

....The Kirtling festivities also had another important visitor at the time: Leicester's soon-to-be or then-current secretary, the young poet Edmund Spenser, who appears to have given an oration to the queen. This would have been an important time for Spenser because, as Percy W. Long argued nearly a century ago, this was where he met his first love. Spenser's effort to woo the lady would eventually become the subject of one of Shakespeare's most adored plays. Specifically, the "Rosalinde" that Spenser encountered at Kirtling in the fall of 1578—and immortalized in his series of poetic pastorals, *The Shepherd's Calendar*—would eventually become the most substantial and beloved female role in the canon.

The witty Rosalind of *As You Like It* consumes more lines than any other Shakespearean heroine, with no feminine protagonist except Cleopatra even coming close. In many Shakespearean plays, the lead female stands as the vulnerable victim of male-driven events: Desdemona is the virtuous target of Iago's scheming, Ophelia a confused casualty of Hamlet's pseudo-madness, Juliet the adoring subject of Romeo's youthful passion. Not so with Rosalind. She is not a passive subject of Orlando's love, a Juliet to his Romeo, a Hero to his Claudio; she is the graceful and conscious manipulator of his affections, the prime mover of the play's complicated plot, and the one who slyly crafts the romantic resolution for all the couples. As Stephen J. Lynch observes, "Rosalind is to *As You Like It* what Hamlet is to *Hamlet*."<sup>1</sup>

Essentially all editors of the pastoral comedy have noted that its protagonist ultimately derives from the "Rosalinde" of *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Spenser's collection of 12 bucolic poems, one for each month, which focuses in part on his futile attempt to woo his beautiful Rosalinde. The work consists of pastoral odes set in woods and grassy sheep-fields inhabited by philosophical and lovelorn shepherds, which also serve as the background of *As You Like It*. Like Orlando, Spenser's counterpart in the play, the young poet was famous for hanging poems in trees when wooing his beloved; and, like Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Spenser's Rosalinde scorns his poetry. As James Shapiro observes:

In a play so intimately aware of literary antecedents, there's probably yet one more in-joke, for Rosalind had also been the name of the heartless lover (and despiser of bad poetry) in Edmund Spenser's poetry. Spenser's autobiographical double, Colin Clout, had complained in *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579) about how his beloved Rosalind "laughs [at] the songs, that Colin Clout doth make ..."<sup>2</sup>

These are not coincidences. The name alone confirms her origin, as *Rosalind(e)* and *Rosaline* were essentially unheard of in England prior to Spenser's work,<sup>3</sup> and etymological researcher C. Elliot Browne suggests the poet coined the name.<sup>4</sup> Google Scholar records 284 papers that refer to both *As You Like It* and *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and a similar search in Google Books lists almost 1,000 entries. No one disputes that the author of *As You Like It* looked to Spenser's Rosalinde when penning the play, and that she is the origin of the heroine of the canon.

But what few scholars mention is that the original Rosalinde was a flesh-and-blood human being living in Shakespeare's England. Spenser's work, after all, clarified that the woman really existed and that her name was an anagram meant to disguise the identity of his inamorata. The reason for the omission is not hard to see. Shakespeare was 15 when *The Shepherd's Calendar* was first printed, and Spenser, from the early 1580s to his death in 1599, spent most of his life in Ireland, far from the experiential circle of Shakespeare. Also, in 1579, while the future

playwright for the King's Men lived in Stratford, Rosalinde, as is clear from Spenser's life history and statements in *The Shepherd's Calendar* about her residence, lived in a beautiful house in a small "neighbor town" of Cambridge. There is no known connection between Shakespeare and either Spenser or his beloved.

What is more, in 1905, Long, after carefully studying the poet's life, particularly in the late 1570s, and the numerous clues in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, determined who she was: Thomas North's only daughter, Elisa North.<sup>5</sup> Long, like a number of other Elizabethan archaeologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, had busied himself with the task of unmasking the subject of Spenser's love poem because the poet had offered so many tantalizing clues to her identity. It was clear that Rosalinde was a real person because Spenser admitted this frankly: the gloss lets it be known that the main character, Colin Clout, represents Spenser himself and that "Rosalinde" was a "feigned name" (2) for the young object of his adoration. Gabriel Harvey, Spenser's friend and another main character in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, would refer to her in personal letters to Spenser. In one of the missives, Harvey, in complimentary fashion, notes that Spenser's "gentle Mistress Rosalinde" had at one point complimented Spenser's wit, claiming he had "all the intelligences at commandment" and that she had "christened him her Signior Pegaso."<sup>6</sup> Spenser sprinkled his *Shepherd's Calendar* with hints to her identity, and, by studying this evidence, Long showed that Rosalinde was almost certainly meant for Thomas's daughter. Moreover, by studying the family records of Elisa's grandfather, Edward, the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord North, Long determined that Elisa was between 16 and 21 years old in the autumn of 1578, when Spenser first began courting his Rosalinde. Everything about the young Elisa fit: family, age, circle of friends—and, most importantly, Spenser's pointed clues matched her precisely.

