ship: so is the soule endangered, which lacketh the burthen and ballace of the diuine feare, which poyseth the soule, that the windes of worldly fauour, or of diuine graces, doe not tosse and puffe it vp, and so ouerthrow it. Londou. Granat. lib. 1. Ducis Peccatorum. (N6^{r})

In all, *Palladis Tamia* contains 326 topic categories, one of the shortest of which,[61] on the subject of 'Breviloquence',[62] illustrates the wit of Francis Meres (Figure 4).

The chapter illustrates Meres' ability to make good on any opportunity for jest, here accomplished through a witty correlation of form and content. If brevity is the soul of wit, the point need not be belaboured and is best made in


Breuiloquence:

THe *Celtiberians* do ſo temper & harden their Iron, that it beeing buried in the earth, that may be purged and taken away which is earthly: ſo the *Laconique* ſpeech is made more piercing by taking away that which is ſuperfluous. *Plut.*

Figure 4. The shortest chapter in *Palladis Tamia*, Breviloquence: As iron buried in the earth may be 'purged' of impurities, so the 'laconic speech' becomes 'more piercing' by cutting away all superfluity (Ll^{r}). Image courtesy Allen (1938).

a comically short entry in the commonplace book.[63] But Plutarch's similitude also introduces what will become a recurrent theme of *Palladis Tamia*: 'occult' objects and reasons:

> The seedes of a Cypres tree are so small, that they can scarcely be discerned with the eies, and yet a greate and tall tree doeth spring from so small a seede: *so* reason is a very little thing and occult, but yet is very great, if it shewe itself, and unfoulde his force. ('Reason', 241[v])

Already in his dedication, Meres has invoked the occult powers of the 'loadstone' or magnet to attract iron 'by a secret unknown force'. The abbreviated chapter on breviloquence compares iron that is 'buried in the earth' to the wit of 'laconic' speech, which is 'made more piercing' by removing the 'superfluous'. Magnetism – a 'secret unknown force' – had been a powerful object of philosophical and literary discourse since Plato's *Ion*, in which doctrines of influence are in part explained by analogy to magnetism.[64] More surprising, then, is Meres' insistence through Plutarch on reason itself as a 'very little thing and occult' and yet powerful if he 'unfold his force'.

In Meres, occult reasons unfold themselves by means of the doctrine and practices of the 'commonplace' tradition. Today choosing a 'topic' for composition is a decision about content, about theme, thesis or idea. But in the sixteenth century, 'topic' was still a standard abbreviation for Aristotle's *Topica* (fourth century BCE), a study of the uses and value of the concept of *places* in rhetoric and logical argument. Already in Aristotle, Ann Moss observes, 'places' are not incidental adjuncts, but 'stratagems for dialectical reasoning, modes of finding arguments'.[65] In other works, Aristotle, like Cicero, Quintilian and the *Ad Herrenium*, associates this theory of places with the art of memory. Cicero repeats Quintilian's metaphor of the 'commonplaces' as *sedes argumentorum* (seats of argument) or '*dwelling places* in which lines of argument wait to be discovered and from which they must be drawn out'[66] through *imitatio* and *emulatio*.[67]

In Cicero's version, Ann Moss shows, 'the original metaphor is splendidly amplified. The dwelling-places of arguments become the habitats peculiar to diverse species of beast and fish and fowl, known only to the experienced seeker'.[68] Coaxed from their sometimes-obscure hiding places, these undiscovered species abide the reader's synthesis. The early modern European subject, Marion Trousdale[69] and Frances Yates[70] have shown, valued and applied this concept of place, both in the theory of *memory* and the concept of *design*. Today the OED still preserves a vestige of this pervasive emphasis on *topos* when it defines 'topology' as 'a term meaning science of place',[71] but the Elizabethan mind was an actively topological mind,[72] constructed by intent and through training to store knowledge *in* places and draw knowledge *from* them. In research, composition and pedagogy, in public rhetoric or in private meditation, place and its role in the arrangement of parts into a whole was of paramount cultural significance. Creative labour therefore involved integrating form and content as a *techne* of memory.

Shakespeare and the 'Comparative Discourse'

In his 'A Comparative Discourse of our English Poets, with the Greeke, Latine, and Italian Poets' (Nn7–Oo7), by default whenever countable names or persons occur on the *as*-side of Meres' paragraphs, the same number appears on the *so*-side. The fifty-nine syllogistic paragraphs of the chapter each list anywhere from one to sixteen pairs of English and classic or Italian names, many of them quite obscure. Noting that many of the Greek and Latin names in the 'Comparative Discourse' are 'relatively unfamiliar even to the classical scholar of modern times',[73] In his influential 1933 study Allen admits that Meres' knowledge of the more obscure ancient writers is an 'interesting problem', and later even concedes that a 'hypothesis [has been] maintained for some time by various scholars that a critical system lies hidden beneath the shrouds of the treatise'.[74] Allen was taking a cue from G. Gregory Smith, who in his 1904 *Elizabethan Critical Essays* had already curiously called Meres 'obviously a dullard to most casual reader', yet one who also 'discloses an editorial cunning that does him credit'.[75] More specifically, Allen admits that Meres often attempts to balance the number of writers on each side of his 'as…so' equations. Many of his comparisons 'cannot be explained unless it can be assumed that they were made for the sake of *filling out the numbers of the generic group*';[76] certain names might be paired by 'apposition';[77] Meres may be following some kind of 'critical formula'[78] or even expressing 'a hidden critical judgment on Shakespeare'[79] through the arrangement of the names. A 2009 study by Robert Detobel and K.C. Ligon[80] confirmed the existence of such a system. The 'Comparative Discourse', they show, is a highly systematic piece of work, one that exhibits a 'tenacious'[81] adherence to symmetry. Paragraph 36 on 'iambic' poets illustrates this underlying pattern of balanced symmetrical construction:

> Among the Greeks I will name but two for Iambics, Archilochus Parius and Hipponax Ephesius: *so* amongst us I name but two iambichal poets, Gabriel Harvey, and Richard Stanyhurst, because I have seene no mo in this kind.[82]

The paragraph is intriguing not only for its symmetrical design, but also because Meres here conscientiously clarifies his own method: he *could have* named more Greeks, but since he could only find *two* English writers in the genre, he did not. The inference is inescapable: Meres curtailed the Greek list to illustrate a method in which the numbers of writers on both sides would balance – just like Meres' balanced ships in Table 3. Meres' minute attention to meticulous design is further revealed by Heinrich Christoph Matthes' (1941) comparative study of Meres' borrowing practices,[83] which shows that Meres, in the very first similitude of the 'Comparative Discourse', converted unsymmetrical data from his sources to his own symmetrical forms (Table 4).

Adapting his source by adding Lydgate, Meres converts Sydney's 3:3:2 arrangement into one of 3:3:3, triplicity squared (3^2). The change reflects and illustrates the union of the principle of symmetry with that of triplicity; these desiderata inform the design of the similitudes of the 'Comparative Discourse'.

Table 4. Parallel Listings of Poets in Sidney and Meres par. 1 showing Meres's restoration of symmetry to an asymmetrical source.

Sidney's Apology for Poetry (source): 3:3:2		Meres Par. 1 (adjusted copy): 3:3:3	
Greek:	Musaeus, Homer, and Hesiod (3)	Greece:	Orpheus, Linus and Musaeus (3)
Romans:	Livius, Andronicus, and Ennius (3)	Italy:	Livius Andronicus, Ennius, and Plautus (3)
English:	Gower and Chaucer (2)	England:	Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate (3)

Symmetry is violated or varied for didactic purposes, for example in this passage on famous scholars from Meres' chapter on Music:

> **As** *Plato* and *Aristotle* are counted princes in philosophie and Logicke; *Hippocrates* and *Galen* in Phisick; *Ptolmie* in Astrologie, *Euclide* in Geometry, and *Cicero* in eloquence; **so** *Boetius* is esteemed a Prince and captaine in Musicke. (Oo8^{r})

Here the student can deduce that the 7:1 imbalance between the two sides refers to the octave or modal properties of music.[84] Just as to Antimachus Colophonius one Plato may be 'equal to all the rest', Boethius as a musician-philosopher, capable of employing octaves or modes as a means of expressing themes and variations, completes the listing by making up the eighth, and suddenly music permeates all the other arts and sciences. Such variations add instructive delight and metaphysical depth to a book whose humanist wit has long been vastly underestimated.

This wit, we shall see, extends to Meres' triumphant commentary on Shakespeare. Of the nine mentions of Shakespeare in the 'Comparative Discourse', by far the most controversial involves his inclusion of both 'William Shakespeare' and 'Edward, Earl of Oxford', son-in-law to spymaster and Lord Treasurer William Cecil, in his list of contemporary comic writers:

> The best poets for comedy among the Greeks are these, Menander (1), Aristophanes (2), Eupolis Atheniensis (3), Alexis Terius (4), Nicostratus (5), Amipsias Atheniensis (6), Anaxandrides Rhodius (7), Aristonymous (8), Archippus Atheniensis (9) and Callias Atheniensis (10), and among the Latins, Plautus (11), Terence (12), Naevius (13), Sext. Turpilius (14), Licinius Imbrex (15), and Virgilius Romanus (16), *so* the best for comedy amongst us be Edward Earl of Oxford (1), Doctor Gager of Oxford (2), Master Rowley, once a rare scholar of learned Pembroke Hall in Cambridge (3), Master Edwards, one of her Majesty's Chapel (4), eloquent and witty John Lyly (5), Lodge (6), Gascoigne (7), Greene (8), Shakespeare (9), Thomas Nash (10), Thomas Heywood (11), Anthony Mundye, our best plotter (12), Chapman (13), Porter (14), Wilson (15), Hathway (16), and Henry Chettle (17).[85]

Shakespeare scholars have long insisted on the decisive character of this testimony for the Shakespeare Authorship Question (SAQ).[86] James Oscar

Campbell's 1940 *Harper's* 'review' of *Shakespeare Identified* singles out Looney's failure to explain Meres' double allusion to both 'Oxford' and 'Shakespeare' in the paragraph as the Achilles heel of Looney's argument: 'If the list proves that Oxford was a successful writer of comedies, it proves just as clearly that Shakespeare, too, was a successful writer of comedies', and confirming Meres' 'certainty as to the separate identity of the two men'.[87] Likewise, since Meres here lists *both* Shakespeare *and* the Earl of Oxford as contemporary writers of comic drama, Samuel Schoenbaum concludes that 'clearly [Meres] did not believe that the Earl wrote *Comedy of Errors, Romeo and Juliet*, and the rest'.[88] James Shapiro, proceeding in one giant leap for the Shakespeare Industrial Complex[89] from 'clearly' to 'crushingly' also credits Meres as a vital witness for the traditional view of the authorship of the plays:

> Crushingly, for those who want to believe that the Earl of Oxford and Shakespeare were one and the same writer, Meres names both and distinguishes between them, including both 'Edward, Earl of Oxford' and Shakespeare in his list of the best writers of comedy.[90]

More recently, Alan Nelson concurs that Meres was '*obviously* of the opinion that [Oxford and Shakespeare] were two different men'.[91] Such arguments could be faulted, as George Greenwood (1916), J.T. Looney (1940)[92] and Charlton Ogburn (1984)[93] do, for *assuming* that Meres knew the truth and was not just another person fooled by a pseudonym. As Greenwood explains, 'contemporary belief ... although due weight must certainly be given to it, is not conclusive of the case'.[94] Yet, since Meres in *Palladis Tamia* reveals more about Shakespeare than anyone else over at least a twenty-five-year period, this scepticism seems misplaced. On the contrary, as Katherine Duncan-Jones insists, the evidence suggests that Meres was intimately familiar with the London theatrical culture of the 1590s.[95] We shall accordingly proceed on the premise that Meres did, in fact, know the truth about Shakespeare but chose to express his knowledge through time-honoured but now decayed strategies of symbolic logic.

