

## SOGLIARDO & CO.

### Members of the Stratford Corporation in Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*

By Heidi Jansch

Much of the evidence for William Shakspeare throughout the late 1590s documents his involvement in business and financial matters. One important piece of financial evidence has come down to us through Richard Quiney, a business associate and family friend of Shakspeare, who wrote him a letter in 1598 requesting a £30 loan (equivalent to £6,000+ today).<sup>1</sup> This loan was subsequently discussed by members of the Stratford Corporation in their communications with Richard Quiney, also a member of the Corporation. An examination of this correspondence alongside Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour* reveals considerable similarities between Shakspeare's Stratford associates and interests and the characters and situations presented by Jonson in the play. In light of these similarities, it seems that Jonson found his inspiration for Sogliardo and his 'family' from Shakspeare and the members of the Stratford Corporation. In *Shakespeare's Money*, Robert Bearman relates that John Shakspeare, William's father, was part of the Stratford Corporation throughout the 1560s:

It was common practice for prominent members of the business community to enter the ranks of the civic elite who made up the Stratford Corporation, a twenty-eight-man, self-perpetuating oligarchy established by the Corporation's

founding charter of 1553. John was no exception to the rule. After holding a number of civic posts, he was elected an alderman in July 1565, high bailiff in September 1568, and chief alderman in July 1571.<sup>2</sup>

It does not appear that William followed in his father's footsteps serving this group, but a comparable involvement is reflected in the person of Richard Quiney, who was elected principal burgess in 1580, chamberlain in 1587 and alderman in 1588. In *The Shakespeare Circle*, Quiney is described by Germaine Greer as 'a mercer, son of Adrian Quiney, also a mercer, grandson of another Richard Quiney, also a mercer'. In 1581 he married Bess, the daughter of Thomas Phillips, also a mercer and member of the corporation, to whom Greer refers as 'a chief figure in what I am tempted to call the mercery mafia'.<sup>3</sup> While a leading member of the Stratford Corporation, Quiney often travelled to London on corporation business, and he is documented as being in London for much of the fall of 1598. In addition to being recorded as a mercer, 'a person who deals in textile fabrics, esp. silks, velvets, and other fine materials ... also (occasionally): a dealer in haberdashery' the corporation records show that 'Master Richard Quiney useth the trades of buying and selling of corn for great sums and making of malt'.<sup>5</sup> Two of Quiney's business interests, therefore, were fabrics and grain dealing.

It is the letter this Richard Quiney wrote to William Shakspere requesting the procurement of a £30 loan that is the only known letter to Shakspere in existence. However, there are several other letters written to Richard Quiney that give a more complete view of the interactions of the Stratford Corporation members, their concerns, as well as their impression of who William Shakspere was, and of his association with their group. Now accessible on the website Shakespeare Documented (<https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu>) the information contained in the letters between Quiney and the members of the Stratford Corporation (including Abraham Sturley, Adrian Quiney and Daniel Baker) indicates that Shakspere was known to this group of associates as someone who had access to money and could arrange loans when needed. The evidence also shows that the personal interests of the members of the Stratford

Corporation at this time included their grain stores and acquiring money to pay cloth/clothing debts or to make clothing related purchases. Similar concerns are reflected by the family of Sogliardo in *Every Man Out of His Humour*. Additionally, Shakspeare's position within the group is comparable to that of Sogliardo's: when money is needed, he is the man that 'the family' could approach with requests to attain it.

Shakspeare has previously been suggested as the model for Sogliardo<sup>6</sup> because he was documented as applying for a coat of arms in 1596 and 1599, and the words 'Non Sanz Droict' (Not Without Right or No, Without Right) appear on the Shakspeare arms application while Jonson sets up Sogliardo's 'motto' with a similar wording of 'Not Without Mustard'. Shakspeare had purchased New Place in 1597, so it is clear he had land and money in the late 1590s and that he was attempting to gain gentleman status by attaining arms. When Sogliardo appears on stage, his first words include the statement:

'I have land and money, my friends left me well,  
and I will be a gentleman whatever it costs me.'

