

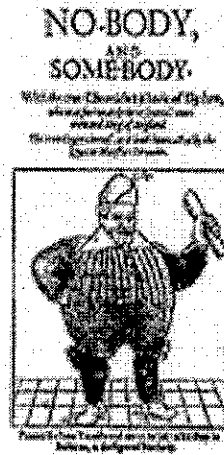
## Somebody We Know Is behind No-body and Some-body

Robert Prechter

In 1878, Chatto and Windus published *The School of Shakspeare*, a two-volume collection of seven anonymous Elizabethan and Jacobean plays edited by the recently-deceased Richard Simpson, a prominent Shakespeare scholar. They had all been performed by Shakespeare's company during his connection with it, or were assigned to him by tradition, and were not to be found in the customary collections of old plays. Simpson's volumes included *The Life and Death of Captain Thomas Stuckeley*, *Nobody and Somebody*, *Histrion-Mastix*, *The Prodigal Son*, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, or *The Comedie of Pasquil and Katherine*, *A Warning for Fair Women* and *Faire Em*.

Modern Shakespeare scholars do not include any of these plays in the Shakespeare canon. I decided to check the accepted conclusion by reading all these plays, keeping in mind the Oxfordian perspective that Edward de Vere was writing plays well before the name *Shakespeare* appeared in 1593. Internal evidence suggests that at least one of these obscure plays, *No-body and Somebody*, is quite probably a product of a younger Bard.

*Nobody and Somebody* was performed by Shakespeare's company in Germany circa 1600 (Farmer). "(The play) was published in 1606, but scholars have argued convincingly for an initial composition date of circa 1592, with subsequent revisions" (Curran 2 n.5). If Oxford wrote this play, my guess is that it actually dates from the 1570s. Besides its mediocre quality, another reason to assume an early



Source: John S. Farmer "Nobody and Somebody", 1911, reproduced in The Tudor Facsimile Texts <[http://www.archive.org/stream/nobodyandsomebo00unknuoft/nobodyandsomebo00unknuoft\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/nobodyandsomebo00unknuoft/nobodyandsomebo00unknuoft_djvu.txt)>

date of production is that the list of Shakespeare's plays with which this play shares phrases are mostly ones that Oxfordians (and many Stratfordians) consider to be among the earliest works of Shakespeare.

Everyone who reads this play also notes structural similarities to Shakespeare's late play, *King Lear*:

*... this play has much in common with Lear including the division of England between two rulers, resignation of government by the ruler, accusation of mildness in a ruler, attempted regicide, talk of following the strongest party, banishment and a mock trial. There is a parasitic character called Sicophant and a character called Braggart, and there is a clown." (Marks)*

*The approximately contemporary Jacobean plays, King Lear and Nobody and Somebody, share an ancient British setting, a preoccupation with instability in the state, and an unsettling interest in negation.... The dramatic mode of existence of the character called "Nobody" is paradoxical,*

*denaturing—an early modern visual and verbal Verfremdungseffekt, at once philosophical and clownish. His negativity, which is articulated in dialogue with the companion figure of "Somebody", is matched in King Lear, above all in the role of Edgar . . ." (Womack 195)*

Lacking, however, are the thematic depth and the high level of poetic quality that *King Lear* evinces.

Several aspects of the play might mislead one from a proper attribution. It contains a sub-plot that, though very cleverly rendered, is an oddity for Shakespeare because it involves representational, yet non-classical characters: Nobody and Somebody, who war with each other about who is to blame for various social ills. The play has only four classical references — to Diana, Hercules, Jove and Fortune — and there are few examples of euphuism. Finally, the play is not divided into acts and scenes. These factors might prompt one to withhold the play from the Shakespeare canon, but doing so would be a mistake. There are numerous indications of Shakespearean style and enough flashes of his technique to confirm this as the Bard's work.

Conforming with Shakespearean settings, the main characters in this play are all courtiers. As with Shakespeare, the courtiers speak in blank verse and the commoners speak in prose, and important speeches end in rhymed couplets. The setting of the play is early Britain. The plot concerns royal succession and the proper behavior of a king, two of Shakespeare's

perennial subjects. As in many of Shakespeare's plays (for example *Measure for Measure* and *The Winter's Tale*), a struggle for the mind of a king in either showing mercy or doling out severe punishment is portrayed. Much of the characters' bad behavior derives from *ambition*, a term of focus used in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Typical of Shakespeare, the author writes passages of extreme passion arising from anger and ambition. Recalling *Hamlet* and the sonnets, three characters profess a wish for death over their state in life.