While insisting that the meaning of the arrangement of paragraph 34 is 'obvious', Shapiro[96] and Nelson[97] ignore the readily apparent design aspects of Meres' rhetoric and fail to notice the potentially relevant anomaly that par. 34 (in all known copies of Meres' book) is among the handful of 'Comparative Discourse' paragraphs following an asymmetrically 'off by one' pattern. It prints sixteen names on the Greco-Roman *as*-side and seventeen names on the English *so*-side. The possible significance of this asymmetry is explored in depth in Detobel and Ligon's meticulous 2009 study, which concludes that every paragraph of the 'Comparative Discourse' 'observes some kind of symmetry',[98] achieved in one of three ways:

1) There is an identical number of writers of specific types on both sides of the *as-so* equation.
2) Occasionally, one poet is set off against each of two poets. This is done in pairs. Thus, in par. 9, the two Greeks Xenophon and Heliodorus are compared to Sir Phillip Sidney, and then, three paragraphs later in par. 15, the formula is reversed, so that the Roman Lucan is compared to

Shakespeare's contemporaries, Michael Drayton (1563–1631) and Samuel Daniel (1562–1619).

3) Sometimes a difference in the number of poets is made up for by adding works in place of names. In par. 18, for example, Drayton is weighed against three of the ancients because he wrote three different works (the number of works is the same, not the number of authors). Numerical balance, either literal or figurative, not factual accuracy, is Meres' guiding principle. This is here confirmed by the fact that the youthful but prolific Drayton was by 1598 the author of *at least eight* published works,[99] of which Meres mentions only three in par. 18.[100] Since Meres needed only three to balance the paragraph, he selected only that number of examples.

According to Detobel and Ligon, there are only four exceptions (including the critical par. 34) to these three principles.[101] Each furnishes a relevant lesson in logical classification that prepares an understanding of Meres' larger design in the book and implicates his 'darker purpose'. In par. 46, comparing ancient and modern translators, the balance at first *appears* as 6:7, but one item on the English side is the (anonymous) and unnamed group, identified only as 'translators of Seneca'. Thus, because one name is a collective noun,[102] although there is no 'equality of persons', there is 'an equal number of names'. Par. 7, likewise, discloses a partly concealed symmetry by naming on the *as*-side 'the two Strozae, the father and the son', so that 'asymmetry of persons' is reconciled through 'symmetry of names, as only one name need be given for the two Strozae'.[103] Through these examples, Meres not only confirms general methods for unlocking the esoteric significance of an off-by-one series of 'almost symmetrical' passages but also introduces the critical conceptual distinction between a name and a person.

Paragraph 39 comparing ancient and modern writers of epigrams is perhaps the most interesting of all to the Shakespeare scholar (Figure 5).

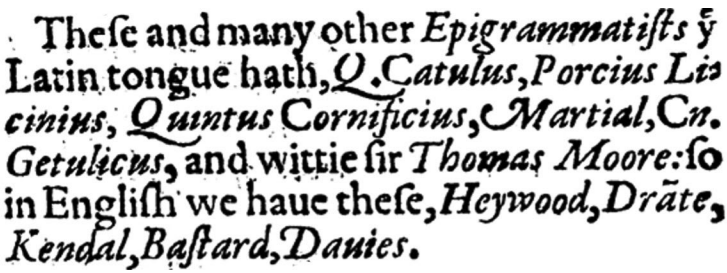

These and many other *Epigrammatiſts* ỹ
Latin tongue hath, *Q. Catulus, Porcius Licinius, Quintus Cornificius, Martial, Cn. Getulicus*, and wittie ſir *Thomas Moore*: ſo
in Engliſh we haue theſe, *Heywood, Drãte, Kendal, Baſtard, Danies.*

Figure 5. Paragraph 39 showing a 6:5 'off-by-one' pattern of writers of epigrams. Image courtesy Allen (1938).

Here an apparent discrepancy of 6:5 – more names on the ancient side in this case – conceals a hidden symmetry of persons, since 'Davies' on the English side can stand for either of two persons (or both) of the same name: John Davies of Hereford (ca. 1565–1618) and Sir John Davies (1569–1626), each by 1598 a well-known English writer of epigrams. The result is that in this para-

graph the unequal number of names conceals an equality of persons since one name can 'stand for two persons'.[104]

The implications of these findings are, it would seem, astounding; together they exemplify the 'hidden critical system' that Allen feared the 'Comparative Discourse' might contain, suggesting that *Palladis Tamia* is designed as a series of logic puzzles for students, a set of exercises in classification, numeration, and inference. If one name can stand for two persons, can two names refer to the same person? The lists of comic dramatists in par. 34 would balance if two names on the English side stand for one person. Thus Enoch Powell pro-poses that 'it would be a natural assumption that [the English list] originally numbered sixteen but that one name was added without a corresponding ad-justment of the symmetry'.[105]

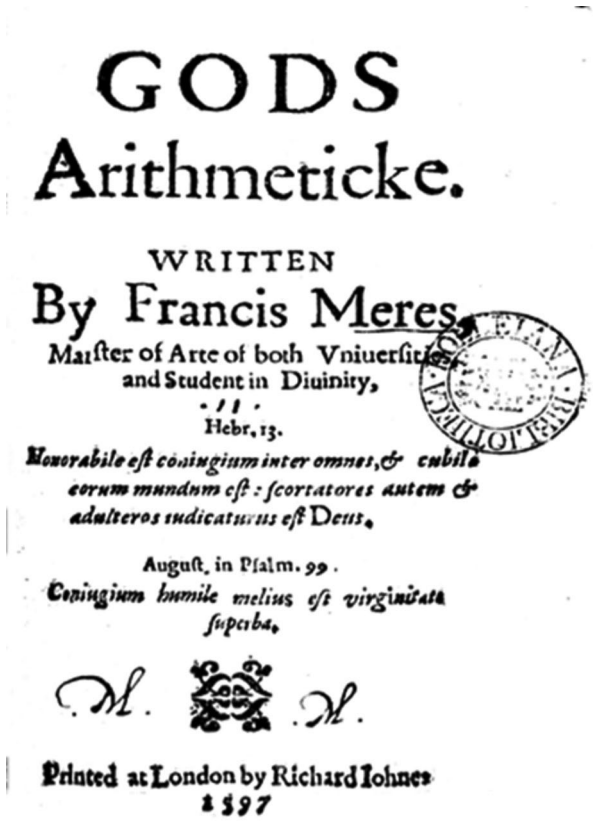
But which two names stand for one person?

To answer this question, Detobel and Ligon called upon the large and accumulating fund of evidence,[106] external to Meres' work and long predating their own study, implicating 'Edward, [17th] Earl of Oxford' as the real author of the works. Detobel and Ligon were already convinced that the compounding logic of evidence external to their own study was sufficient to identify the pair in question; here let us instead consider the possibility of a more definite answer that does not rely on anything external to Meres' own construction, which we have in evidence to analyse. According to D'Arcy Thompson, 'in the study of material things, *number*, *order*, and *position* are the threefold clues to exact knowledge'.[107] To understand Meres' method requires considering how he applies *all three* ideas in the critical paragraph 34 (283^{v}–284^{r}).

Witty numbers: Meres as metaphysician and number theorist

Like all early modern writers,[108] Francis Meres adhered to an esoteric theory of knowledge; information was privileged, and the acolyte was obliged to pay the price of intensive study before gaining entrance to the temple of higher understanding. Meres had already announced this programme a year earlier in his *God's Arithmeticke* (1597) (Figure 6),[109] a treatise in divine math.

God's Arithmeticke is an obscure publication, never reprinted and today largely ignored by scholars. Its importance lies in the fact that a year later, Meres was in print again with *Palladis Tamia*, announcing the dramatist Shakespeare to the world. *God's Arithmeticke* not only celebrates the virtues of marriage but contains a critical key to understanding *Palladis Tamia*. The book's numerological refrain – with obvious application to the topic of marriage – is 'two are better than one' (Eccles. 4:9). Meres supplies many examples to illustrate this concept, but perhaps the most pertinent is the first: 'While a man is one and alone, it is not well with him, but when a helpe is made, it is better for him'.[110] To many, even in England, the Catholic practice of celibate clergy was still regarded as normative, but for Meres the coupling of marriage is a metaphor for any circumstance in which a 'help' can be made for another. We shall soon see just how cleverly Meres employed the concept that 'two is better than one' in *Palladis Tamia*.



GODS
Arithmeticke.

WRITTEN
By Francis Meres,
Maiſter of Arte of both Vniuerſities,
and Student in Diuinity.

·11·
Hebr. 13.

Honorabile eſt coniugium inter omnes, & cubile eorum mundum eſt: ſcortatores autem & adulteros iudicaturus eſt Deus.

Auguſt. in Pſalm. 99.

Coniugium humile melius eſt virginitate ſuperba.

M. M.

Printed at London by Richard Iohnes
1597

Figure 6. Title page of *God's Arithmeticke* (1597), Aa4.

Although esoteric doctrine was already widespread and time-honoured by 1598, if anything it intensified with the rise of the Stuarts and the prolonged religious wars of the seventeenth century. In his 1632 *Mythomystes*, Henry Reynoldes, the esoteric critic and author of the Latin MS *Macrolexis*, a treatise concerning 'communication at a distance',[111] cites over a dozen ancient authorities including Plato, Moses, Homer and several prominent Rabbis among the adherents of a belief in the connection between number and esoteric doctrine, noting the

> care [the ancients] took to conceale [their knowledge] from the unworthy vulgar … [they] in all probability would not prostitute all they know to the rape and spoil of every illiterate reader, were they not conscious to themselves their treasor deserves many locks to guard it under.[112]

Alastair Fowler summarises Reynoldes' book as one that 'exhorts poets to steep themselves in the cabala and in the lore of Pythagoras the Master of Silence'.[113] Indeed, many early modern poems, in English as well as the other vernaculars and Latin, are constructed on a numerical scaffolding employed

to embody some silent 'higher' truth.[114] Form and content should together express the same idea, preserving difficult truths, both 'high' and 'low', away from the 'prophane multitude'. The wise, Pliny says, would deflect 'the unlearned multitude' by 'mingl[ing] in their writings certain *Mathematical numbers and figures*'.[115] As this excerpt hints, *Palladis Tamia*, like *God's Arithmeticke* before it, is a carefully designed esoteric treatise; 'the most casual reader' will miss the point, but closer inspection discloses intricate design illustrating symbolic logic. As is well-known, renaissance ideals of beauty remained closely tied to the same ideals of proportion and number originally used by the ancients. As Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) attests,

> Beauty is a kind of harmony and concord of all the parts to form a whole which is constructed according to a fixed number, and a certain relation and order, as symmetry, the highest and most perfect law of nature, demands.[116]

That many medieval and early modern literary productions were organised by numerical patterns – especially, of course, poetry, a mode then synonymous with 'number'[117] – is confirmed by so sober and authoritative an intellectual historian as Ernst Robert Curtius, who coined the term 'numerical composition' (*zahlenkomposition*).[118] As Maren-Sofie Røstvig clarifies, numerical composition involves the 'structural use of pre-selected numbers whose symbolism accords with the contents'.[119] Such an organisational strategy accomplished the twofold purpose of supplying 'formal scaffolding' and endowing a work with 'symbolic profundity',[120] by connecting formal design to content, either explicit or implied.

Less well appreciated, perhaps, is the close association in early modern arts between ideas of number or proportion and *wit* (Figure 7).

