

Gabriel Harvey's Relationship with Oxford - by Mark Andre Alexander

originally posted at sourcetext.com (site is slated to go dark in 2026)

Gabriel Harvey (c1545-1630) was a well known Elizabethan writer, lecturer, and critic. Born the son of a rope-maker in Saffron-Walden, near Cambridge, he gradually became something of a fixture at the University. In his youth Harvey knew the poet Edmund Spenser, and was loosely associated with the literary circle around Sir Philip Sidney. Harvey became Professor of Rhetoric at Cambridge in 1574. Harvey got in trouble in 1579 for his published correspondence with Spenser, in which he attacked the Earl of Oxford in verse. Later Harvey feuded with satirists Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe in a series of pamphlets which are remembered as the War of Words of the University Wits. After failing to receive advancement in his career, Harvey retired in 1598, and spent the next 33 years in his library studying Literature Science, and Medicine.

Gabriel Harvey and Oxford

During Oxford's youth Oxford apparently was on good terms with and gave financial assistance to Gabriel Harvey, a Cambridge Don. In 1578 the Queen visited Cambridge, accompanied by the whole Court. Harvey met the procession at Audley End, presented verses written in their honor.

The following address, in Latin, was presented to Lord Oxford (trans. by Ward).

An heroic address to [Oxford], concerning the combined utility and dignity of military affairs and of warlike exercises.

This is my welcome; this is how I have decided to bid All Hail!
to thee and to the other Nobles.
Thy splendid fame, great Earl, demands even more than in the case of others
the services of a poet possessing lofty eloquence.
Thy merit doth not creep along the ground,
nor can it be confined within the limits of a song.
It is a wonder which reaches as far as the heavenly orbs.
O great-hearted one, strong in thy mind and thy fiery will,
thou wilt conquer thyself, thou wilt conquer others;
thy glory will spread out in all directions beyond the Arctic Ocean;
and England will put thee to the test and prove thee to be native-born Achilles.
Do thou but go forward boldly and without hesitation.
Mars will obey thee, Hermes will be thy messenger,
Pallas striking her shield with her spear shaft will attend thee,
thine own breast and courageous heart will instruct thee.
For long time past Phoebus Apollo has cultivated thy mind in the arts.
English poetical measures have been sung by thee long enough.
Let that Courtly Epistle 1 –
more polished even than the writings of Castiglione himself –
witness how greatly thou dost excel in letters.
I have seen many Latin verses of thine, yea,
even more English verses are extant;
thou hast drunk deep draughts not only of the Muses of France and Italy,
but hast learned the manners of many men, and the arts of foreign countries.
It was not for nothing that Sturmius, 2 himself was visited by thee;
neither in France, Italy, nor Germany are any such cultivated and polished men.

O thou hero worthy of renown, throw away the insignificant pen, throw away bloodless books,
and writings that serve no useful purpose; now must the sword be brought into play,
now is the time for thee to sharpen the spear and to handle great engines of war.
On all sides men are talking of camps and of deadly weapons; war and the Furies are everywhere,
and Bellona reigns supreme.

Now may all martial influences support thy eager mind, driving out the cares of Peace.
Pull Hannibal up short at the gates of Britain. Defended though he be by a mighty host,
let Don John of Austria come on only to be driven home again. Fate is unknown to man,
nor are the counsels of the Thunderer fully determined.

And what if suddenly a most powerful enemy should invade our borders?
If the Turk should be arming his savage hosts against us?
What though the terrible war trumpet is even now sounding its blast?
Thou wilt see it all; even at this very moment thou art fiercely longing for the fray.
I feel it. Our whole country knows it.

In thy breast is noble blood, Courage animates thy brow, Mars lives in thy tongue,
Minerva strengthen thy right hand, Bellona reigns in thy body, within thee burns the fire of Mars.
Thine eyes flash fire, thy countenance shakes a spear;
who would not swear that Achilles had come to life again?