There are also some very funny lines: after two lords bid princes, "Come, kill me first" and "kill me to[o]" and Lady Elydure adds "The third am I," her rival the Queen immediately interjects, "Nay strike her first." In the end, three bad characters make instantaneous transformations into good ones, as occurs singly in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*. As in so many of Shakespeare's comedies, this change resolves the play's driving conflict: "My oath is past and what I have lately sworne/Ile hold inviolate. Here all stryfe ends." In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the end of the play is delayed with a humorous conclusion to the sub-plot involving the rustic players. In the play under consideration, the end is delayed with a humorous conclusion to the sub-plot involving Nobody and Somebody. Shakespeare directly connects a spirit-character to the name Nobody in *The Tempest* (III ii) when the sprite, Ariel — who has rendered himself invisible — plays a tune on a tabor and pipe, to which Trinculo responds, "This is the tune of our catch, played by the picture of Nobody."

In three separate instances, characters eavesdrop on others — another common device in Shakespeare. Two characters goad two others to usurp the king, much as the witches goad Macbeth to do the same; then Elydure's wife passionately entreats Elydure to take the crown unlawfully, as Lady Macbeth entreats Macbeth to do. In doing so, moreover, she connects two words in "To *minister* this soveraigne *Antidote*," just as does: "Canst thou not *minister*...some sweet oblivious *antidote*...?" (Macbeth 5.3.43) The Queen orders the princess to pick up her glove, and after some argument the princess strikes one of the courtiers; as Simpson notes, the scene is akin to one in *Henry VI Part 1*, scene iii, "where the Queen tells the Duchess of Gloucester to pick up her fan, and gives her a box on the ear—pretending to take her for someone else" (Simpson 297fn). Prince Elydure is, above all, moderate in his demeanor, and in one scene "he comes, reading a booke," suggesting an aspect of the bookish Hamlet in the hero. There is a humorous non-fight scene between Nobody and a Braggart, recalling that between Cesario and Andrew in *Twelfth Night*.

There are metaphors of theater, birding, music and several of nature, including eclipses, an idea Shakespeare uses in Sonnet 107. There are terms of law and instances of wordplay between characters. The metaphor "Bridle your spirit" appears in several forms throughout Shakespeare, but especially in *King Henry VI Part 3*: "it...makes me bridle passion." The metaphor in "these *unripe* ill" appears four times in Shakespeare. The metaphor of women's eyes as sharp or fiery weapons occurs in

Shakespeare, and here Sicophant says, "Your lookes...were all fire," to which Lady Elydure replies, "Would they had burnt his eyes out." The play contains many other phrases found in Shakespeare, for example the following (Note: all play citations are from *The Riverside Shakespeare* 2nd ed., 1997):

- "Weele have some sport with him" recalls the Bard's line in *Timon of Athens* (2.2.47): "let's ha' some sport with 'em."
- In speaking of his rival rustic, the Clown asserts the comparative fineness between "his leg and mine," much as in *Twelfth Night* Sir Andrew wishes that he "had such a leg" (2.3.20-1) as the Clown.
- In Shakespeare's *Love's Labor's Lost* (V ii), Holofernes dismisses Moth with "Keep some state in thy exit, and vanish" (5.2.594); the Clown in *Othello* (3.1.19-20) says, "for I'll away: go; vanish into air; away!"; likewise in the play at hand the Clown dismisses the rustic with "go silly Rafe, go, away, vanish."
- Lady Elydure cries, "O monstrous!" and Nobody shouts, "O intolerable!" just as Shakespeare's characters cry, "O monstrous" 15 times, along with "O monstrous!...intolerable" in *King Henry IV Part 1* (2.4.540-1) and "O vile, intolerable" in *The Taming of the Shrew* (5.2.93-4). Indeed, Peridure recalls Shakespeare's title when he declares, "I the shrew will tame."
- Somebody says, "Ile follow thee with Swallowes wings," just as Richmond in *Richard III* (5.2.24) says, "True hope...flies with swallow's wings."
- Lady Elydure's phrase, "Shee's shadow; We the true substance are," echoes throughout Shakespeare. This word pairing occurs in Sonnets 37 and 53: "Whilst that this shadow doth such

(*Nobody cont.*)

- substance give" and "What is your substance, whereof are you made,/ That millions of strange shadows on you tend?"; in *King Henry VI Part 2* (1.1.13-14): "the substance/ Of that great shadow I did represent"; *The Merchant of Venice* (3.2.127-9): "The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow... this shadow doth limp behind the substance"; and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: "Love like a shadow flies when substance love pursues" (2.2.207).
- Nearly as common in Shakespeare are variations on the Clowne's line, "truth will come to light"; Shakespeare uses it identically in *The Merchant of Venice* (2.2.79): "truth will come to light"; and similarly in *Lucrece* (Stanza 135): "Time's glory is... to bring truth to light."
  - In *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Shakespeare has one character say to another, "you have an exchequer of words" (2.4.43-4); in this play, one character calls another "You old exchecker of flatterie."
  - Shakespeare pairs life and forfeit three times, and in this play we have the line, "Thy life is forfeit."
  - Shakespeare uses injurious with a noun 17 times—for example, "Injurious duke" in *Henry VI Part 2* (1.4.48) and "injurious villain" in *Richard II* (1.1.91)—and in this play we have "injurious tyrant."
  - In Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* (3.1.43), Caesar disparages "Low-crooked court'sies and base spaniel-fawning"; and in this play the Queen berates a flattering courtier named Sycophant: "Time was, base spaniell, thou didst fawne as much/ On me." Shakespeare uses spaniel in the same manner numerous other times and links it with fawn again in *The Two Gentle-*

*men of Verona* (4.2.14-15): "Yet, spaniel-like, the moreshes spurns my love,/ The more it grows and fawneth on her still."