We know Rosalinde's general location because Spenser's alter-ego, Colin Clout, identifies his Rosalinde as "a country lass" (1, 10, 23) "of no mean house" (14) in the "neighbor town" or "next town" (2) of his "good friend" Hobbinol (39, 51; also, document images 2, 4, 7). As the work explicitly identifies Gabriel Harvey as Hobbinol, we know that his location in 1578 is in and around Cambridge. By 1579, Harvey had lived most of his life in Cambridge, and his childhood home was Saffron Walden, just south. He attended Christ's College from 1566 to 1570 and was elected fellow of Pembroke College in November 1570, eventually becoming Professor of Rhetoric in 1574, and he remained in some capacity as professor at Pembroke throughout the rest of the 1570s. This is where he met Spenser, who attended Pembroke beginning in 1569, receiving a master's degree in 1576. From 1578 to 1579, Elisa's primary residence was the largest mansion in Cambridgeshire, her uncle's estate at Kirtling Hall, 14 miles east of Cambridge.

The gloss for *The Shepherd's Calendar* was allegedly written by an "E.K.," who was likely meant to represent Edmund Kirke, a Cambridge friend of both Harvey and Spenser. But other scholars have since suggested that Spenser wrote much or all of the gloss himself and used "E.K." as his conduit. Regardless, whoever wrote the gloss takes pains to describe Rosalinde's residence among "those hills" (23, 25) of the "higher country" (25), stressing its elevation: Kirtling Hall sat atop one of the tallest hills in the highest part of a ridge, commanding a view of two shires.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Kirtling (or, at times, "Carthlage" or "Catlidge") was named for the ridge upon which it was founded: "Cyrtla's" ridge. The source for the name of Upend, which had been a part of Kirtling since before 1066, is even more fitting: British History Online includes a webpage on the history of Kirtling, which states: "Upend was until the 15<sup>th</sup> century called Upheme (Old English 'the up-dwellers'), indicating its position further up the valley from

Lidgate or Dalham (both Suff).”<sup>8</sup> Kirtling Hall was indeed the “higher country.” Visitors to Kirtling Hall will also note that it provides an elevated and commanding view of the rest of the countryside.

The gloss also emphasizes Rosalinde’s residence as “the North country” and “the North parts” (25). This has confused a number of scholars, who had a difficult time explaining why Spenser would refer to a region in Cambridgeshire as “North country.”<sup>9</sup> But given that Roger, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord North, was both the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire and High Steward of Cambridge, the Norths were the most powerful family in the region—and Elisa North was then the focus of his life—it is not difficult to see why Spenser would refer to Kirtling and the Cambridge region as “the North country” and “the North parts.”

Of course, there were many lasses in Cambridge, but Spenser also gave a pointed clue: *The Shepherd's Calendar* states that the “feigned name” of “Rosalinde” was an anagram, “which being well ordered will bewray the very name of his love and mistress, whom by that name he coloureth” (2).

R O S A L I N D E = ELISA NORD.  
And *Nord* is French for *North*.

Spenser specifically spells “Rosalinde” with an “e” at the end, allowing for “Elisa.”

While it may seem that the anagram can be resolved in dozens of ways, this is not exactly true—as the universe of reasonable first names for Elizabethan women was not unlimited. After more than a century of scholarly guessing, the only two first names that have been proffered for the anagram are “Rose” and “Elisa.” And this, when matched with possible last names, leaves only three credible Elizabethan names among those suggested: Rose Danil for Rose Daniel; Rose Dinla for Rose Dinley; or Elisa Nord. Some support “Rose Daniel,” pointing out that the Elizabethan writer John Florio had a wife named “Rose”—and, in 1580, he married Samuel Daniel’s sister. But it turns out they were not the same wives. It was Florio’s *second* wife who was named Rose Spicer, and he married her as a widower in 1617—37 years after his first marriage to Daniel’s sister.<sup>10</sup> There is no record of Florio’s first wedding, so the bride’s name is unknown,<sup>11</sup> but Long contends that “Daniel is not known to have had more than two sisters, and neither was named Rose.”<sup>12</sup> After pointing out that it was Florio’s second wife—not Daniel’s sister—who had the relevant first name, James Jackson Higginson stresses that “no Rose Daniel is known to have existed.”<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Rose Dinley has the problem of absence from all known Elizabethan records. More than a century ago, Long had so thoroughly dismantled A. B. Grosart’s attempt to link Spenser to a Dinley family in Lancashire that the view has remained essentially obsolete since.<sup>14</sup> Elisa Nord remains.