This 1547 engraving[121] by Walther Hermann Ryff (1500–1548)[122] includes the familiar *Momento mori* motto, most often known from Andreas Vesalius's 1543 *Fabrica* and featured on the title page of *Palladis Tamia*: 'Vivitur ingenio, Caetera mortis erunt / He lives by wit: all else dies'. The Ryff engraving joins this to another line, printed at the bottom of the card in much smaller type, to form a heroic couplet that continues the thought by defining 'wit': 'Aurum probatur igni, ingenium vero mathematicis / as gold is proved by fire, wit, forsooth, is proved by math'.[123] In his *God's Arithmeticke* Meres confirms that 'the ancients' not only held arithmetic in high esteem, but also employed it to esoteric purpose:

> [The ancients] considered the deepe devises, the profound practices, & cunning conclusions therein contained [in arithmetic]: and also that it is the Key and entrance into all other arts and learning as well as approved [by] the noble philosopher Pythagoras, who caused this inscription to be written upon his Schoole doore (where he taught Philosphye) in great letters: *Nemo Arithmeticae ignarus hic ingrediatur*: Let none enter here, that is ignorant in arithmeticke.[124]

Passing through the door of Meres' memory palace, this theme of concealed wisdom – the 'profound practices' and 'cunning conclusions' available to the student of numbers – is positively ubiquitous in *Palladis Tamia*: Rivers

Figure 7. 1547 allegorical engraving by Walther Hermann Ryff, *Der Architectür fürnembsten, notwendigsten, angehorigen mathematischen vnd mechanischen Künst*, 1558.

'suddainlie hyde themselves vnder the earth' (9^{v}); Angels 'in their own nature are not visible vnto us' (22^{r}); an obelisk is 'builded under the earth' (214^{r}), a loadstone 'by a certain secret and unknown force doth draw iron unto it' (114^{r}), and 'wisdom by a secret reason doth draw the minds of men unto it' (114^{r}); As Timanthes painted Agamemnon 'covered with a veil, so some things are better left to everyone's judgement and consideration, than expressed with words' (231^{v}); 'that kind of speech is best, wherein many things are left unto consideration, and few discoursed of, and wherein there is more sense than words' (253^{v}).

Ordinal pairing in Francis Meres

Meres uses deviations from symmetry as lessons in logic and classification. He wants 'more sense than words'; he not only values the communicative potential of *number*, but also *place*, a primary preoccupation of the *commonplace* book genre. This means that in many cases it becomes apparent on close inspection (not only in the 'Comparative Discourse' but in many other places in *Palladis Tamia*), that the ordinal pairings produced by the two parallel lists of each paragraph are appositively matched. The sequence of paragraphs in the 'Comparative Discourse' is carefully arranged to reinforce this idea. Paragraph 33, anticipating and modelling a practice of ordinal arrangement next seen in par. 34, provides a striking illustration of Meres' correlative logic (Figure 8).

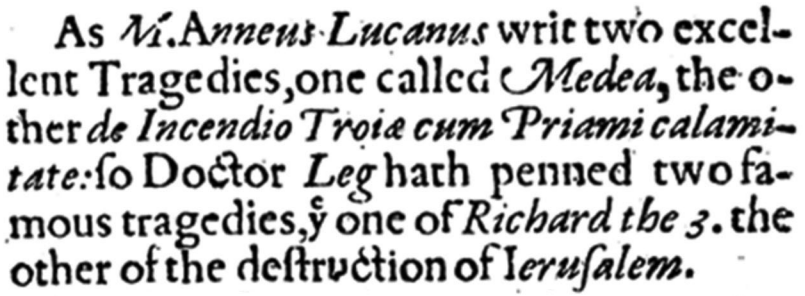

As *M.Anneus Lucanus* writ two excellent Tragedies, one called *Medea*, the other *de Incendio Troiæ cum Priami calamitate:* ſo Doctor *Leg* hath penned two famous tragedies, ỹ one of *Richard the 3.* the other of the deſtruction of *Ieruſalem.*

Figure 8. Paragraph 33 showing distribution of topics to produce ordinal pairing. Image courtesy Allen (1938).

On both sides one author writes two plays: the two classical plays, *Medea* and *Incendio Troiae* (*The Burning of Troy*) by Lucanus, on the *as*-side, are compared to the two Elizabethan plays, *Richard III* and *The Destruction of Jerusalem* by Leg on the *so*-side.[125] On each side, that is, a play about a tyrant is followed by another about the destruction of a famous city, viz. in modern symbolic logic:

Medea: Incendio Troiae :: Richard III: Destruction of Jerusalem.

With this precedent in mind, paragraph 34 yields a more definite answer to Detobel and Ligon's query about which names are doubled on the English side of the ledger (Table 5). To balance the uneven number of names on both sides requires an empty placeholder among the ancients; as the Earl of Oxford is the first name on the English 'so' side, one can provisionally assign the empty place (0) to him and list the remaining names in their assigned orders on both sides of the equation.

In his analysis of this data, Robert S. Knapp cites a 'telling peculiarity in [the text's] order of names', based on consideration of both 'social status' and 'chronology'.[126] The first four names on the English list – Edward Earl of Oxford, Dr Gager of Oxford, William Rowley of Cambridge, and Richard Edwards of her Majesty's Chapel – follow a formal order of social rank. This is not only

Table 5. Correspondences between the ancient and English sides of Meres' par. 34.

#	**Ancient Comedic Writers (16)**	**Elizabethan Comedic Writers (17)**
0.	X – "no one"	Edward Earl of Oxford
1.	Menander	Doctor Gager of Oxford
2.	Aristophanes	Master Rowley, once a rare scholar of learned Pembroke Hall in Cambridge
3.	Eupolis Atheniensis	Master Edwards, one of her Majesty's Chapel
4.	Alexis Terius	Eloquent and witty John Lyly
5.	Nicostratus	Lodge
6.	Amipsias Atheniensis	Gascoigne
7.	Anaxandrides Rhodius	Greene
8.	Aristonymous	Shakespeare
9.	Archippus Atheniensis	Thomas Nash
10.	Callias Atheniensis	Thomas Heywood
11.	Plautus	Anthony Munday, our best plotter
12.	Terence	Chapman
13.	Naevius	Porter
14.	Sext. Turpilius	Wilson
15.	Licinius Imbrex	Hathaway
16.	Virgilius Romanus	Henry Chettle

the correct public protocol but also a rhetorical device for legitimising comedy, since each of the first four names contributes to the ethos of the controversial genre. Comedy, Meres asserts, has the sanction of the relevant authorities, including the aristocracy, both universities, and (via Master Edwards of her Majesty's Chapel) a 'signifier' for the Crown.

A similar principle, based less on social protocol than 'classic' status, is evident in the corresponding lists on the *as* side. With literary reputation as the ranking principle, Menander and Aristophanes (1 and 2) come first for the Greeks, Plautus and Terence (11 and 12) for the Romans. If Meres wanted to coordinate the lists through some 'critical method' invoking an encrypted message, he had to structure that project within the overt structure of these other, socially recognised, organising principles. That he effected such an integration is evident when the logic for the corresponding pairs is considered.

Starting from the top of the list and proceeding down, let us consider some of the pairs. Although more often remembered as a tragedian, William Gager (1555–1622) also wrote comedies and was considered the leading university playwright of the Elizabethan age.[127] He aligns with Menander for several reasons, starting from their mutual reputation for 'New Comedy'; Menander wrote 'New Comedy' plays in Greek, Gager wrote 'Tragoedia Nova' or 'New Tragedy' in Latin.[128] Both comedians also featured abundant consumption of alcohol as part of their plots. Menander's lost *Drunkeness* employed a chorus of drunken men,[129] and Gager in his lost *Rivales* staged a scene of drunken sailors.[130] Finally, Menander and Gager are both remembered for plays performed before foreign potentates. Textor records that Menander was 'by the kings of Egypt via their envoys invited [to perform] with great reward'.[131] Likewise Gager's *Dido* was in 1583 staged at court for the visiting Polish Prince Albertus de Alasco.[132]

In the next position, Alexis Terius makes the perfect mate for John Lyly, whom Meres calls 'eloquent and witty';[133] Terius's nickname was 'gracefully sportive'.[134] Richard Edwards, likewise, matches Eupolis Atheniensis, for both comic writers provoked authorities through their topical satire, comedy in the "old style",[135] and both died in shipwrecks, Eupolis on the Hellespont[136] and Edwards on the Bristol channel between England and Wales (the English 'Hellespont').

By far the most impressive correlations come from the most well-documented comic writers in Meres' list, including Robert Greene, Anthony Munday, George Chapman and Thomas Nashe. Each matches his classical counterpart in the array in telling particulars. Aligned with Greene, for example, Anaxandrides was 'studiously elegant' and 'effeminate in dress and manner ... yet the slave of passion ... [he] introduced up on the stage scenes of gross intrigue and debauchery'. He made 'love matters' a topic of plays, and 'not only ridiculed Plato and the Academy but proceeded to lampoon the magistracy of Athens. For this attack, he is reported by some to have been tried and condemned to die by starvation'.[137]

Robert Greene, likewise, first attracted an Elizabethan readership with his prose romances and romantic plays, including *Orlando Furioso* (1594), which depicts the madness wrought by love. In *The Repentance of Robert Greene Maister of Artes* (1592), Greene calls himself an 'author of plays and penner of love pamphlets' (C1^{v}). Like the comedies of Anaxandrides, Greene's were criticised by contemporaries like Gabriel Harvey, for whom Greene's 'debauched' writing was corrosive of the social fabric. Harvey regarded Greene as a threat to the legitimacy of literature, for although his works 'were replacing those of Greek and Roman authors, they were not equal to them'.[138] Greene's dissolute lifestyle, including abandoning his wife and son, was a subject of much controversy, and his caustic wit brought him a reputation as a troublemaker. Finally, he died in 1592, not by starvation, but by an opposite fate, from eating too much contaminated pickled herring.

Plautus, whom Meres aligns with Munday, adapted many of his plots from the Greek sources and became known for the wide influence of his *Miles Gloriosus* ('Braggart Soldier') character type; Munday's most famous play, *Two Italian Gentlemen* (circa 1584),[139] is a Plautine comedy featuring a prominent *Miles Gloriosus* character, Captain Crackstone, a literary antecedent of Falstaff. Meres calls Munday 'our best plotter',[140] and Plautus is today still widely known as the 'best plotter' of antiquity, producing plots that in their intricacy and influence have had a large and enduring influence on Renaissance comedy, inspiring hundreds of imitations in many European languages[141]

Chapman and the Roman playwright Terence, both known as translators and adaptors, also match in specifying detail. Terence was distinguished by his preference for 'Greek models and Greek titles, plot structures, variations of stock motifs and topics',[142] and Meres elsewhere singles out Terence for his 'translations out of Menander and Apollodorus'.[143] Chapman was also a distinguished translator of Greek texts,[144] known to be more directly influenced by Greek literary traditions than any other Elizabethan/Jacobean comedian, and more specifically is said to be heavily indebted to Terence for his *All Fools*, a modernisation of two Terence plays: 'the close resemblance between the *Heauton timoroumenos* (*The Self Tormenter*) and *All Fools* will be apparent to every reader of Chapman's play ... The play is taken directly from the Latin comedy'.[145]

Finally, there is Meres' remarkable comparison of Thomas Nashe to Archippus Atheniensis, whose most famous dramatic satire, *Ichthyes* / *The Fishes*, parodies the dietary habits of Athenian epicures.[146] By the time *Palladis Tamia* appeared in print in October 1598, Nashe was completing his last satire, *Nashe's Lenten Stuffe*, subtitled *The Praise of the Red Herring*. Recounting his escape from London and exile in the port city of Yarmouth in Norfolk, after the *Isle of Dogs* fiasco in 1597, Nashe's dangerous satire, developing the extended metaphor of the 'red herring' as applied to the public life of late Elizabethan England,[147] was published in or around Lent, 1599, by Nicholas Ling for Cuthbert Burby – the same team that had published *Palladis Tamia* five months before.[148] Given these circumstances, there seems little basis to doubt that Meres in his 'Comparative Discourse' was already privy to Nashe's forthcoming satire on 'distracting fishes'.