*Sogliardo*, I. ii.

The editor of a modern edition of *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Helen Ostovich, defines 'friends' as 'relatives'<sup>7</sup> here, which is interesting in light of the familial terms used between members of the Stratford Corporation. On *Shakespeare Documented*, Bearman comments on the title 'brother' used between the members several times, indicating that it may have meant 'brother alderman', but that some relationships between the members are 'hard to explain' or not fully understood.<sup>8</sup> Although they referred to Shakspeare as 'friend', other Stratford Corporation members addressed each other as 'brother'<sup>9</sup> and Daniel Baker called Richard Quiney and his wife 'aunt' and 'uncle'. Adrian Quiney, naturally refers to Richard as his 'son'.

But the term 'friends' is the one used by Jonson in regard to Sogliardo's money and, coincidentally, also used by Abraham Sturley in relation to Shakspeare in a letter to Richard Quiney dated January 24, 1598.<sup>10</sup> Sturley writes that he heard Shakspeare was interested in purchasing more land and asked Quiney to

convince Shakspeare to invest instead in the tithes of the Stratford Corporation. Sturley hoped that '*bi the instruccions u can geve him theareof, and bi the frendes he can make*' Quiney could persuade Shakspeare to invest in these tithes instead of purchasing the land he was thought to have in mind. Interestingly, Shakspeare is being discussed in regard to land/money and refers to 'friends' in Sturley's letter.

Of additional interest is something mentioned later in the same letter when Sturley reports: '*v shall vnderstande brother that our neighbours are growen with the wantes thei feele through the dearneses of corne ... malecontent*'. Bearman explains that officials at this time had been asked to investigate the activities of local maltsters who were accused of hoarding. Sturley writes that these officials hoped '*within a weeke to leade some of them in a halter*' and that the Earl of Essex would intervene '*to se them hanged on gibbets att their owne door*'<sup>7</sup> The phrase used by Sturley of the accused hoarders being led 'in a halter' is reflected in the Sordido character in the play when Jonson uses the stage direction:

*Enter Sordido with a halter about his necke...*

*Sogliardo, III. ii.*

In his letter, Sturley is commenting on current events in England concerning official decrees. Ostovich explains:

A proclamation was issued on 31 July 1596 against covetous farmers and engrossers; local sheriffs had to submit monthly surveillance reports on its enforcements by justices of the peace. Another proclamation, issued 23 August 1598, was directed against any hoarding or wasting of corn, 'especially such as so contemptuously and unchristianly either have fed dogs or made starch' for their own vanity or profit instead of sustaining the poor in a time of dearth.

(Proclamations 2.355 in the BL)<sup>11</sup>

In Jonson's play, Sordido delights in his hidden stores of grain and his ability to hide them from the authorities. In Act I, scene iii, he heartlessly swears to hide his grain regardless of the proclamations issued instructing him against this:

... Here's a device

*To charge me bring my grain unto the markets.  
Ay, much! - when I haue neither barn nor garner,  
Nor Earth to hide it in, I'll bring it, but till then  
Each corn I send shall be as big as Pauls.  
O, but (say some) the poor are like to starve.  
Why let 'hem starve, what's that to me? (ln 97-103)*

Two surveys of the holders of grain and malt were recorded in Stratford, one in 1595 and one in 1598. In *Shakespeare's Money*, Robert Bearman also notes that Richard Quiney's recorded holdings in 1595 of:

'... forty-seven quarters of barley and thirty-two of malt, were the highest in town. By the time of the second survey of 1598, written up by Quiney himself, these holdings had miraculously dwindled to just over sixteen quarters. Some massaging of the figures might therefore be expected.'<sup>12</sup>

According to Bearman, Richard Quiney was deceitfully hiding his assets. This is what just what Sordido pledges to do at the beginning of the play. Since Quiney was not a farmer, he is not literally 'a farmer burying his grain'. Instead, he used his position as the recorder of the grain survey to 'hide' his grain by, as Bearman phrases it, 'massaging' the amounts of his holdings on paper.