Thomas’s daughter was obviously christened “Elizabeth,” not “Elisa.” But not only does Spenser go out of his way in *The Shepherd's Calendar* to show he used the nickname “Elisa” for “Elizabeth”—in various allusions to the queen—he pointedly explains *why* he uses that name. In the April eclogue (a Virgilian term for bucolic poem), Spenser refers to a “song, which the said Colin sometime made in honor of her Majesty, whom abruptly he termeth Elisa” (11). Spenser then exclusively uses “Elisa” for “Elizabeth” through the rest of the work, repeating “Elisa” no fewer than 11 times (and *Eliza* twice) and never again referring to the queen’s full Christian name. In the gloss, Spenser awkwardly and pointedly explains that in his use of “Elisa,” he realizes that it was not appropriate; that this was not what “her Majesty deserveth” nor what might be “agreeable” to the “highness of a Prince”; but it is the name that is “most comely for

the meanness of a shepherd's wit, or to conceive, or to utter. And therefore he calleth her Elisa," as if she were a "shepherd's daughter, it being very unfit, that a shepherd's boy brought up in the sheepfold, should know, or ever seem to have heard of a Queen's royalty" (14). This is a big hint—with Spenser laboriously emphasizing that, though he uses "Elisa" for Queen Elizabeth, the name is really more suitable for a "shepherd's daughter." Of course, the only significant shepherd's daughter in the series of poems is that very same "country lass" who is the subject of his unrequited love. And once you subtract *e-l-i-s-a* from "Rosalinde," only four letters remain: "Dorn," "Dron," "Rond," "Nord." The last, for *North*, appears to be the only plausible Elizabethan resolution. There is, in fact, no other reasonable candidate for the character—and, since Long's groundbreaking work, a number of Spenser scholars have described this identification as "the best guess so far"<sup>15</sup> or "by all odds ... the most worthy of belief."<sup>16</sup>

A new look at *The Shepherd's Calendar*, combined with recent historical investigations that have uncovered documents that shed light on Spenser's whereabouts in 1578, has now confirmed Long's assessment, including his most important of all contentions—that Spenser and Harvey were with Elisa North at Kirtling Hall during the queen's East Anglia progress in early September.

### **Rosalinde's Residence and Her Meeting Colin**

Throughout most of the eclogues and especially from January through June, it is abundantly clear that Colin (Spenser) has travelled to the land of Hobbinol (Harvey) and become smitten with a local. The all-important June eclogue serves as an obvious example:



This June woodcut shows Colin (left) in "the hills" of Hobbinol's homeland, complaining that, as beautiful as it is, it brings him pain because Rosalind has forsaken him for another. Hobbinol advises his sad friend that he must remove himself from the land of Hobbinol and

Rosalind, “the North parts,” and return to his own home in “the dales” (25) of the south (Kent). The elevated estate depicted in the upper-left corner of the woodcut almost certainly represents Rosalinde’s abode. The eclogue begins as follows:

This Æglogue is wholly vowed to the complaining of Colin’s ill success in his love. For being (as is aforesaid) enamored of a Country lass Rosalind, and having (as seemeth) found place in her heart, he lamenteth to his dear friend Hobbinol, that he is now forsaken unfaithfully, and in his stead Menalcas, another shepherd received disloyally. And this is the whole Argument of this Æglogue (22).

The dialogue starts with Hobbinol’s explaining to Colin how joyful he is in his Edenic homeland, describing the loveliness of their surroundings:

Lo *Colin*, here the place, whose pleasant site  
From other shades hath weaned my wandering mind,  
Tell me, what wants me here, to work delight?  
The simple air, the gentle warbling wind,  
So calm, so cool, as nowhere else I find:  
The grassy ground with dainty Daisies dight,  
The Bramble bush, where Birds of every kind  
To the waters fall their tunes attemper right. (23)

Colin agrees with Hobbinol that his land is beautiful; he is happy that Hobbinol has found paradise, in which his flocks may wander peacefully and the flowers are lovely. But, unfortunately, the place also makes Colin sad because Rosalind lives there too:

O happy *Hobbinol*, I bless thy state,  
That Paradise hast found, which *Adam* lost.  
Here wander may thy flock early or late,  
Withouten dread of Wolves to been ylost:  
Thy lovely lays here mayst thou freely boast.  
But I unhappy man, whom cruel fate,  
And angry Gods pursue from coast to coast,  
Can nowhere find, to shroud my luckless pate. (23)

Hobbinol responds that Colin must then leave this “soil” that Rosalind “doth ... bewitch”—and return to his home in “the dales”:

Then if by me thou list advised be  
Forsake the soil that so doth thee bewitch  
Leave me those hills where harbor nis to see  
Nor holly bush, nor briar, nor winding witch  
And to the dales resort where shepherds rich  
And fruitful flocks, been everywhere to see. (23)

After Colin continues complaining that Rosalind has forsaken him, Hobbinol again tells his friend that he must go home and bring his flock with him:

O careful *Colin*, I lament thy case,  
Thy tears would make the hardest flint to flow.  
Ah faithless Rosalind, and void of grace,  
That art the root of all this ruthful woe.  
But now is time, I guess, homeward to go:  
Then rise ye blessed flocks, and home apace,  
Lest night with stealing steps do you forslow,  
And wet your tender Lambs that by you trace. (24)

The gloss for this chapter explains its meaning and emphasizes that this is “no poetical fiction” but represents what Hobbinol (Harvey) really advised—and what Colin (Spenser) really did:

Paradise—A Paradise in Greek signifieth a Garden of pleasure, or place of delights. So he compareth the soil, wherein Hobbinol made his abode, to that earthly Paradise in scripture called Eden; wherein Adam in his first creation was placed ...

Forsake the soil—This is no poetical fiction, but unfeignedly spoken of the poet self, who for special occasion of private affairs (as I have been partly of himself informed) and for his more preferment removing out of the North parts, came into the South, as Hobbinol indeed advised him privately.

The hills—that is the North country, where he dwelt.

Nis—is not.

The Dales—The South parts, where he [Colin] now abideth, which though they be full of hills and woods (for Kent is very hilly and woody; and therefore so called, for Kants in the Saxon tongue signifieth woody) yet in respect of the North parts they be called dales. For indeed the North is counted the higher country. (24-25)

Notice the pointed use of “those hills,” “higher country,” “North parts” and “North country.” Given Kirtling Hall’s elevated and bucolic location, these descriptions fit perfectly—and they match the estate pictured in the upper-left corner of the June illustration. Ben Colburn, in his website on Cambridgeshire churches, describes the high and hilly land that sat beneath Kirtling Hall:

I love the borderlands between Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. For the most part, any interesting landscape is on the Suffolk side, but there are places where the high land is on the western side of the border, and we end up with pockets of woodland and gentle hills. Kirtling sits firmly in this territory, and the church has one of the finest spots in the parish. It sits next to the moat of Kirtling Tower, once the large Tudor mansion of the North family ... It is all marvelously bucolic.<sup>17</sup>

The location of the “south parts” is also clear. By 1578, Spenser had become the legal secretary for John Young, the Bishop of Rochester, which is centered in Kent. This is described as Spenser’s current abode—“where he now abideth”—as distinguished from the land of

Rosalind and Hobbinol. When Hobbinol tells him to go home to mend his heart and leave the “hills” and “North country” and “to the dales resort,” the gloss then emphasizes that “The Dales” refers to Kent.

Other eclogues add more hints: in the January chapter, Spenser confirms Rosalinde's location as in the “neighbor town” and “next town” of Hobbinol. In the December epilogue, when Colin finally and melodramatically bids Hobbinol adieu, telling him to give that same message to Rosalind, who has rejected all his advances, his “Adieu good Hobbinol ... / Tell *Rosalind*, her Colin bids her adieu” (51) again confirms that Hobbinol and Rosalind live in the same realm. In the April eclogue, Hobbinol tells another local, Thenot, that Spenser now “woos the Widow's daughter of the glen” (12), an absurd thing to say if the glen and the widow's daughter were not regional and familiar. The “Widow's daughter” also fits, as Elisa's mother, Elizabeth, was indeed a widow; her first husband before Thomas had been Robert Rich.<sup>18</sup> And, as we have seen, “the glen” is also apt as their manor was situated at the high end of a valley.

All of this reconfirms that Spenser was with Harvey in the latter's homeland during the events that are discussed in *The Shepherd's Calendar*—and this is where Rosalinde lives as well. “North country” and “North parts,” then, are puns on the family name—which, again, confirms his love's identity.

### **Harvey, Spenser, and Elisa North at Kirtling Hall**

Long argues that both Spenser and Harvey were at Kirtling Hall for the queen's early September stopover. The evidence he provides is persuasive, and now we have an assortment of new facts. Much of the non-Rosalind material of *The Shepherd's Calendar* alludes to the political environment, particularly the tension between the Catholic religious leaders and Protestant courtiers and the pressing interests involving Elizabeth's possible marriage to the French-Catholic Duke of Alençon, which served as the jittery setting for the East Anglia progress.<sup>19</sup> At one of the first stops on Elizabeth's journey to Leicester's country house in Wanstead in May, Sidney fittingly produced “The Lady of May,” the “first English pastoral play,”<sup>20</sup> to entertain the queen. In the bucolic masque, Sidney urges against the French marriage<sup>21</sup> and establishes the shepherd motif for the progress. The work is known to have helped inspire *The Shepherd's Calendar*, which is dedicated to Sidney.