Shakespeare and Aristonymous

If the names of paragraph 34 are – as the forgoing analysis shows – arranged by ordinal pairing, then Shakespeare's alignment in position 8 (See Table 5), across from the obscure Athenian comedian *Aristonymous*, must have some intelligible significance in Meres' system. In the classical list, the centre falls between Aristonymous and Archippus Atheniensis, in the precise centre (8:8); in the English list, it is 'off by one', yielding an 8:1:8 pattern that totals seventeen.

Like the name 'Shakespeare', which calls to mind an emblem of a person – or the Goddess Pallas herself – shaking a spear, *Aristonymous* embodies a clue to Meres' design: 'the aristocratic name' (ἄριστος + ὄνομα = ἀριστονυμος, cf., pseudonym, allonym, etc.).[149] But more than a witty coincidence of names is involved here. The encyclopaedic Suidas reports that Aristonymous ridiculed Aristophanes on the stage (as also did Sannyrion in *Laughter* [*Gelos*]) for producing plays, at first 'brought out' under the names of two front men, Kallistratos and Philonides. Thus, Aristonymous ('the Aristocratic Name') ridiculed Aristophanes ('the Aristocratic Appearing') for using two living men as his allonyms.[150] As we shall see, this anecdote is given an Elizabethan twist in Meres' comic construct. But first we need a larger sense of context, including the historical antecedents and analogues of Meres' method.

Meres' system in cultural context: Raymond Lull and the *Zairja*

In what is certainly the most influential study of the 'Comparative Discourse' ever done, Don Cameron Allen insists that 'if Meres had a critical purpose when he arranged his lists, it was of the most vague nature, and not at all in harmony with the theories of his age'.[151] In fact, Meres' method as reconstructed in this essay exemplifies centuries of doctrine and practice of esoteric communication and commonplace book construction. He actively and constructively draws on the technology and practices of the esoteric wisdom and memory traditions, pioneered in Europe by Raymond Lull (1232–1315) in his *Ars Magna* (*The General Art*), as extensively discussed by Francis Yates.[152] Lull's 'art of finding truth' used a primitive paper computer called a volvelle, designed to form combinations of abstract symbols into symbolic propositions (Figure 9).

As David Kahn recounts the progress of the technology over the centuries,[153] Lull appropriated an active Arabic/Persian/Hebraic tradition of volvelles (coordinating dials), used in medicine and astronomy as well as in the Kabballah. In Arabic the volvelle was called a *Zairja* or 'horoscope circle'. Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406) describes the use of this device as 'a branch of the science of letter magic'.[154] Lull recombined three sets of nine letters of the Roman alphabet, each a symbol for a theological or metaphysical 'first principle'. Spinning the dials, Lull's readers could construct a theory of anything and everything, all derived from recombination of nine first principles. Or they could follow the idea and design their own wheels with their own symbols or principles. The European intelligentsia had 'discovered' the volvelle. By the seventeenth century, as Katherine Ellison observes, they would invest in 'philosophical numbers' and 'numeric alphabets', embracing 'the historical occult mystery and power of numbers' while stressing that 'even the most daring mathematical adventures could be learned from the safety of anyone's desk'.[155]

When Meres coordinates names in his lists for comparison, he is pursuing the tradition of Lull back to the *Zairja*, but from the perspective of the further

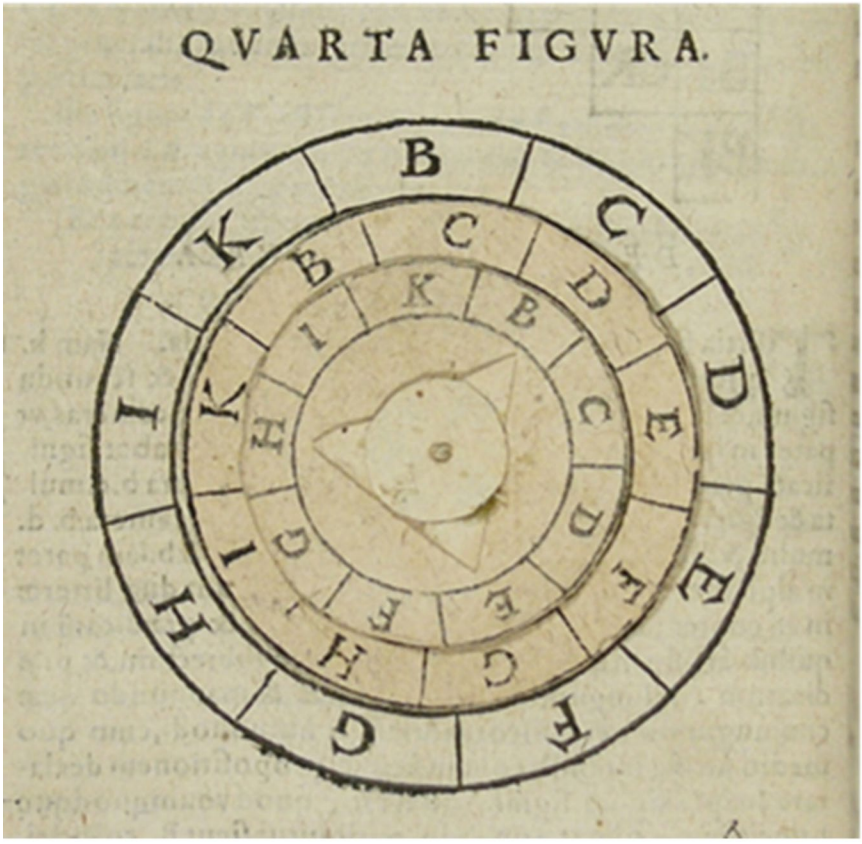


Figure 9. Raymond Lull's 'Quarta Figura' volvelle.

evolution of the techne over the next three centuries. By their flexible ordering, the names in Meres' lists operate like independent variables and can therefore function like the signifiers on Lull's wheels. Instead of recombining letters to form some higher symbolic pattern, Alberti in the fifteenth century had turned the system to more worldly and practical applications in cryptography; he used the 'cipher wheel' to juxtapose alphabets for the purposes of substitution and encryption. In the sixteenth century Cornelius Agrippa (1530–1605), now equipped with access to a printing press, updated and popularised Lull's ideas in a series of widely propagated (and highly controversial) works. The occult theorist Giordano Bruno, in his *De Umbris idearum* (1582),[156] published the year before he arrived in England for two years, used the volvelles to produce a 'universal memory machine'.[157] Lull's concepts as transmitted through Alberti and Agrippa would form a methodological linchpin in Della Porta's 1563 state-

Table 6. Methodologies of the volvelle tradition.

Lull (1232-1315) – scholastic tradition	Recombining letters that stand for abstract qualities to develop a theological metaphysics ("scholastic exercise").
Alberti (1404-1472) – Renaissance tradition	Rearranging and substituting letters and numbers for encryption ("encoding"). A practical exercise to conceal and transmit privileged information, either of a diplomatic or esoteric character.
Meres (1565-1647) – Later English Renaissance	Recombining names to reveal otherwise concealed premises or facts. As practice, this is closer to Lull; in its objectives, closer to Alberti.

of-the-art encryption manual, *De Furtivis Literarum Notis* (*Concerning Purloined Notes of Letters*). And, most importantly, the commonplace book tradition was itself a technology of reading based on the application of the 'memory palace' principles transmitted through Lull as assisted by the *Zairja*.

Comparing these uses shows that Meres' method is closer in episteme to Lull but closer to Alberti in terms of its didactic and esoteric uses (Table 6).

Each of these applications belongs more generally to the intellectual tradition of what remained until the eighteenth century the treasured fourth canon of rhetoric, namely the 'arts of memory', which utilised metaphors and principles of architectural arrangement to assist a mnemonic science 'of ordered, coded associations' and employed 'evocative and associative imagery to instruct prudential behavior' and facilitate the preservation of memorable data.[158]

Like Lull, Meres combines and recombines variables to discover concealed likenesses that can be applied to the problem at hand. By the synthesis of two elements, he derives a third, a new item of data, a perception of knowledge about the world. This formula, we saw, is already announced in the first sentence of Meres' rare dedication of *Palladis Tamia* to Thomas Eliot (See Figure 3).

In the preface Meres goes on from his organising principle to give many intriguing and relevant examples of things that come in threes. The principle is reiterated in Meres' analogy between a triangle and love:

> There must in euery triangle be three lynes, the first beginnith, the second augmenteth, the thirde concludeth it a figure: so in loue three vertues, affection, which drawth the heart, secrecie, which increaseth the hope, and constancie, which finisheth the worke, without any of these rules there can be no triangle, without any of these vertues, no loue.

Both the geometry and the metaphysics of love as spelled out in the paragraph are relevant to Meres' 'tria sunt omnia' solution to the problem of 'Shakespeare' (Figure 10).

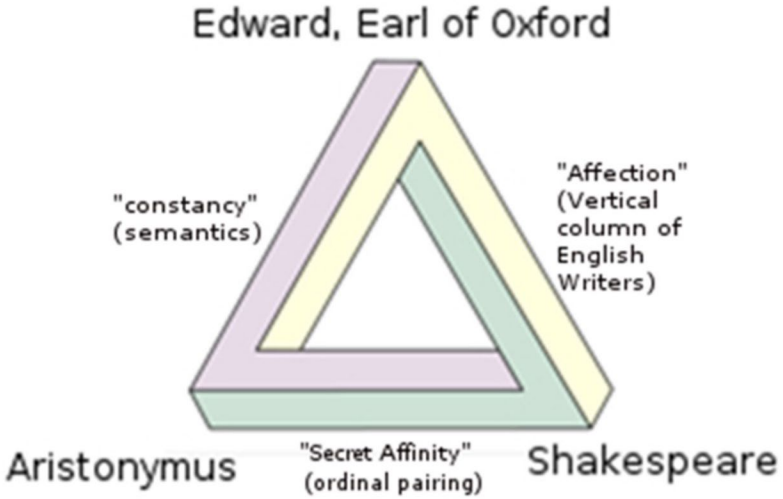


Figure 10. 'Tria sunt omnia' Illustrated from the dedication in *Palladis Tamia*.

Affection rules the first side of the triangle; the names Shakespeare and Oxford both fall in the vertical column listing of Meres' contemporary English writers, bound by a sense of shared history and nationhood; counting down both lists, the names *Aristonymous* and *Shakespeare*, we have seen, both fall in the eighth position – at the arithmetic centre of their respective lists. These two names are drawn together by the principle of *ordered sequence* or *ordinal position* (a 'secret affinity') and together form the second side of the triangle. Semantics – *meaning* – completes the triangle when the principle of *constancy* is applied; the Greek name Aristonymous points back to Oxford, *the only* 'aristocratic name' on the English side. Together the three names thus complete a perfect 'Platonic' triangle, demonstrating Meres' arithmetic premise, established in the first sentence of his book, *tria sunt omnia*.

Meres' construct merges the rich spiritual symbolism of the trinity in Christian doctrine to the commonplace traditions with the pedagogical principle of the *trivium*. Applying the 'tria sunt omnia' formula, Meres not only aligns 'Shakespeare' with the 'Aristocratic name', but uses this alignment to point to 'Oxford' – the only aristocratic name in the English list. Since we began by trying to discover which two names in the English list are duplicated, it may be

concluded that Francis Meres, using 'Aristonymous' as the mediating signifier, says that 'Shakespeare = Oxford'. The triumphalist design of Meres' 'Comparative Discourse' is confirmed by analysing the distribution of names in relation to the possible dynamic centres of the overall schema. Considering all thirty-three names in the array, Alexander Waugh has shown that Oxford's name occupies the 'triumphal centre' (16:1:16).[159] In this position,[160] Meres' construct joins the customary and long-established principle of the 'privileged centre'[161] of any numerical schema, relevant here to honour the 17th Earl of Oxford in both figure and form, starting either from the top or the bottom of the paired lists, and for a bonus plays on 33, long considered a characteristically mystical topos in number theory.