- Shakespeare links base and noble four times, and in this play we find "O God, that one born noble should be so base."
- In Sonnet 93, Shakespeare writes, "heaven in thy creation did decree"; and in this play we find the same word pairing in "Heaven hath decreed."
- Shakespeare pairs treble with a noun half a dozen times, and in this play we find the phrase "treble wall."
- The author connects the rare word interdict with inappropriate behavior relating to government in "What traitrous hand dares interdict our way?" and Shakespeare does the same in *The Phoenix and the Turtle*: "From this session interdict/ Every fowl of tyrant wing" (9-10).
- Shakespeare's characters call people a cipher ("To prove you a cipher," *Love's Labor's Lost* (1.2.56); in this play a king says, "Before ile stand/ Thus for a Cipher....")
- He continues, "with half my command,/ Ile venture all my fortunes," pairing two words found together in Brutus' speech in *Julius Caesar* (4.3.218-24), in which a flood taken "leads on to fortune... Or lose our ventures."
- Shakespeare uses the term confederate almost exclusively to mean one of several ill-intentioned schemers, as in "thou art... confederate with a damned pack" (*Comedy of Errors* 4.4.101-2) and "swore to Cymbeline/ I was confederate with the Romans" (*Cymbeline* 3.3.67-8); in this play, a character asks, "Are you confederate in this treason, sirra?"
- Somebody speaks of "rich and wealthy chuffes,/ Whose full cramd Garners to the roofes

are fild," using a rare word that shows up in *King Henry IV Part I* (2.2.88-9) also to indicate an overstuffed state: "ye gorbellied knaves... ye fat chuffs."

- Shakespeare is also well known for expressing one idea with two different terms, and this author does the same: "Those monstrous crimes, the only staine and blemish/ To the weale-publike."
- The Prologue in this play explains that a stage version of a person named Nobody, who is presented as having no body, is "lesser than a shadowes shadow," echoing Rosencrantz in *Hamlet* (2.2.261-2): "ambition... is but a shadow's shadow."
- In the Epilogue, the spirit-character Nobody steps out of the play and addresses the audience, saying, "If nobody have offended..."; likewise at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the spirit-character Puck steps out of the play and addresses the audience, beginning, "If we shadows have offended..." (5.1.423).

Many of Shakespeare's terms and variations on his phrases are evident throughout *Nobody and Somebody* as well: *sweete, sugred, joys, delight, blisse, content, Wo, melancholy, misery, weepe, teares, griefes, sorrows, pittie, disdaine, constancy, constant, inconstants, bootlesse, worser, glose, trashe, despight, Unseasons, dissemble, importuned, importunate, usury, usurers, thraldome, hipocrisie, counterfeit, countercheck, countermaunded, Banish, banisht, banishment, bankrout, exchecker, pompe, sawcie, mauger, Goddesse, mynion, drudge, Exile, usurpation, treason, traytor, traitresse, Tyrant, tirannous, tirannie, moitie, Screechowe, Raven, overthrow, over-heard, over-proud, treasures, black despaire, torments my troubled soul, flint-harted,*

*sweet friend and this hunned night.*

Simpson observes that the rare term *Fulloms*, meaning loaded dice, shows up here and as *ful-lam* in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1.3.85).

The following passages in *Nobody and Somebody* have a Shakespearean ring:

*The state itself mournes in a robe of Wo* (3)

*Shadow us, State, with thy majestic wings!* (248)

*your proude aspiring thoughts* (274)

*My dearest love, the essence of my soule...* (612)

*What is my greatnes by my brothers fall,  
But like a starved body nourished*

*With the destruction of other lymbes?* (616-618)

*Innumerable are the griefes that waite*

*On horded treasures, then much more on Crownes.  
The middle path, the golden meane for me!* (619-621)

*Men, heavens, gods, devils, what power should I invoke  
To fashion him anew? Thunder, come downe!*

*Crowne me with ruine, since not with a Crowne.* (638-640)

*Lady: Tis sweete to rule.  
Elid: Tis sweeter to obey.* (653)

*The throne I reckon but a glorious grave.* (716)