At some point during the progress, Harvey became part of Leicester's entourage, travelling with the queen's followers from estate to estate. Writers were an important part of the nobleman's staff on these trips: they would often present texts or lyrical speeches in praise of Elizabeth at certain events, typically while endeavoring to push the nobleman's interests. In late July, at Elizabeth's stopover in Audley End, 15 miles south of Kirtling Hall, Leicester introduced Harvey to the queen, and there the young writer presented his dedication of his *Gratulationum Valdinensium* to her. Harvey's Latin text also included fawning tributes to Leicester, Burghley, Oxford, Hatton, and Sidney. Importantly, it is almost certainly through Harvey that Spenser met Leicester, and it was at this point in the summer or early autumn of 1578 that Spenser moved out of Bishop Young's circle into the more powerful earl's, becoming Leicester's secretary by April 1579. Quoting H. R. Fox Bourne:

Sidney had probably made the acquaintance of Gabriel Harvey some while before they met at Audley End in July, 1578. Harvey was then one of the Earl of Leicester's “men.” “Who is this?” asked the Queen, when the Cambridge teacher of rhetoric and classical literature came up to pay his respects to her. “Is it Leicester's man that we were

speaking of?" On being told that it was, she added "I will not deny you my hand, Harvey." There was talk at that time of Harvey's going abroad, in some unexplained capacity, on Leicester's behalf. This arrangement apparently fell through, but one which is far more noteworthy ensued on the Audley End meeting. Harvey's favourite pupil, Edmund Spenser, was brought under the Earl's notice, and soon afterwards we find him at Leicester House, as a sort of secretary...<sup>22</sup>

In his chapter "Biography of Spenser," Higginson also notes:

Unless, therefore, we are to suppose that Spenser had the good fortune to meet Leicester or Sidney in some chance way—a meeting which seems altogether unlikely on account of his probable residence in the vicinity of Cambridge in 1576-8, which neither Leicester nor Sidney visited from 1569 until the time of which we are speaking,—the progress at Audley End, with its attendant circumstance of Harvey's doings thereat, offers the most plausible date for the beginning of this connection.<sup>23</sup>

Audley End is not the only place where Harvey's presence is documented along the progress. We also find a record of the Cambridge professor at the queen's stop in Hertfordshire at the end of the first week in September: this time, he gave her a printed copy of *Gratulationum Valdinensium*. Likely, during their journey from Audley End to Hertfordshire, Leicester had a messenger take Harvey's manuscript to London to have it printed—and return with it. The title-page reads "*Londini, Ex Officina Typographica Henrici Binnemani,*" referring to Henry Bynneman, one of Leicester's printers, whom the Earl would help in 1580 to secure the privilege to print "all Dictionaries in all tongues, all Chronicles and histories whatsoever."<sup>24</sup>

How do we know about Harvey's interactions with the queen in both Audley End and Hertfordshire, and particularly the latter event? The main reason is that Spenser documented it in his *Shepherd's Calendar*, fittingly in the September gloss, the same month that it occurred. Quoting Higginson:

In the September eclogue (gloss to l. 176), he speaks of Harvey's *Gratulationum Valdinensium*, "which boke in the progresse at Audley in Essex, he dedicated in writing to her Majestie, afterward presenting the same in print to her Highnesse at the worshipfull Maister Capells in Hertfordshire". On this progress of 1578 the Queen left Lord North's at Kirtling on September 3, and reached "Maister Capells" a few days later, making two short stops on the way. This assigns the date of Harvey's presentation of his book to the second week in September.<sup>25</sup>

Significantly, this gloss helps establish the time and place of the events surrounding Hobbinol in *The Shepherd's Calendar*. And Spenser, of course, knows so much about the specifics of the progress because, as the *Calendar* repeatedly makes clear, Colin (Spenser) is with Hobbinol (Harvey) in his own Edenic realm—and so he had been travelling with Harvey in Leicester's retinue, eventually garnering enough of the earl's respect to become his secretary. The queen's progress is the setting of *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and Colin meets his Rosalind at Kirtling, just before the progress stops at Capells. Because he wanted to help his friend Lord Roger North with the preparations, Leicester attended the estates at Kirtling in full force. As

Long notes, the Lord North's "house was full of Leicester's retainers. Even his cooks and minstrels were there."<sup>26</sup>

But, remarkably (though this is not often discussed in works on Spenser or his pastoral poem), two historical accounts confirm that the young poet was indeed part of the East Anglia progress and was interacting with the queen. First, the historian Thomas Fuller, in his *Histories of the Worthies of England* (1662), records the following fascinating item about the famous 1578 journey:

There passeth a story commonly told and believed, that Spenser presenting his Poems to Queen *Elizabeth*: She highly affected therewith, commanded the Lord Cecil Her Treasurer, to give him an hundred pound; and when the Treasurer (a good Steward of the Queens money) alleged that sum was too much, then *give him* (quoth the Queen) *what is reason*; to which the Lord consented, but was so busied, belike, about matters of higher concernment, that *Spencer* received no reward; Whereupon he presented this petition in a small piece of paper to *the Queen in her Progress*,

I was promis'd on a time,  
To have reason for my rhyme;  
From that time unto this season,  
I receiv'd nor rhyme nor reason.