Parallel lives and the witty Francis Meres

Early modern European biography until Montaigne is most visibly influenced by *Plutarch's Lives*, where each of two paired biographies somehow interpret the other, such that both emerge as part of a larger project. As we have seen, such a 'comparative method' is intrinsic to the design of *Palladis Tamia*, where Meres has encoded a subtext equating the author 'Shakespeare' both with the Greek Aristonymous and the contemporary Edward Earl of Oxford.

The wit of Francis Meres' design is further illustrated in his sly correlative comparison of Shakespeare to the Warwickshire playwright Michael Drayton of Hartshill.[162] Both poets are singled out for special attention by Meres, who mentions Shakespeare nine and Drayton a dozen times in his 'Comparative Discourse'. In the earliest known literary allusion to *1 Hen. IV*, Meres laments that Drayton's exceptional honesty and integrity seems 'almost miraculous' in 'these declining and corrupt times, when there is nothing but roguery in villainous man'.[163] The line quotes from Falstaff in *1 Hen. IV*: 'You rogue, here's lime in this sack too: there is nothing but roguery to be found in villainous man' (*1 Hen. IV* 2.4.124–125).[164] Meres' intimacy with the literary culture of his day and eagerness for a joke are on display as he wittily introduces Falstaff's line as a counterpoint to the 'honest life and upright conversation' (par. 20) of the Warwickshire Drayton. Shakespeare is here covertly invoked through a joke about the dishonest times, put into the mouth of one of his own problematically autobiographical creations.[165] The allusion to the 'declining and corrupt times' provides a backhanded justification for Meres' evasive tactics. Most importantly, the covert allusion to Shakespeare violates Meres' own distinctly articulated principles of attribution:

> As naughtie women, hauing trod awry, conceale the names of the right fathers of their children: so many schollers stealing their learning from diuers authors do conceale their names; which is palpable theft and no plaine dealing. Ingenui pudoris est (vt ait Plinius) fateri per quos profecerimus; et haec quasi merces authori iure optimo pensitanda est, ne fures esse videamur. Gratia animi esse duco, (inquit Franciscus Patricius) eorum nomina profiteri, quos imitamur, et a quibus accepimus.[166]

This paragraph juxtaposes two contrasting messages about literary borrowing, in English and Latin. In English, Meres scolds those who 'steal their learning' from others while concealing the names of their sources. In Latin, he adapts Pliny's idea that 'It is the shame of the innocent to confess by whom we have proceeded; and this is to be weighed as a reward to the author in the best way possible, lest we be seen as thieves'. This paragraph links by the figure of irony to Meres' unacknowledged allusion to Shakespeare; Meres confesses that he may have been guilty of 'palpable theft' and 'no plain dealing' in some of his commentaries.

Meres' one other overt 'biographical' datum about Shakespeare in paragraph 23 interlocks with the rest of his design: here he again implicitly contrasts Shakespeare to the honest, upright, WYSIWYG Drayton, calling Shakespeare a metempsychosis of Ovid (Figure 11) and associating him with Pythagoras.

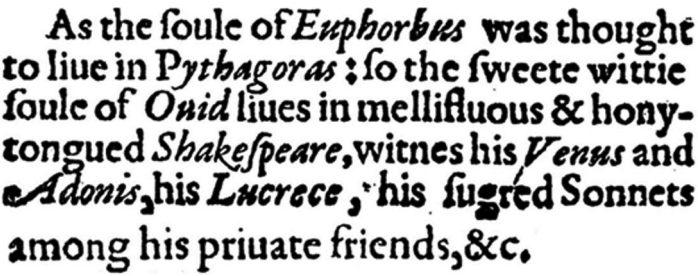

As the ſoule of *Euphorbus* was thought
to liue in *Pythagoras*: ſo the ſweete wittie
ſoule of *Ouid* liues in mellifluous & hony-
tongued *Shakeſpeare*, witnes his *Venus* and
Adonis, his *Lucrece*, his ſugred Sonnets
among his priuate friends, &c.

Figure 11. In his most 'biographical' allusion to Shakespeare in par. 23, Meres compares him to Ovid and Pythagoras, the maestro of silence and numbers. Image courtesy Allen (1938).

The sentence is a complex and inter-braided one. Compared to Drayton, an esteemed companion in Warwickshire literary circles, Meres' Shakespeare is a polished literary construct, a Pythagorean metempsychosis of Ovid, conjured from smoke and numbers, a product of art, not nature. In equating Shakespeare with Pythagoras, indeed, Meres summons the archetypal maestro of number and 'silence' whose pervasive influence is conspicuous in his own 1597 *God's Arithmeticke* through its subject matter and in *Palladis Tamia* through its mnemonic design. As Arthur M. Melzer clarifies in *Philosophy Between the Lines* (2014), the surface teachings of esoteric texts 'have one essential thing in common: they are carefully designed to create the false appearance of conformity to the most powerful dogmas of the time, which it is too dangerous to question openly'.[167]

Why has Meres been so badly misunderstood for so long?

One prominent objection to the line of inquiry pursued here might be that Meres writes of Shakespeare without mentioning the Earl of Oxford in eight other places in his 'Comparative Discourse' and also that he fails to identify

Oxford as a writer of tragedies. But Meres' apparent inconsistencies are as methodical as his carefully aligned syllogisms. In *As You Like It*, apparently written within a year of *Palladis Tamia*, the courtier-fool Touchstone clarifies that 'your *if* is your only peacemaker: [there is] much virtue in *if*' (5.4.97). Following an explicitly Pythagorean methodology, and using the language of mathematics as his vehicle, in par. 34 Meres has interjected a 'peacemaker' *if*. Insisting by narrow deduction that Meres' silence on Oxford as a writer of tragedies is intended to distinguish him from Shakespeare is a mistake, one that misses the subtlety of Meres' system and fails to recognise a peacemaking *if*; Meres in par. 34 is *stipulating* to the complete logic of his design. *If* Oxford is 'Shakespeare' (par. 34), then the other eight references[168] to Shakespeare also allude to Oxford, under the cover of the established and accepted pseudonym keyed by par. 34.

Given these considerations, we are left with the question of how Meres became one of the most misunderstood writers in English Renaissance studies, and two primary reasons stand out. The first is the loss of the commonplace book as a theoretical construct. In the sixteenth century these memory books, inspired by the metaphor of the 'memory palace' or the 'theatre of memory', became pedagogical standards for learning and processing knowledge of both rhetoric and dialectic, but over the ensuing centuries, knowledge of the genre was steadily eclipsed as 'common' and 'commonplace' were reduced to 'trivial', 'banal', 'not learned' or 'unworthy of remembrance' and the genre itself became a 'totally archaic object'[169] shrouded in false assumptions and anachronistic prejudice that still impede a fair comprehension of the methodical wit of Francis Meres. As Jason Scott-Warren puts it in one recent survey, the history of reading has 'started to teach us how much of our reading is non-reading', hinting that our cultural gatekeepers have for too long 'emphasized the dangers of reading "the wrong sort of thing"' when tabooed methods fail to align with their preconceptions.[170]

In anthropological terms, in Europe and the United States, cultures that once practised 'high context' communication styles graduated to 'low context' ones.[171] As Arthur M. Melzer explains, today in the United States and throughout most of Europe, 'one is expected to be direct, clear, explicit, concrete, linear, and to the point', at the expense of much lost meaning; but in early modern England, one was still expected to be 'thoughtfully indirect, suggestive, and circumlocutious'.[172] Especially lost has been the role of theories of arrangement and their relationship to memory as essential elements of the commonplace genre. This conceptual 'sea change', Ann Moss explains, 'swept [the commonplace book] off the cultural map'.[173]

Long fallen into disuse and even – in Moss's apt term – 'disgrace',[174] the topological strategies of early modern discourse are now being rediscovered. Following the lead of Marion Trousdale, Frances Yates, Alistair Fowler and Daniel Martin, the burgeoning fields of early modern memory and 'commonplace' studies gathered force in the 1990s, and in the 2020s show every sign of continuing growth. In her indispensable 2013 bibliographical survey,

Victoria E. Burke summarises a field that has 'blossomed' and looks forward to new research that can shed light on reading practices and 'on the ways the modes of thought generated by ... commonplace books influenced fields such as music, science, and literature'.[175] Until *Palladis Tamia* is understood as an exercise in symbolic logic using the medieval and renaissance commonplace and mnemonic traditions of 'topological' reasoning,[176] Meres will seem like a dullard and his modern interpreters will persist in rewriting Don Cameron Allen's confusion.

The more closely we examine the evidence Meres has left us, the clearer it becomes that Allen's view of Meres as a 'minor actor', 'petty creature',[177] and product of a university system that 'fostered intellectual laziness'[178] in a nation that suffered from 'a national contempt for pure learning',[179] is mistaken; instead, Meres appears to have been a skilled operative in a carefully orchestrated public relations campaign to set up the Elizabethan equivalent of a literary 'cut-out', an allonym for a highly placed political insider who, along with his family and close associates, required protection from the public scandal of his playwriting.[180] 16th century Noblemen were allowed and even encouraged to patronise players, but to *write* plays, or act or be seen to be associated with actors required crossing the consequential social barrier between aristocratic honour and the tradesman's world of theatrical print or staged drama that is so potently memorialised in Sonnet 48.[181] As Bryan Wildenthal suggests, 'If Meres was nominally going along with the cover name, he may also have been slyly yanking at the veil'.[182]

The second factor distorting Meres' reputation is the pressure within academia not only to *accept* traditional assumptions about the authorship of the Shakespeare plays, but to confirm them, reflexively and without critical inquiry. This mindset has precluded the dispassionate analysis of evidence on which any secure paradigm depends for its longevity. 'Doubts about Shakespeare', as Folger Library Director of Educational Programs Richmond Crinkley emphasises in his 1985 review essay in the *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 'came early and grew rapidly. They have a simple and direct plausibility. The plausibility has been reinforced by the tone and methods by which traditional scholarship has responded to the doubts'.[183] More recently, Michael Dudley identifies the authorship question as 'a significant but under-examined example of a threat to academic freedom originating from within the academy ... [engaging a] campaign to delegitimize and foreclose legitimate lines of inquiry [that] has necessitated confining itself to an intellectual prison, because it refuses to broaden either its scope or inquiry or its community of scholars'.[184]

To correct this, Dudley argues, scholars should reject the 'industrial-age ethos of "reproductive education" in which students are merely expected to consume and repeat knowledge provided by experts who are certain about their own certainties, to instead embrace uncertainty, complexity, and the realization of all we do not know'.[185] From this perspective, Allen's glaring misconstructions become the predictable destination of three centuries of amnesiac decline that has eclipsed the mnemonic principles and techniques used in Meres' book to identify Shakespeare.

It is quite apparent, moreover, on a wider view, that Meres is in good company among early modern poets and literary critics, many of whom used esoteric technique of some kind to preserve knowledge of the true author of the plays.[186] Thus, just as the design of *Palladis Tamia* contradicts Allen's beliefs, so Allen's fallacious critique is symptomatic of a deeper and more pervasive failure of modern criticism to appreciate the remarkable uses of literary 'code talking' in renaissance documents.

Francis Meres' 'Comparative Discourse' in *Palladis Tamia* (1598), long considered an essential early witness to Shakespeare, is not the potpourri of pilfered baggage Allen and so many others have long insisted. On the contrary, if Meres' work is 'carefully designed to create the false appearance of conformity' to the dogma of 'Shakespeare', it is also the first publication to systematically deconstruct this artifice. Using the logic of the 'commonplaces', Meres confirms that the post-modern 'Shakespeare' is a sleight of hand based on an early modern fiction, a fiction sanctioned by authority and posthumously interpreted through an astonishing literalism and copious circular reasoning[187] sustaining a 'Shakespeare Industrial Complex' in which truth had become irrelevant. Simultaneously, Meres identifies the real author of the plays as Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (1550–1604). The context may have been unique, and the document itself a *tour de force* of the genre, but the techniques employed are effectively universals of logic with ancient pedigrees; Meres' patron and dedicatee, the Middle Temple barrister M. Thomas Eliot, would surely have enjoyed this book of puzzles to be pondered and solved, and could have read with delight Meres' encoded message about the 17th Earl in par. 34.