*I was a King, but now I am [a] slave.*

*How happie were I in this base estate*

*If I had never tasted royaltie!  
But the remembrance that I was a king,  
Unseasons the content of pov-ertie.* (854-858)

*O Elidure, take pittie on my state,  
Let me not live thus infortunate.* (885-886)

*The sight of thee...draws rivers from my eyes . . .* (875-876)  
*Alas, if pittie could procure your good,  
Instead of water, Ide weepe teares of blood . . .* (887-888)

*Death is the happy period of all woe.*

*The wretch thats torne upon the torturing wrack  
Feeles not more devilish torment than my hart,  
When I but call to minde my tirannie.* (930-933)

*Then happie Elidurus, happie day!  
That takes from me a kingdoms cares away.* (967-968)

*Come, gentle brother! Pittie, that should rest  
In women most, in harbor'd in thy brest.* (973-974)

*Blame not me;  
Wisedome never lov'd declined Majestie.* (1031-1032)

*Once more our royall temples are ingirt  
With Brittaines golden wreath.  
All-seeing heaven,  
Witnes I not desire this soveraigntie.*

*But since this kingdoms good, and your Decrees  
Have laid this heavy loade of common care  
On Elidure, we shall discharge the same*

*To your content, I hope, and this Lands fame.* (1096-1102)

*So but cal me King,  
The charming Spheres so sweetly cannot sing.* (1281)

*Oh, but wheres our Crowne,  
That make[s] knees humble when their soveragines frowne?* (1283-1284)

*He discords taught, that taught thee to sing.* (1326)

*Before such bondage, graunt me, heaven, a grave!* (1339)

*Tirants good subjects kills, and traitors spare.* (1352)

*Hast lived a king, and canst thou die a slave?  
A royal seat doth aske a royall grave.  
Though thousand swords thy present safety ring,  
Thou that hast bin a Monarch, dye a king!* (1360-1363)

*O heaven, that men so much should covet care!  
Septers are golden baites, the outsides faire:  
But he that swallowes this sweete sugred pill,  
Twill make him sicke with troubles that grow, still.* (1381-1384)

*My doomes severer then my small offence.* (1434)

*I but waite the time,  
To see their sodaine fall, that swiftly clime.* (1461-1462)

*Then, when the fielde consists of such a spirit,  
He that subdues conquers the Crowne by merit.* (1613-1614)

*what new flatteries  
Are a coyning in the mint of that smoth face?* (1639-1640)

(*Nobody cont.*)

The title of this play contains the phrase, "With the *true* Chronicle," and the title page promises to present "The *true* copy thereof." These terms, possibly punning on *Vere*, could be deliberate.

A few years after finishing this analysis, I received a copy of an e-mail sent to Oxfordians by Barboura Flues. She commented on this play, which she had originally dismissed as not by Shakespeare, as follows:

*On this (second) typing I spotted a number of Shakespeare markers, so am placing it in my brain's rather large limbo section. The clusters are self-explanatory. I haven't yet looked closer at the amazing amount of colloquial legal language, most of which deals with forfeitures, bonds and the like—highly suggestive of the tribulations of poor Oxford. I search Matty Farrow's site and found a huge number of Shakespeare situations evolving around the same problems. (Flues 1)*

In the appendix to her reprint of the play, Flues notes certain verbal "markers" and "clusters" suggesting Shakespeare's authorship of the play. They include *bootless*, *sycophant*, *love/pity* and *bond/forfeit[ure]*. She reports, "*Nobody and Somebody* is one of the very few non-Shakespeare-attributed works that are found to have significant clusters, both in number and content." (Flues 2 19) Echoing a common observation about Shakespeare, she adds, "...the high number of first or early *Oxford English Dictionary* citations (shows that) the author of *Nobody* was

a prolific and inventive coiner of words." (Flues 3 1) One example she cites is the word *techy* or *tetchy*, which shows up first in this play and later in Shakespeare (*RJ* 1.3.32; *TC* 1.1.96; *R III* 4.4.169). Her observations extend the case for Oxford's authorship of *No-body and Some-body*.

Somewhat off-putting (as other scholars note) are the dual plotlines in the play, with the antics of *Nobody* and *Somebody* standing substantially apart from the story of the ups and downs of the king. Perhaps originally meant as tavern entertainment, the pair's banter is a less well interwoven version of the rustics' role in the sub-plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The form of the title of the play: *No-body and Some-body. With the true Chronicle Historie of Elydure*, given its separating period and the conjunction *With*, suggests that these two stories might have begun as separate entities, which the playwright then merged to create a longer production. If so, which part came first and the reason for the merger we can only guess. But perhaps we need no longer wonder who was behind most or all of the composition.

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- Note: The text of this play is also available on Robert Brazil's Elizabethan Authors website at: <<http://www.elizabethanauthors.com/Nobody102.htm>>.