Hereupon the Queen gave strict order (not without some check to her Treasurer) for the present payment of the hundred pounds, she first intended unto him.

He afterwards went over into Ireland, Secretary to the Lord Gray, Lord Deputy thereof.<sup>27</sup>

Since Spenser went to Ireland in the service of Lord Grey in the summer of 1580, this story about "the Queen in her Progress" then derives from the East Anglia journey of 1578—and Burghley had indeed accompanied her on the trip. We even have multiple forms of confirmation of the tale. The versions of this anecdote found in William Winstanley's *The Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* (1687)<sup>28</sup> and George Sandys's *Anglorum Speculum* (1684)<sup>29</sup> probably stem from Fuller's history, but, prior to these histories, a similar story appeared in John Manningham's unpublished "diary" (1602). Quoting J. Payne Collier's edition of Shakespeare's works:

Fuller first published the anecdote in his "Worthies," 1662; but sixty years earlier, and within a very short time after the death of Spenser, the story was current, for we find the lines in Manningham's Diary (Harl. MS. 5353), under the date of May 4, 1602: they are thus introduced:—

"When her Majesty had given order that Spenser should have a reward for his poems, but Spenser could have nothing, he presented her with these verses:

'It pleas'd your Grace upon a time  
'To grant me reason for my rhyme;  
'But from that time until this season,  
'I heard of neither rhyme nor reason.'"<sup>30</sup>

While the wording is slightly different, Manningham's account obviously refers to the same event and response. Recall again that, in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, Spenser mentions a song that Colin "sometime made in honor of her Majesty." This is likely related to the same presentation. Moreover, Thomas Churchyard, the Shrewesbury author who wrote devices for the queen's stopover in Norwich, continued with the royal entourage into Kirtling and observed the following:

From Master Revet's her Highness came to my Lord North's at Kirtling, who was no whit behind any of the best for a frank house, a noble heart, and well ordered entertainment; and there was an Oration made by a gentleman of Cambridge, and a stately and faire cup presented from the University, all the Ambassadors of France beholding the same; and the gentlemen of the shire (as in many other places) did bear the Queene's meat to the table ...<sup>31</sup>

The ambassadors of France refer to Monsieur de Bacqueville and compatriots who joined the progress half-way through with news from Alençon and continued with them to Kirtling, which was where their all-important last dinner was to be held. At the North family estates, the ambassadors pressed the marriage suit of Alençon. The Cambridge man who made an oration at Kirtling is not named, but, if we reasonably assume that he was also one of Leicester's retainers and chosen by Professor Harvey, then Spenser is a likely choice. Regardless, it is interesting to note that Thomas Churchyard would later steal Spenser's lines in a similar situation when Churchyard felt he had not been properly compensated. Quoting Collier's edition of Spenser's works:

In Birch's *Memoirs of Elizabeth*, vol. 1. p. 131, we find substantially the same lines imputed to Thomas Churchyard, the dull and voluminous poet, and there they are inserted as part of a gossiping letter from a person of the name of Standen to Anthony Bacon, dated 17<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1593:—

"You bad your Treasurer on a time  
To give me reason for my rhyme,  
But since that time and that season  
He gave me neither rhyme nor reason."

Our conviction is that the anecdote was well founded as regards Spenser—Churchyard was too dull for the lines.<sup>32</sup>

That the lines were originally Spenser's can scarcely be doubted, as in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, a work he penned not long after his jest, the poet has a similar *season-reason* couplet that includes *on a time*:

<p>For <i>on a time</i> in Summer season, The Gate her dame, that had good <i>reason</i>. --<i>Shepherd's Calendar</i> 19</p>	<p>I was promis'd <i>on a time</i>, To have <i>reason</i> for my <i>rhyme</i>; From that <i>time unto this season</i>, I receiv'd <i>nor rhyme nor reason</i>. --Churchill's borrowed lines</p>
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This is a fingerprint phrasing. An EEBO search for *on a time* FBY.30 *season* FBY.20 *reason* yields only five results: *The Shepherd's Calendar* and four historical accounts that describe Spenser's famous rhyming retort. No one else linked those terms.