These conclusions are not only warranted in the semiotic structure of Meres' book but corroborated successively, over several generations of researchers, on many other grounds from Looney in 1920 onwards. But to return in closing to the threefold influence of number, order and position in the material world, we may summarise how Meres employs all three concepts to reinforce his message about Shakespeare in par. 34 (Table 7).

Table 7. Number, Order, and Placement as aspects of Meres's Design in Par. Number 34.

	17 English names on the 'so' side mirror the number symbolism of the 17th Earl of Oxford. The paragraph is 34/59.
Order	Ordinal arrangement equates 'Shakespeare' with Aristonymous; following the tria sunt omnia formula, the semantics of Aristonymous directs us to Oxford as the third corner of the figure and simultaneously resolves the numerical discrepancy between the two sides of the syllogism. This functions like clockwork.
Position	Shakespeare's name falls on the 8th and honoured central position in the array of English names (8:1:8). Oxford's name falls in the 17th in the honoured central position in the entire array of classical and English names (16:1:16), confirming that, as Jonson would later declare, the real Shakespeare was 'not of an age, but for all times'.

Francis Meres, it seems, was not a dullard after all, but a man of uncommon genius, subtle wit and even, as Gregory Smith had already warned us in 1905, 'editorial cunning', a philosopher-poet who assembled books designed to 'last long'. Assisted by perhaps two thousand years of scholarship on mnemonic theory and praxis, he achieved the triple hat trick of literary criticism: taken for a mere copyist, a dunce incapable of a critical method, he has, 'incognito' as it were, not only transmitted to posterity Plutarch's simile of the literary grapes under the leaves; he has proven it by the example of 'Shakespeare': '*As* in a Vine clusters of grapes are often hidde under the broade and spacious leaves: *so* in deepe conceited, and well couched poems, figures, and fables, many things, verie profitable to be knowne, do passe by a young scholler'.[188]

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Notes

1. *Palladis Tamia. VVits treasury being the second part of Wits commonwealth. By Francis Meres Maister of Artes of both Vniuersities* (At London: printed by P. Short, for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be solde at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1598). The research for this article involved the invaluable assistance of library staff at the Rosenbach Museum, the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Huntington Library, and especially the sustained assistance of the Huntington's late Virginia Renner, Director of Reader Services (1974–1999).
2. Roland Lewis, *The Shakespeare Documents* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940), I: 293.
3. Samuel Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 140–141.
4. Ian Wilson, *Shakespeare: The Evidence* (London: Headline, 1993), 242. David Kathman ('Meres, Francis', *Dictionary of National Biography* 2004, updated 2018, https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.vt.edu/10.1093/ref:odnb/18581), while diminishing Meres for having 'cribbed much of his poetry chapter' from contemporaries like William Webbe, 'Puttenham' or Sir Philip Sidney, concurs that the *Palladis Tamia* still 'constitutes a unique and extremely valuable survey of English literature at the end of the sixteenth century' (2/4). Less optimistically, James J. Marino in 2014 discovers that Meres' 'profoundly unoriginal' book is 'cribbed from older compilations' and that Meres consequently 'is not providing a unified overview of

English poetry, but a selection of educated opinions available for quotation' that 'should not necessarily be trusted as a guide to poetic reputations throughout the era' ("Francis Meres," *Dictionary of the English Literary Renaissance*, ed. Garret L. Sullivan and Alan Stewart [Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell 2014], II: 680).

5. *Granados spiritual and heauenly exercises devided into seauen pithie and briefe meditations, for euery day in the weeke one, with the exposition vpon the 51. psalme. Written in Spanish by the learned and reuerend diuine, F. Lewes of Granada* (Edinburgh: Printed by Robert Walde-Graue, printer to the Kings Maiestie, 1600); *Granados spirituall and heauenlie exercises. Deuided into seauen pithie and briefe meditations, for euery day in the vveeke one. Written in Spanish, by the learned and reuerend diuine, F. Lewes of Granado. Since translated into the Latine, Italian French, and the Germaine tongue. And now englished by Francis Meres, Maister of Artes of both Vniuersities, and student in Diuinitie* (At London: Printed by Iames Robarts, for I. B[ing], Anno. Dom. 1598); *Granados deuotion. Exactly teaching how a man may truely dedicate and deuote himselfe vnto God: and so become his acceptable votary. Written in Spanish, by the learned and reuerend diuine F. Lewes of Granada. Since translated into Latine, Italian and French. And now perused, and englished, by Francis Meres, Master of Artes, & student in diuinity* (London: Printed by E. Allde. for Cuthbert Burby and are to be sold at his shop at the Royall Exchange, 1598).
6. On the Q2 imprints of the two history plays, see Alexander Waugh and Roger Stritmatter, *The New Shakespeare Allusion Book*, Vol. I, II.2 (In press), 'Andrew Wise' (262–267); and Lucas Erne *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 92.
7. James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, Eleventh Impression (London: Longman, Green, & Co., 1870), II: 149.
8. Q1 of *Love's Labour's Lost*, published as 'Newly corrected and augmented By W. Shakespere', is dated 1598 'as it was presented before her Highness this last Christmas', i.e., in old style dates, Christmas 1598, not Christmas 1597. This has often been without justification assumed to mean Christmas 1597, i.e., so-called 'new style.' More commonly domestic documents followed the Julian Calendar; if so, the Christmas referred to is 1598, making *LLL* the third, not the first quarto to bear the name 'Shakespeare'. See W.W. Greg, 'Old-Style, New Style', in *Joseph Quincy Adams: Memorial Studies*, J. G. McManaway ed. The Folger Shakespeare Library (1948).
9. Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 92.
10. Don Cameron Allen, 'Francis Meres's Treatise "Poetry": A Critical Edition' (University of Illinois, 1933), 15.
11. Fitzgeoffrey, *Affaniae* II: 22 (https://philological.cal.bham.ac.uk/affaniae/2eng.html). On Fitzgeoffrey, see Dana Sutton, 'Introduction to the Edition of Charles Fitzgeoffrey's *Affaniae* and *Cenotaphia* (1601) in the Philological Museum' (https://philological.cal.bham.ac.uk/affaniae/intro.html), accessed June 16, 2023.
12. Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist*, 92–93.
13. H.G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 790. While Liddell and Scott reserve some doubt about the etymology, it was proposed as early as Servius (fourth century CE) and is endorsed in Cooper's authoritative *Thesaurus Linguae Graeca* (1572): '*dicitur enim pallas quasi Vibratrix dea. & quidem hastae vibratrix . . . unde et Pallas a Graecis dicitur,* ἀπὸ τὸν πάλλειν, *propterea quod hastam tenens eam veluti vibrare*' / 'For Pallas is said to be the shaking goddess and indeed the shaker of the spear ... indeed she is named by the Greeks ἀπὸ τὸν πάλλειν because she is seen shaking the spear she holds', as well as by Charles Estienne, '*dicitur enim Pallas quasi Vibratrix dea. et quidem hastae vibratris, ut pote bellicose*' / 'Pallas is said to be the shaking goddess and indeed the shaker of the spear, because she is warlike'.
14. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 790.
15. My census compiles copies noted by A.S.W. Rosenbach, 'The Only Perfect Copy in Existence of the Most Important Piece of Shakespeareana in the Whole Range of English Literature', unpublished report c. 1935; Don Cameron Allen, *Palladis Tamia (1598)*, Scholar's facsimile (1938); Emma V. A. Ungar, 'A Note on Three Copies of Meres *Palladis Tami*a, 1598', in *The collected catalogues of Dr. A. S. W. Rosenbach, 1904–1951: in ten volumes including an index by*

Don Ward (New York: Arno Press, with McGraw-Hill, [1946] 1967); and Arthur Freeman, *Palladis Tamia: Wits Treasury. With a Pref. for the Garland Ed.* (1973). Of the approximately twenty-one copies of the first edition of *Palladis Tamia* that survive, only two at most – including the so-called 'Hogan' copy – include an original dedication. An 18 June 1946 bill of sale of Rosenbach's copy to Carl H. Pforzheimer describes the copy as 'one of two known copies with the three cancelled leaves'.

16. All citations to *Palladis Tamia* are to the 1938 Scholars Press Facsimile of the first 1598 edition, edited by Don Cameron Allen.
17. *Ioannis Rauisii Textoris Niuernensis Officina, nunc demum post tot editiones diligenter emendata, aucta, & in longe' commodiorem ordinem redacta per Conradum Lycosthenem Rubeaquensem* (Bryling: Basil [1562]), 805. All subsequent allusions are to this edition, available through google books. The translations are mine.
18. Adam Smyth, 'Commonplace Book Culture', in *Women and Writing, c.1340–c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (Boydel & Brewer: York Medieval Press, 2010), 90–110, here 99.
19. Liddell and Scott, *Greek English Lexicon*, 588.
20. The imagery of Pallas as 'spear-shaker' is ubiquitous in early modern sources. Those who portray Pallas 'shaking a spear' include Abraham Fraunce (1592), Edmund Spenser (1579), George Chapman (1614), Richard Nichols (1616), John Squire (1632), Henry Bellamy (1625), George Sandys (1632) and Thomas Heywood (1637, 1640). All could trace authority for this idea to Estienne (1572), Cooper (1572) or Servius (fourth century BCE).
21. E.J. Kenney and W.V. Clausen, eds, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature, Vol. II: Latin Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 84.
22. Ibid.
23. Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 290.
24. Daniel Martin, *L'Architecture des 'Essais' de Montaigne: memoire artificielle et mythologie* (Paris: Nizet, 1992), 'déesse protrectrice de la patrie, mais à la différence de Mars, elle utilise la feinte et la masque pour tromper l'ennemi afin de remporter la Victoire', 141. All English translations from Martin are my own.
25. Francis Bacon, 'Of Council', in *The Essays or Councils Civill and Morall*, ed. Michael Kiernan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 64.
26. 'Secrets of state', also known as *ragion di stato*. See Peter S. Donaldson, *Machiavelli and Mystery of State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) or Mariavittoria Catanzariti, '*New Arcana Imperii*' (https://escholarship.org/uc/item/81g0030z).
27. In the *Odyssey*, according to Zeus in Book 5, Athena is the designer of Odysseus's plans to restore his rule in Ithaca by means of disguise. In Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, after Odysseus makes off with the Palladium from Troy, Pallas in rage brandishes her 'quivering spear/ hastam trementem' (2.175) at him. A 2006 *Notes and Queries* article by Fred Shurink ('An Unnoticed Early Reference to Shakespeare', *Notes & Queries* [March 2006], 72–74) notes a long-overlooked Shakespeare allusion in the 1628 third edition of Thomas Vicars' Χειραγωγία *Manuductio ad artem rhetoricam*. Following a previously published list of English writers who have brought glory to the nation, named as 'Galfridum Chaucerum, Edmundum Spencerum, Michaelem Draytonium, et Georgium Withersium', Vicars in 1628 adds 'that famous poet who takes a name from "shaking" and "spear", John Davies, and my namesake, the pious and learned poet John Vicars'. See Thomas L. Townsend, 'Thomas Vicars Shows Us "Shakespeare" Is a Pseudonym', *Shakespeare Oxford Newsletter* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2021), 23, https://shakespeareoxfordfellowship.org/wp-content/uploads/SO-Newsletter-Summer-2021.pdf (Accessed 15 June 2023).
28. The Palladium is '1. *Gr.* and *Lat.* myth. The image of the Goddess Pallas, in the citadel of Troy, on which the safety of the city was supposed to depend, reputed to have been thence brought to Rome. 2. *Trans.* and *fig.* Anything on which the safety of a nation, institution, privilege, etc., is believed to depend' ('Palladium', *Micro OED*, 397).
29. C.H. Herford and P. Simpson, eds, *Ben Jonson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947): 'The strength of empire is in religion. What else is the Palladium (with Homer) that kept Troy so long from sacking? Nothing more commends the Sovereign to the subject than it' (VIII: 600).