By 1580, Harvey had secured the patronage of the Puritan Dudley/Sidney faction and endorsed the new poetic dicta of Sidney and Spenser. Harvey's vitriolic pen now turned against his former benefactor, expressed in the following poem (letter to Spenser and published by him), which Harvey disingenuously disclaimed as not meant for circulation. (Three proper and familiar letters, 1580)

36
Speculum Tuscanismi.

Since *Galateo* came in, and *Tuscanisme* gan vsurpe,
Vanie about all : Villanie next her, Statelines Emperesse.
No man, but Minion, Stowte, Lowte, Plaine, fwayne, quoth a Lording:
No wordes but valorous, no workes but woomanish onely.
For life Magnificoes, not a beck but glorious in shew,
In deepe most friuolous, not a looke but Tuscanish alwayes.
His cringing side necke, Eyes glauncing, Fisnamic smirking,
With fiery finger kisse, and braue embrace to the footeuarde.
Largebelled Kocpeald Dublet, vnkodpeald halfe hose,
Straite to the dock, like a shirte, and clofe to the britch, like a dineling.
A little Apish Hatte, cowched fast to the pate, like an Oyster,
French Camarick Ruffes, deepe with a witnessse, starched to the purpose.
Euery one A per se A, his termes, and braueries in Print,
Delicate in speach, queynte in araye : conceited in all poyntes :
In Courtly gayles, a pasing singular odde man,
For Gallantes a braue Myrroure, a Primerose of Honour,
A Diamond for nonce, a fellowe perelesse in England.
Not the like *Disiourser* for Tongue, and head to be found out :
Not the like *resolue Man*, for great and serious affayres,
Not the like *Lynx*, to spie out secretes, and priuities of States.
Eyed, like to Argus, Earde, like to Midas, Nose, like to Neso,
Wingd, like to Mercury, fittst of a Thousand for to be employde,
This, nay more than this doth practise of *Italy* in one yeare.
None doe I name, but some doe I know, that a peece of a twelue month
Hath so perfitd outly, and inly, both body, both soule,
That none for sense, and senses, halfe matchable with them.
A Vultures smelling, Apes rasting, sight of an Eagle,
A spiders touching, Hartes hawking, might of a Lyon.
Compounds of wisdom, witte, prowes, bountie, behaiour,
All gallant Vertues, all qualities of body and soule :
O thrice tenne hundred thousand times blessed and happy,
Blessed and happy *Tramaile, Tramaile* most blessed and happy.

Penatibus Hetruscis ieribusque nostris Inquilinis:

Tell me in god sooth, both it not so evidently appare, that

Speculum Tuscanismi (1580)

Since Galateo came in, and Tuscanism gan usurp,
Vanity above all: villainy next her, stateliness Empress
No man but minion, stout, lout, plain, swain, quoth a Lording:
No words but valorous, no works but womanish only.
For life Magnificoes, not a beck but glorious in show,
In deed most frivolous, not a look but Tuscanish always.
His cringing side neck, eyes glancing, fisnamy smirking,
With forefinger kiss, and brave embrace to the footward.
Large bellied Cod-pieced doublet, uncod-pieced half hose,
Straight to the dock like a shirt, and close to the britch like a diving.
A little Apish flat couched fast to the pate like an oyster,
French camarick ruffs, deep with a whiteness starched to the purpose.
Every one A per se A, his terms and braveries in print,
Delicate in speech, quaint in array: conceited in all points,
In Courtly guiles a passing singular odd man,
For Gallants a brave Mirror, a Primrose of Honour,
A Diamond for nonce, a fellow peerless in England.
Not the like discourser for Tongue, and head to be found out,
Not the like resolute man for great and serious affairs,
Not the like Lynx to spy out secrets and privities of States,
Eyed like to Argus, eared like to Midas, nos'd like to Naso,
Wing'd like to Mercury, fittst of a thousand for to be employ'd,
This, nay more than this, doth practice of Italy in one year.
None do I name, but some do I know, that a piece of a twelve month
Hath so perfited outly and inly both body, both soul,
That none for sense and senses half matchable with them.
A vulture's smelling, Ape's tasting, sight of an eagle,
A spider's touching, Hart's hearing, might of a Lion.
Compounds of wisdom, wit, prowess, bounty, behavior,
All gallant virtues, all qualities of body and soul.
O thrice ten hundred thousand times blessed and happy,
Blessed and happy travail, Travailer most blessed and happy.