It is not especially prudent to doubt the veracity of multiple historical accounts without good reason. But given that Spenser's purported comment shares a unique verbal echo with his 1579 poem, this verifies the documentation.

There is also evidence that authors writing to or about Spenser would evoke this same *rhyme nor reason* phrase. For example, in the 1580 publication of a series of Spenser's and Harvey's letters, *Three Proper, and wittie, familiar Letters*, Harvey writes the following: "Now, I beseech you, what think ye, Gentlewomen, by this Reason? 'Reason,' quoth Madame *Incredula*, 'By my truly, I can neither pick out Rhyme nor Reason.'" <sup>33</sup> An EEBO search reveals that *rhyme nor reason* was not common prior to 1580, occurring in only six other works. Harvey's use of it here was purposeful, and this will be confirmed in the next section with a similar example involving Spenser.

Even the woodcuts fronting the April and May eclogues appear to conjure the image of the progress. In the April illustration, we find the hills in the background—along with the two shepherds talking and watching the entertainment for the queen.

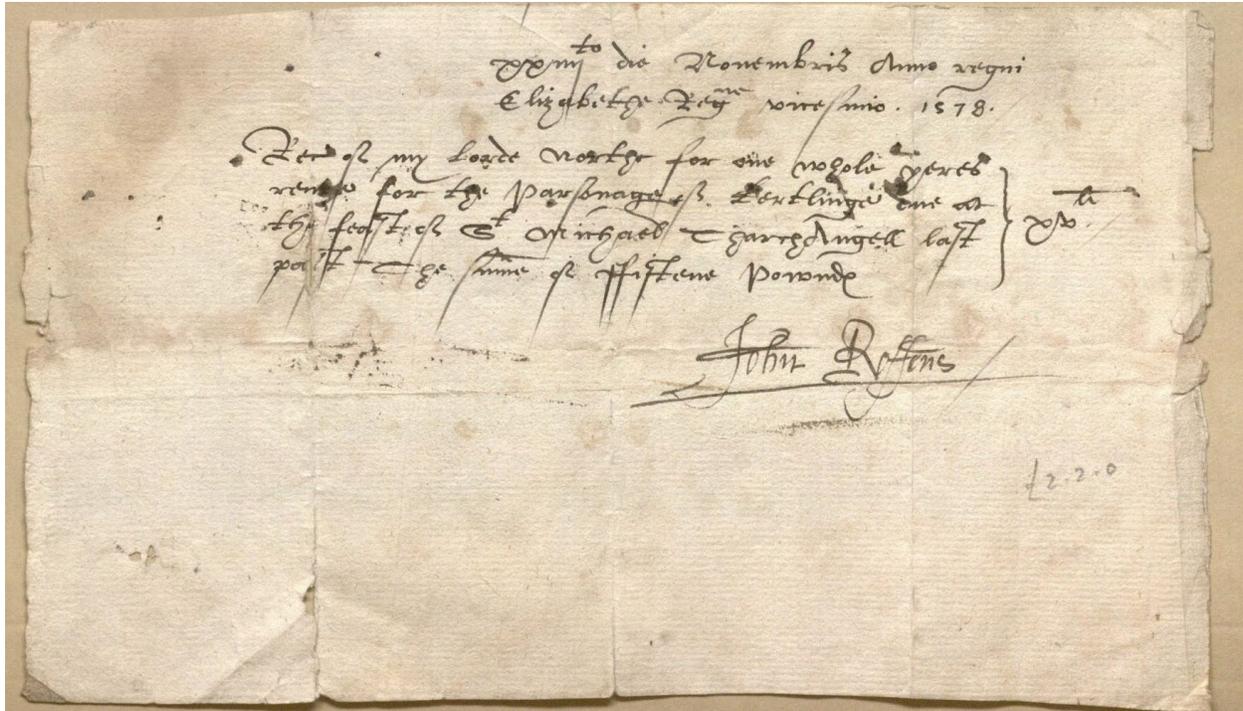


We find the same in the May eclogue: hills as backdrop and two shepherds, again in the upper left, witnessing what appears to be the queen's progress.



Others have noticed these resemblances as well. Douglas Brooks-Davies observes that “[May’s] woodcut parallels April’s woodcut in that both share two shepherd interlocutors ...; a similar hilly background; and a sun setting by a leafy tree.” The foregrounds, he observes, would seem to be linked and are “reminiscent of a monarchical progress ...”<sup>34</sup> And, importantly, the hilly background and pair of watching shepherds is similar to the setting for the woodcut for the June eclogue, with Hobbinol and Colin in the same background, confirming once more that their setting is indeed the progress.