The concerns and actions of Richard Quiney and Abraham Sturley are reflected in Jonson's Sordido character. Another member of the Stratford Corporation who seems to have been an inspiration for one of Jonson's characters is Daniel Baker. Baker's correspondence with his 'uncle' Richard Quiney is comparable to the interactions between Fungoso, his father Sordido and his uncle Sogliardo. Fungoso daydreams about purchasing the clothes worn by Fastidious Brisk and then requests that his uncle arrange borrowing the money for him, under the presumption that the money will be used for books. Sogliardo mediates this money transaction for clothing between his brother and his nephew:

SOGLIARDO: *Your mind is carried away with somewhat else. I ask what news you bear?*

FUNGOSO: *Troth we bear none. (Aside) In good faith, I was never so pleased with a fashion, days of my life! O an I might have but my wish, I'd ask no more of God now but such a suit, such a hat, such a band, such a doublet, such a hose, such a boot, and such a ...*

Annoyed that his uncle Sogliardo is talking about recent puppet shows he has heard about in the vicinity, Fungoso calculates how much money he would need to purchase his new outfit:

FUNGOSO: ... *Let me see: the doublet, say fifty shillings the doublet; and between three or four pounds the hose; then boots, the hat, and band— Some ten or eleven pound would do it all, and suit me for the heavens!*

He then approaches Sogliardo to ‘make a motion for me to my father’, asking his uncle to secure money from Sordido, claiming that it would be used for schoolbooks. Fungoso asks Sogliardo to negotiate for him instead of speaking directly to Sordido, who is standing nearby:

FUNGOSO: ... *I pray you, move it for me.*

SOGLIARDO: *That I will. When would you have me do it? Presently?*

FUNGOSO: *O, ay, I pray you, good uncle! [Aside, as Sogliardo and Sordido step to one side] God send me good luck! Lord, an't be thy will, prosper it! O Iesu! Now, now, if it take (O Christ!) I am made for euer!*

*Sogliardo, II. i. 449*

Sordido later agrees to give Fungoso ‘ten pound’ but ‘part with no more’, a comment which may indicate that Sogliardo had originally approached his brother with a higher amount, and they bargained to reach ten pounds. Sogliardo acts as the middleman or broker here, securing the money from Sordido for Fungoso.

The correspondence surrounding the £30 Quiney-Shakspere letter reveals that the Stratford Corporation members saw Shakspere as filling a similar broker role for their group. Although this loan request letter written by Richard Quiney is often touted as the one and only letter to William Shakspere, its contents were

known about and commented on in other letters by the members of the Stratford Corporation. One letter indicates that Quiney's £30 request, supposedly to pay off his own debts in London, was actually made for Abraham Sturley. Sturley had indicated in an earlier letter to Quiney that he had bonds coming due soon<sup>13</sup> and in a subsequent letter stated that he was happy to hear that Shakspeare would help 'procure us monie'.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, back in Stratford, Quiney's father, Adrian, sent word that if Quiney were to acquire money from Shakspeare, he should bring the money home and use it for an investment in knytte stockings.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, Quiney's 'nephew', Daniel Baker, sent several letters expecting Quiney to pay his debts to London drapers<sup>16</sup> with money (presumed to be the £30 from Shakspeare) that he had heard Quiney might be acquiring.<sup>17</sup>