Tell me in good sooth, doth it not too evidently appear
that this English poet wanted but a good pattern before his eyes,
as it might be some delicate and choice elegant Poesy
of good Master Sidney's or Master Dyer's
(our very Castor and Pollux for such and many greater matters)
when this trim gear was in the matching?

A comparison of the two pieces indicates that Harvey's venom was much more potent than his honey. This insult to a man of Oxford's standing was not to be tolerated by the establishment, and Lyly launched an attack on Harvey, finally forcing from him an apology.

Harvey's career was later ruined by increasingly intemperate quarrels, opposed equally ferociously by the gifted Thomas Nashe. Lady Pembroke withdrew her protection from Harvey; and in 1599 Archbishop Whitgift and Bishop Bancroft ordered an immediate calling-in of various apparently objectionable publications, including an instruction that "all NASSHES and DOCTOR HARVEYES bookes bee taken wheresoeer they maye be found and that none of thaire bookes bee euer printed hereafter." John Davies of Hereford summed up the quarrel: "Well, God forgive them both, they did me wrong, / To make me beare their choller spude, so long." 3

Glossary

camarick (n): cambric. Cf. Harvey Speculum.

cod-pieced (a): cod-piece attached to a doublet. Cf. Harvey Speculum (1st OED citation).

deviling: young/small devil. Cf. Harvey Speculum.

fisnamy: physiognomy. Cf. Harvey Speculum.

inly (adv): inwardly. FS (4-3H6, H5, Temp); Cf. Harvey Speculum; Spenser Shep Cal; (anon.) Arden.

Naso: Ovid, author of the #Metamorphoses. Cf. Harvey Speculum. Harvey apparently means that Oxford has a rather large, Roman nose, believed in those days to indicate a lascivious nature..

Notes

1. Bartholomew Clerke's *Courtier*, published with the patronage of Oxford, containing Oxford's "Letter to the Reader" written in Latin.
2. In 1575 during his European travels Oxford made a special trip to Germany to visit the noted scholar Johannes Sturm. Speaking together in Latin, the two must have gotten along well, for Sturmius later wrote to Queen Elizabeth, urging intervention in the Spanish campaign against the low countries, and suggesting as military commander "some faithful and zealous personage such as the Earl of Oxford, the Earl of Leicester, or Philip Sidney." [Ogburn, p. 682]
3. Whitgift quotation from Edward Arber, ed. *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London* (London: privately printed, 1876), 3.677. Davies quotation from *The Complete Works of John Davies of Hereford*. ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1878), 2:85. Both quotations in Margaret P. Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 142.

Gabriel Harvey's battle with Nashe and Oxford

Gabriel Harvey (c1545 -1630), was a few years older than Oxford. Harvey spent most of his life in shire Essex, and must have been keenly aware of the Vere legacy. As an elder student at Cambridge, Harvey clearly felt an intellectual superiority to Edward de Vere (at first), though gradually succumbing to the force and fury of the younger man's poetry, prose, and drama. No wonder he told Oxford in 1578 to put down his pen and pick up a weapon (and go die in a foreign war like a good nobleman and fightin' Vere.)

Harvey's "Vultus Tela Vibrat" (your Look Shakes Spears) gave Oxford (I think) the idea for his famous pen-name.

I want to share with you all something interesting of which you may be unaware.

There is only one contemporary 'Illustration' of Gabriel Harvey – though it's just a woodcut image of a "generic" man, probably cut out from a larger block. But it appeared in Nashe's caustic *Have with you to Saffron-walden. Or, Gabriell Harveys hunt is up*, 1596. In which Nashe claims to have created the illustration himself (doubtful in extremis) to illustrate Harvey on his way to the Ajax (an outhouse or indoor WC). What is equally fascinating is that Nashe had the printer (Danter) set up the page so that the toilet-attack on Harvey follows immediately Nashe's statement that Harvey had abused the Earl of Oxford! It's an amazing visual juxtaposition.