30. To George Chapman, she is 'patroness of cities, and with Mars / Marshall'd in all the care and cure of wars, / And in everted cities, fights, and cries. / But never doth herself set down or rise / Before a city, but at both times She / All injur'd people sets on foot and free'. See Chapman's *Homer's Hymns etc.*, ed. Richard Hooper (London: John Russell Smith, 1858), 102.
31. *Wits common vvealth. The second part. A treasurie of diuine, morall, and phylosophicall similies, and sentences, generally vsefull. But more particularly published, for the vse of schooles. By F.M. Master of Arts of both Vniuersities* (London: Printed by William Stansby, and are to be sold by Richard Royston, at his shop in Iuie Lane, 1634).
32. *Witts academy a treasurie of goulden sentences similies and examples. Set forth cheefely for the benefitt of young schollers. by Fr: M. Mr. of Arts of both Vniuersities* (Printed at London: [By William Stansby] for Richard Royston, 1636).
33. *Compact OED*, I: 484.
34. Peter Beal, 'Notions in Garrison: The 17th-Century Commonplace Book Tradition', in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts: Papers of the Renaissance English Text Society, 1985–1991*, ed. W. Speed Hill (1993), 131–147; my emphasis
35. Yates, *Art of Memory*, 3.
36. Alastair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 23.
37. Alastair Fowler, 'Numerology of the Centre', in *Triumphal Forms*, 65–66, my emphasis.
38. Ibid., 62–88.
39. A.W. Johnson finds that *all* the Jonson poems analysed in his 'Centred Form and the Poetry of Praise', a chapter in *Ben Jonson: Poetry and Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), exhibited a 'significant and related centre' (105).
40. Fowler, 'Numerology of the Centre', 31, 23.
41. Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1996), 17.
42. Martin, *L'Architecture des 'Essais' de Montaigne*, 34.
43. Chad S. Carr, Paul A. Kirschner and Simon J. Buckingham-Shum, *Visualizing Argumentation: Software Tools for Collaborative and Educational Sense-Making* (London: Springer, 2003); Alexandra Okada, Simon J. Buckingham-Shum, Tony Sherborne et al., *Knowledge Cartography* (Berlin: Springer, 2008).
44. Moss, 'At Birth', 21/32.
45. Colin Burrow, *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 204.
46. Sophia Xenophontos and Katerina Oikonomopoulou, *Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plutarch. Volume 20* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).
47. Meres, Oov-Oo2.
48. Even the 1592 *Green's Groatsworth of Wit* allusion to a 'shakescene' and 'upstart crow', often taken as an allusion to Shakespeare, seems more likely to be a reference to the bombastic actor-manager Edward Alleyn. See Jay Hoster, *What Really Happened in The Groatsworth of Wit Controversy of 1592* (Columbus: Ravine Books, 1993), and Katherine Chiljan, *Shakespeare Suppressed: The Uncensored Truth about Shakespeare and His Works* (San Francisco: Faire Editions, 2011), 107–129.
49. Erne, Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist, 92–93
50. Ibid., 82.
51. The dedication apparently survives in only one or two of eighteen known surviving copies of the book but has been reprinted in Allen's 1938 Scholar's Press facsimile.
52. Eliot's exact relationship, if any, to Thomas Eliot (1490–1546), the famed diplomat and author of *The Booke of the Governor*, remains uncertain.
53. James Shapiro, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), mistakenly identifies the playwrights to whom Shakespeare is compared here as 'Plautus and Terence' (236) – Terence of course also being a comic playwright.
54. Meres, 282^{r}. Unless specified otherwise, all subsequent citations to Meres are Allen's modern facsimile of the 1598 first edition.

55. *Love's Labour's Lost* is also mentioned in another 1598 source, *Alba*; a performance of *Comedy of Errors* at Gray's Inn in 1594 is recorded; *Merchant of Venice* was entered into the Stationer's Register on 22 July 1598; and *Love's Labour's Wonne* refers to another play, but which is unknown; all the tragedies were known from other sources by this time.
56. Margrethe Jolly, 'Meres – His Usefulness and His Limitations', *De Vere Society Newsletter* (October 2007), 13–18.
57. William E. Engel, *Mapping Mortality: The Persistence of Memory and Melancholy in Early Modern Europe* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1995), 111.
58. Meres, 271^{r-v}, emphasis supplied. Unless otherwise noted, citations labelled 'Meres' are to the leaf numbers from the 1598 edition of *Palladis Tamia* as reprinted and available in the 1938 Scholar's Press edition edited by Allen.
59. Meres, 267^{r}.
60. Writing only a year before the 1 June 1599 Bishop's Ban, Meres' active support for satire here makes him an unambiguous spokesperson for literary tolerance. Among other targets, the ban cracked down specifically on the genres of history and satire. Richard A. McCabe, 'Elizabethan Satire and the Bishop's Ban', in *The Yearbook of English Studies: Literature and Its Audience*, ed. G.K. Hunter, C.J. Rawson and Jenny Mesciems (Modern Humanities Research Association, 1981), Vol. II, makes it clear that the primary target of the ban was satire; Lynda E. Boose, 'The 1599 Bishop's Ban, Elizabethan Pornography and the Sexualization of the Jacobean Stage', in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, & Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994) laments that 'surprisingly little attention has been paid to a distinctly anomalous – and, I believe, portentous – political collision of the Ban between Elizabethan literary texts and the Elizabethan state' (185).
61. A few other topics only contain one paragraph, among them 'Exhortation' (160^{r}) and 'Adoption. Abdication' (160^{v}).
62. According to both the *OED* and EEBO, Meres may be the first person to use this as an English word; his 1598 use predates the next recorded EEBO use by fifty-eight years. In EEBO the word only occurs in three late-seventeenth-century reference works on rare and difficult English words.
63. All the other one paragraph chapters – 'The Gifts of Men are Diverse' (39), 'Assuiduity taketh awaie admiration' (160), 'Adoption/Abdication' (160), 'Exhortation' (160^{v}), 'Endeavor' (160^{v}–161), 'Cunctation' (175), 'Defence' (188^{v}), and 'Rash counsel' (197) – are longer, at least by a few words or lines, than 'Breviloquence' (257^{v}).
64. See *Ion*, 533–536.
65. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 4/24.
66. Cited in ibid., 9. My emphasis.
67. Marion Trousdale, 'Recurrence and Renaissance: Rhetorical Imitation in Ascham and Sturm', *Studies in English Humanism* 6, no. 2 (1976), 156–179, here 166. For an outstanding current study of Renaissance *imitatio* and *emulatio*, see Colin Burrow, *Imitating Authors: Plato to Futurity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
68. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 9.
69. Marion Trousdale, *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), see esp. 'Place Logic' (31–38). One feature of the method, as originally described in Aristotle's *Topica*, was that 'one investigates those areas of uncertain knowledge by making known not only all possible views, but the difficulties or knots that lie in these views, and these difficulties are best brought to light by means of an argument that is meant to persuade' (36).
70. Yates, *Art of Memory*.
71. *OED*, 1b, 'the art of assisting the memory by associating the thing to be remembered with some place or building' (I: 3354).
72. *Lexicon*, 'topological': 'Relating to the way in which constituent parts are interrelated or arranged'.
73. Don Cameron Allen, 'The Classical Scholarship of Francis Meres', *PMLA* XLVIII, no. 1 (March 1933), 418–425, here 420.

74. Don Cameron Allen, *Francis Meres Treatise 'Poetrie': A Critical Edition* (University of Illinois, 1933), XVI: 44.
75. *Elizabethan Critical Essays, edited with an Introduction by G. Gregory Smith* (Oxford: at the University Press, 1904), Two vols., xci.
76. Allen, *'Poetrie'*, 30. My emphasis.
77. Allen, *'Poetrie'*, 45 misidentifies the list of names to which Meres juxtaposes Shakespeare.
78. Ibid., 59.
79. Ibid., 45.
80. Robert Detobel and K.C. Ligon, 'Francis Meres and the Earl of Oxford', *Brief Chronicles* I (2009), 97–107.
81. Ibid., 103.
82. Meres, 283^{v}. Italics added.
83. Heinrich Christoph Matthes, 'Zum Quellenproblem der *Palladis Tamia*' (1941), *Anglia* 65, 131.
84. The medieval modal system recognised eight modes, four each classified into the types Authentic, including Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, and Plagal, including hypodorian, hypophrygian, hypolydian, and hypomixolydian. See Donald J. Grout, *A History of Western Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 32–33.
85. Meres 283$^{r–v}$. Numbering of listed names has been supplied
86. On the SAQ, see, e.g., Diana Price, *Shakespeare's Unorthodox Biography: New Evidence of an Authorship Problem* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001) as well as the sources of fn 92–98. On the earlier critical history of *Palladis Tamia*, see below.
87. Oscar James Campbell, 'Shakespeare Himself', *Harpers* (October 1940) (172–185), 174–175.
88. Samuel Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press [1970] 1991), 433.
89. Ron Rosenbaum, 'Battling the American Shakespeare Industrial Complex', *Slate*, 21 September 2006; *The Shakespeare Wars: Clashing Scholars, Public Fiascos, Palace Coups* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 8 January 2008).
90. James Shapiro, *Contested Will*, 236. Needless to say, Shapiro fails to cite Campbell's precedent or to contextualize Meres as a critical locus of contested interpretation.
91. Alan H. Nelson, 'The Life and Theatrical Interests of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford', in *Shakespeare Beyond Doubt*, ed. Samuel Schoenbaum and Paul Edmonson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 39–48, here 43. My emphasis. Like Shapiro, Nelson fails to cite Campbell.
92. J.T. Looney, 'The Author of *Shakespeare Identified* Comments on Professor Campbell's Article in *Harpers*', *Shakespeare Fellowship Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (December 1940), 1–3.
93. Charlton Ogburn, *The Mysterious William Shakespeare: The Myth and the Reality* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1984).
94. Sir George Greenwood, *Is There a Shakespeare Problem* (London: John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1916), 355.
95. Katherine Duncan-Jones, 'Francis Meres, Playgoer', *Notes & Queries* 56 (2009), 579. Meres was a 'particularly attentive playgoer' who in one paragraph (47^{v}–48^{r}) juxtaposes an allusion to *Midsummer Night's Dream* with another to *Romeo and Juliet*.
96. Shapiro, *Contested Will*, 206.
97. Nelson, 'Life and Theatrical Interests', 43.
98. Detobel and Ligon, 'Francis Meres', 103.
99. Ibid., 102.
100. To emphasise that he could have included more, Meres lists three more of Drayton's titles elsewhere in the 'Comparative Discourse'.
101. To these four exceptions must be added par. 37, in which the name 'Mymnerus Colophonius' conceals reference to two persons, *Mymnerus Colophonius* and *Antimachus Colophonius*. Properly punctuated, the numerical figure for the par. is 14:14. *Colophonius* is a cognomen attached to the city Colophon in Ionia and is used by Textor (*Officina*, (Basil: Bryling [1562]) to refer to both *Mymnerus* and *Antimachus Colophonius*. In his dedication to Thomas Eliot (A3^{v}) Meres has disclosed his purposeful knowledge of 'Antimachus Colophonius'. While it might be thought that the missing comma is a mistake, Meres' pointed comparison of

himself to Antimachus indicates that purposeful design is a more likely explanation. Authors are identified throughout the 'Comparative Discourse' with one, two, three or sometimes more than three names; in par. 34, for example, *Melanthus, Maecenas, Ovid*, etc. are each indicated by only one name. Therefore, Haslewood's supplemental comma ('Mymnerus, Colophonius') brings the two lists of par. 37 into 14:14 agreement (*Joseph Haslewood, The Art of English Poesie, & etc by Gascoigne, Harvey, Spenser, K. James, Webb, Harrington, Meres. Campion, Daniel, and Bolton*. (London: T. Bentley for Robert Triphook, 1815). With this correction, 'Shakespeare' drops one place to align with Ovid in the ninth position on the list in par. 37, like a tumbler in a lock that falls into place when the key is inserted.