Like Fungoso, Baker makes his dishonest requests for money to his 'uncle'. In the play, when Fungoso distractedly (and somewhat rudely) interacts with his uncle Sogliardo, he lists how much each desired item will cost and who he will purchase it from. He then asks Sogliardo to make arrangements for the money. After he receives the money, it is quickly spent and Fungoso becomes more harried and desperate as the play goes on. Similarly, after hearing about the £30 loan from Shakspeare, Baker sent a hurried letter dated November 24, 1598 to Quiney in which he submits a list of payment requests for his uncle to dole out to the drapers (cloth merchants) on his behalf:

*Vnckle Quyne my Commendacions done etc I vnderstand by your Letter to Mr Alderman that Mr Kympton is not yet payde his 4<sup>li</sup> 7<sup>s</sup> which I much marvayle of for that ~~that~~ I appointed Mr Barber to appoint ij<sup>li</sup> to bee payde to Mr Kympton thys last weeke yff hee weare not payd beefore otherwise to pay the 3<sup>li</sup> to Mr Woolly & the monie was payde to Mr Woolly wherby it should seeme that Mr Kympton was payd beefore. I pray you Know certainly yff hee bee payd & yff not then use som meanes eyther to pay hym speedely or eles send mee word that I may sent it hym for I am ashamed that hee is so longe unpaid. my Aunt Quyne telleth mee that you are to Receaue 20 or 30£. In London & that you will pay som monie for mee yff neede bee: &*

*in that Respect I have Lent her som monie allredy to serve her occasions so yff you can pay mee 20<sup>li</sup> then disshardge Mr Kympton & the Resadew pay to Mr ffrauncis Evington at the Checker in matling street: yff Sir Edward Grevile have payd hym 10<sup>li</sup> then doo you pay hym 10<sup>li</sup> more. yff Sir Edward paid hym non then pay Mr Evington 15<sup>li</sup> yff you can. or 20<sup>li</sup> yff your monie will bould owt: and then yff you have any more spare monie Leave 10<sup>li</sup> for mee with my Cossen Vnderhill uppon ludgate hyll. & I will write to hym wheer to pay it for mee. but yff you thinck that you shall not haue monie for mee Let mee know with all speed that I may otherwise provid & so in great haste I comyt you to god Stretford 24 November 1598.*

*Yours ever Daniell Baker*<sup>18</sup>

The evidence shows that Richard Quiney was in London in 1598, and his association with Will Shakspeare could have brought him in close proximity to Ben Jonson since according to Jonson's cast list in his own works of 1616, Shakspeare and Jonson knew each other in theatrical circles at this same time. The correlations between the characters and the members of the Stratford Corporation suggest that they may have provided the inspiration for Jonson's characters. Like Richard Quiney, Sordido is unlawfully hiding his grain in order to make a profit. Like Baker and Adrian Quiney (who hear of the £30 loan and provide cloth-related options for its usage) Fungoso itemizes his costs to a number of cloth vendors and expects his uncle to arrange for payment. Like Quiney's request for £30 from Shakspeare, supposedly for his own debts, but actually for Sturley's, Fungoso is not being honest in his loan request. Like Sogliardo and Sordido, Shakspeare and Quiney are expected to arrange financial assistance for/between members of the 'family' when asked. These correlations between the characters in *Every Man Out of His Humour* and the members of the Stratford Corporation suggest that Jonson was aware of the group's correspondence, interactions, and interests at this time, as well as Shakspeare's role within the group, and that Jonson used them as the models for the characters of Sogliardo and his family in his play.

## References

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9. According to several essays in *The Shakespeare Circle*, Shakspeare's actual brother Gilbert was working in London as a haberdasher at the time, adding another component to the cloth/clothing 'family' interests.
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15. <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/letter-adrian-quiney-his-son-richard-quiney-including-reference-possible>
16. OED defines draper as 'One who made (woollen) cloth. Subsequently, A dealer in cloth, and now by extension, in other articles of textile manufacture: often qualified as woollen draper, linen draper.'
17. <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/exhibition/document/letter-daniel-baker-richard-quiney-including-possible-reference-money-which>
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