Haue with you

tying a flea in a chaine, (put in the last edition of the great Chronicle) which if by anie industrie hee could atchieue, his owne name being so generally odious throughout *Kem*: and Christendome, hee would presently transforme & metamorphize it from Doctour *Haruey* to Doctour *Ty*, (of which stile there was a famous Mutation some few yeres since) resolving as the last cast of his maintenaunce, altogether to liue by carrying that Flea like a monster vp and downe the countrey; teaching it to doo trickes, hey come aloft lack, like an ape ouer the chaine. If you would haue a flea for the nonce that you might keepe for a breeder, why this were a stately flea indeede to get a brauerace of fleas on, your fly in a boxe is but a drumble-bee in comparison of it; with no expence at all (on your chin like a witches familiar) you might seed it, and let the chaine hang downe on your breast, like a stale greasie Courtiers chaine, with one strop. Alacke and weladay, too too inconsiderately aduised was this our Poeticall *Gabriell*, when hexameterly entranced, he cride out *O blessed health, blessed wealth, and blessed abundance, O that I had these three for the losse of 30. Commensments.* when he should haue exclaimd, *O that I had this flea for the losse of 30. Commensments.* Peraduenture he thinks thus slightly to steale away with a Flea in his eare, but I must flea his asses skin ouer his eares a little handfomer ere wee part. Those that bee so disposed to take a view of him, ere hee bee come to the full Midsummer Moone, and raging *Calentura* of his wretchednes, here let them behold his lively counterfet and portraiture, not in the pantofies of his prosperitie, as he was when he libeld against my Lord

to Saffron-walden.

Lord of *Oxford*, but in the single-soald pumpes of his aduersitie, with his gowne cast off, vntrussing, and readie to beray himselfe, vpon the newes of the going in hand of my booke.

The picture of *Gabriell Haruey*, as hee is readie to let fly vpon *Aiax*.



If you aske why I haue put him in round hose, that visually weares Venetians? It is because I would make him looke more dapper & plump and round vpon it, wheras otherwise he looks like a case of tooth-pikes, or a Lute pin put in a sute of apparel. Gaze vpon him who list, for I tell you I am not a little proud of my workmanship, and though I say it, I haue handled it so neatly and so sprightly and withall ouzled, gidumbled, muddled, and drizled it so finely, that I forbid euer a *Hanns Boll*, *Hanns Halbine*, or *Hanns Mullier* of them all (let them but play true

with the face) to amend it or come within fortie foote of it. Away away, *Blockland*, *T r usser*, *Francis de Murra* and the whole generation of them will sooner catch the murre and the pose renscore times ere they doo a thing one quarter so masterly. Yea (without *Kerry merry buffe* be it spoken) put a whole million of *Iohannes Mabusius* of them together, and they shall not handle



Haue vvith you to Saffron vvalden.

O R,

Gabriell Harueys Hunt is vp.

Containing a full Answer to the eldest sonne of the Halter-maker.

O R,

Nashe his Confutation of the sinfull Doctor.

The Mott or Posie, instead of *Omnem in punctum*:

Pacis fiducia nunquam.

As much to say, as I sayd I would speake with him.



Printed at London by *John Danter*

1596.

Harington's *Metamorphosis of Ajax* (a jakes) appeared to great controversy in 1596. The Nashe book and illustration followed. Interestingly, "Shakespeare" makes an Ajax / Jakes joke in *Love's Labors Lost*, printed 1598, which also may contain further send-ups of Harvey. The 1598 *LLL* says that it is an improved edition. Thus, there may have been a (lost) 1st book of *LLL* in 1596 or 1597.

A NEWV DIS-
COVRSE OF A STALE
SVBIECT, CALLED THE
Metamorphosis of A IAX:

*Written by MISACMOS, to his friend
and cofin PHILOSTILPNOS.*



AT LONDON,
Printed by Richard Field, dwelling
in the Black-friers.
1596.