102. Detobel and Ligon, 'Francis Meres', 106.
103. Ibid., 105.
104. Ibid., 105.
105. Enoch Powell, 'Francis Meres and the Authorship Question', *The De Vere Society Newsletter* (April 1988), 16–20, here 17.
106. See James Warren, *An Index to Oxfordian Publications: Including Oxfordian Books and Selected Articles from Non-Oxfordian Publications* (Somerville, MA: Forever Press, 2017), 4th edition.
107. D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, *On Growth and Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 326. My emphasis.
108. See Arthur M. Melzer, *Philosophy between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), fn 105 and 111.
109. *God's Arithmeticke, Written by Francis Meres, Maister of Arte of both Vniuersities, and student in Diuinity* (London: Richard Iohnes, 1597). ESTC citation number 107039.
110. Ibid., $A8^{r}$.
111. Mary Hobbes, 'Drayton's "Most Dearely-Loved Friend Henery Reynolds Esq"', *The Review of English Studies* 24, no. 96 (1973), 414–428.
112. Henry Reynoldes, *Mythomystes, wherein a short suruay is taken of the nature and value of true poesy and depth of the ancients above our moderne poets. To which is annexed the tale of Narcissus briefly mythologized* (London: Printed [by George Purslowe] for Henry Seyle, at the Tigers-head in St. Pauls Churchyard, 1632), 27.
113. Fowler, *Triumphal Forms*, 9.
114. In addition to Fowler, see, e.g., John MacQueen, *Numerology: Theory and Outline History of a Literary Mode* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985); Rosalie L. Colie, 'Triumphal Forms: Structural Patterns in Elizabethan Poetry', *Modern Philology* 71, no. 1 (August 1973), 76–79; A. Kent Hieatt, *Short Time's Endless Monument: The Symbolism of Numbers in Edmund Spenser's Epithalamium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).
115. Meres cites *Plin. Lib 18, cap. 17.* ($274^{r–v}$);emphasis supplied to Meres' text
116. Alberti, *De Re Aedificatoria*, ix, 5 (cited in Rose 1974, *Shakespearean Design*, Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard, 16–17).
117. *OED* 18b.
118. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: University Press Bollingen Series, 1990 reprint of 1953 ed.), 508.
119. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, 'Renaissance Numerology: Acrostics or Criticism', *Essays in Criticism* 16 (1966), 6–21.
120. Curtius, *European Literature*, 508.
121. The image is available on Wikimedia Commons (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fotothek_df_tg_0000047_Architektur_%5E_Mathematik_%5E_Allegorie_%5E_Waage_%5E_Vermessungsinstrument_%5E_Messzirke.jpg)
122. The images is identified by Günther Oestmann in 'Designing a Model of the Cosmos: Theoretical and Visual Considerations Concerning the Construction of Astronomical Clocks through Early Modern Times', in Gianenrico Bernasconi and Susanne Thürigen in *Material Histories of Time: Objects and Practices, 14th–19th Centuries* (Walter de Gruyter, GmbH & Co. KG, 2020), as an 'Allegory of the primacy of theoretical consideration in Architecture', 51.
123. Translations mine.
124. Meres, *God's Arithmeticke*, $A3^{r}$.
125. Meres, 283^{r}.

126. Robert S. Knapp, 'The Academic Drama', in *Blackwell Reference Online: A Companion to Renaissance Drama*, ed. Arthur Kinney (New York: Wiley, 2004), 257.
127. These included *Meleager* (1582), *Dido* (1583) and *Ulysses Redux* (1592).
128. Sarah Dewar Watson, 'Aristotle and Tragicomedy', in *Early Modern Tragicomedy*, ed. Subha Mukherji and Raphael Lyne (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 15–27.
129. John Thorburn, *Facts on File Companion to Classical Drama* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 135.
130. Fredrick Samuel Boas, *University Drama in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), 182.
131. Textor, *Officina* (1562, 737). 'Menander comœdiographus ab Aegypti regibus per legatos magnis praemiis in vitatus est.' My translation.
132. J.W. Binns, 'William Gager's Dido', *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 20 (1971), 167–254, www.jstor.org/stable/23973491.
133. Meres, 283^{v}.
134. Charles Anthon, *A Classical Dictionary* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1841), 113.
135. Textor (809) calls Eupolis as an exponent of the "old style" (*veteris comodiae*) like Aristophanes, a genre known for its liberties with literary impersonations of the powerful or eccentric.
136. Textor, *Officina* 523. 'Eupolis Atheniensis poeta comœdiographus navigans in Hellespontum, quo tempore Lacedemones opprimebantur bello, naufragio periit.'
137. Anthon, *Classical Dictionary*, 132.
138. Ronald A. Tumelson II, 'Robert Green, "Author of Plays"', in *Writing Robert Greene: Essays in England's First Notorious Professional Playwright*, ed. Kirk Melnikoff and Edward Gieskes (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Press, 1988), 110.
139. Otherwise known as *Fidele and Fortunio*.
140. Meres, Oo3^{r}–Oo3^{v}.
141. Plautus has long been known as a master of plot. Although his plays adapted the plots of the Greek masters, his own plots in turn exercised a broad and deep influence in Renaissance drama following his rediscovery in 1428. Don Lepan in *The Cognitive Revolution in Western Culture: The Birth of Expectation* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, and London: MacMillan 1989) explains that 'The greatest classical *influences* in literary *plotting* in the English *Renaissance* were the plays of *Plautus, Terence* and Seneca' (235). Richard F. Hardin, *Plautus and the English Renaissance of Comedy* (Rowman and Littlefield: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2017) confirms that 'Plautus, not Terence, . . . did the most to legitimize comedy as a serious art during the Renaissance' (5) and that his influence 'led to a reinvention of comedy and to new thinking about its art and potential' (https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781683931300/Plautus-and-the-English-Renaissance-of-Comedy). Hardin argues that " Nick Minion in an Xavier University Bachelor's Thesis, R*oman New Comedy in the Renaissance: The Influence of Plautus in Shakespearean Comedy* (2021 11–23) covers the long-known influence of Plautine plots in Shakespeare in a highly useful survey. See also, 'Encountering Plautus in the Renaissance: A Humanist Debate on Comedy'. Richard F. Hardin, *The Renaissance Quarterly* Vol 60 No. 3, 789–818. William Harris, 'Roman Comedy: Plautus and Terence' (n.d.), n.p
142. Gesine Manuwald, *Roman Republican Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 257.
143. Meres, Nn1.
144. In 1598 Chapman published the first seven books of the first translation of major parts of the *Iliad* into English.
145. Thomas Marc Parrot, *The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: Comedies* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1914), 703–704.
146. Valeria Tezon, '"The Big Fish" P. Duke. 1984.7', *Scripta Classica Israelica* XXXV (2016), 29–34, here 30.
147. Registered for publication on 11 January 1598–99. See Ronald B. McKerrow, *The Works of Thomas Nashe* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1905), IV: 371.
148. McKerrow, *Nashe*, III: 140–143.
149. Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, ἄριστος (117), ὄνομα (560).
150. John Maxwell Edmonds, *The Fragments of Attic Comedy, Vol. III* (Netherlands: J.E. Brill, 1957).

151. Allen, 'Treatise', 50.
152. Yates, *Art of Memory*.
153. David Kahn, 'On the Origin of Polyalphabetic Substitution', *Isis* 71, no. 1 (March 1980), 122–127.
154. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History. Translated from the Arabic by Franz Rosenthal*, 3 vols (New York: Princeton, 1958), Chapter 6, section 28.
155. Katherine Ellison, '"1144000727777607680000 Wayes": Early Modern Cryptography as Fashionable Reading', *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* 6 (2014), 'Numbers in Early Modern Writing'.
156. 'Concerning the Shadows of Ideas'.
157. Yates, *Art of Memory*, 209.
158. William Engel, Rory Loughnane and Grant Williams, *The Memory Arts in Renaissance England: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 9.
159. I am in no way claiming that every one of Meres' syllogistic paragraphs is organised around a 'privileged centre'; only that par. 34, the one paragraph that has for almost seventy-five years, since Campbell's critique of Looney, been the chief subject of controversy in Meres, is so organised, and that this organisational pattern supplements the principles of symmetry and ordinal pairing, both easily demonstrated throughout the book, also found in par. 34.
160. Alexander Waugh, 'Francis Meres Knew', YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fFaGybgFs9M.
161. SeeFowler's *Triumphal Forms*.
162. See William Hebel, ed., *The Works of Michael Drayton*, Vols I–V (Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1961); Bernard H. Newdigate, *Michael Drayton and His Circle* (Oxford: The Shakespeare Head Press, 1941).
163. Meres,281 [v].
164. Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Ungentle Shakespeare* (Arden Shakespeare, 2011). Jones sees that the citation is 'joking and paradoxical' (156).
165. Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998). Falstaff is featured in no less than three plays and is eulogised in a fourth. Compare, e.g., from the Sonnets 'Every word doth almost tell my name' (76.7) and Falstaff's 'I have a whole school of tongues in this belly of mine and not a tongue of them speaks any other word but my name' (*2 Hen. IV* 4.3.17–20). See also Mark Anderson, *'Shakespeare' by Another Name* (New York: Gotham Books, 2005), citing the autobiographical character of the Gad's Hill episode (66–67) and Robert Detobel, 'Falstaff in the Low Countries', *Shakespeare Matters* 5, no. 1 (Fall 2005), 4, 7, 11+.
166. Meres,244 [r].
167. Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines*, xiv.
168. Pars. 8, 23, 24, 25, 27, 31, 32, 37.
169. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 2/24.
170. Jason Scott-Warren, 'Commonplacing and Originality: Reading Francis Meres', *Review of English Studies* 68, no. 287 (2017), 902–923, here 902.
171. Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).
172. Melzer, *Philosophy Between the Lines*, 120.
173. Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books*, 2/24.
174. Ibid., 1/24.
175. Victoria Burke, 'Recent Studies in Commonplace Books', *English Literary Renaissance* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2013), 153–177, 173.
176. Trousdale, *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians*.
177. Allen, *'Poetrie'*, 9.
178. Ibid., 26.
179. Ibid, 28.
180. See J.W. Saunders, 'The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry', *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951), 10–31, and *The Profession of English Letters* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) and, more recently Daniel Traister, 'Reluctant Virgins: The Stigma of Print Revisited', *Colby Quarterly* 26: 2 (June 1990), 75–86.

181. See Looney, *"Shakespeare" Identified.* Centenary Edition edited by James Warren, Forever Press, 2020, 179.
182. Bryan Wildenthal, *Early Shakespeare Doubts* (San Diego: Zindabad Press, 2019), 59.
183. Richmond Crinkley, 'New Perspectives on the Authorship Question', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (1985), 515–22, www.jstor.org/stable/2870328.
184. Michael Dudley, 'With Swinish Phrase Soiling Their Addition: Epistemic Injustice, Academic Freedom, and the Shakespeare Authorship Question', in *Teaching and Learning Practices for Academic Freedom*, Vol. 34, ed. Enakshi Sengupta and Patrick Blessinger (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2020), 123–144, here 140.
185. Ibid., 140.
186. See Waugh and Stritmatter, *The New Shakespeare Allusion Book* (forthcoming 2023–2024).
187. See Kevin Gilvary in *The Fictional Lives of Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 2018).
188. Meres,275 [r].