Finally, as noted earlier, Hobbinol advises the rejected Colin to return to the south parts of Kent. At the time, the young poet was secretary to John Young, Bishop of Rochester. In Harvey’s copy of a book given to him by Spenser, we find this inscription: “*ex dono Edmundi Spenserii, Episcopi Roffensi Secretarii. 1578.*” The name “Roffens” or “Roffyn” is an Englishing of the Latin name of John Young, Bishop of Rochester; Spenser even uses “Roffyn” and “Roffy” in defense of the Bishop in his September eclogue.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, while Young resided south of London, likely in Bromley, Kent, this Bishop also controlled the parsonage of Kirtling. And, importantly, the earliest example of Spenser’s handwriting is a legal document found among North family papers, a bill of receipt he wrote for Lord North for the rent of the parsonage of Kirtling, dated 23 November 1578.<sup>36</sup> It is signed “John Roffens,” indicating Spenser’s employer, and correlates with a November payment in Roger North’s record book for the rent of the parsonage. As receipts are almost exclusively given at the time when the money changes hands, this would place Edmund Spenser with Lord North. This is the only legal document relevant to Spenser’s location in the fall of 1578—and it suggests another interaction involving Spenser and Kirtling Hall, one that would post-date the queen’s progress.



But there is even more convincing evidence that Rosalinde is Elisa North, and that is North's *As You Like It*. The knowledge that the two main characters of the play have their counterparts in Elisa North and Edmund Spenser enables an understanding of a number of inside jokes, allusions, and elements that had previously gone unrecognized. And, as the following section will show, it is the consistency, lucidity, and power of this reading that confirms the identity of Spenser's beloved.

### **The Tale of Elisa North and Edmund Spenser in *As You Like It***

More than a century ago, Long solved the question of the identity of Rosalinde. Since then, various historical documents, as well as analyses of *The Shepherd's Calendar*, have located Harvey and Sidney as part of Leicester's entourage during the queen's progress that stopped at Kirtling Hall. The Spenser scholar discovered that the young pastoral poet met his Rosalinde at festivities at her powerful uncle's estates, soon leading to his *Shepherd's Calendar*, a series of pastoral poems describing his effort to woo her, all set in bucolic woods and fields filled with philosophical shepherds. Unfortunately, Long stopped there, just when he was so close to uncovering an even greater secret. For these real-life romantic efforts of Spenser at Kirtling Hall reproduce the peculiar specifics of *As You Like It*, where a pastoral poet meeting his Rosalind at festivities at her powerful uncle's estates, leading to his effort to woo her in bucolic woods and fields in which philosophical shepherds reside. The Orlando/Rosalind storyline represents Spenser's courting of Elisa North, while the Duke Senior subplot focuses on the banishment of her father, particularly to the low countries, near the forest of Ardenne...

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen J. Lynch, *As You Like It: A Guide to the Play* (London: Greenwood Press, 2003), 129.

<sup>2</sup> James Shapiro, *A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare: 1599* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 215.

<sup>3</sup> No form of the name "Rosalind(e)" or "Rosaline" occurs in British History Online as the name of any woman until the late nineteenth century, when the sudden popularity of "Rosalind" was likely due to the popularity of Shakespeare. EEBO does not contain a reference to any form of "Rosalind(e)" or "Rosaline" prior to Spenser's work. And all references after, at least until 1625, either directly allude to Spenser's work or are likely the result of Spenser's (or North's or Shakespeare's) influence.

<sup>4</sup> C. Elliot Browne, "Notes on Shakespeare's Names," *The Athenæum*, Part 2, No. 2544 (1876): 147-48; 147.

<sup>5</sup> Percy W. Long, "Spenser's Rosalind: 'In honour of a private personage unknowne,'" *Anglia: Zeitschrift für englische Philologie* 31, New Series 19 (1908): 72-104; 95.

<sup>6</sup> Richard William Church, *Spenser*. Cambridge Library Collection (1879; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22. Church quotes from [Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser], *Three Proper, and witty, familiar Letters: lately passed betwene two Universitie Men ...* (Imprinted at London, by H. Bynneman, dwelling in Thames streete, neere unto Baynardes Castell, 1580), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Dale B. J. Randall, *Gentle Flame: The Life and Verse of Dudley, Fourth Lord North (1602-1677)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983), 5. According to Dudley North, Kirtling Hall was "situated 'on a prettie Hill' and 'said to have a most statelie Rise by very many Steppes up into the House wherein you may behould a great Part both of this Shire & Suffolke ...'"

<sup>8</sup> A. F. Wareham and A. P. M. Wright, *Kirtling: A History of the County of Cambridge and the Isle of Ely*, vol. 10: Cheveley, Flendish, Staine and Staploe Hundreds (north-eastern Cambridgeshire)," *British History Online*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=18788> (accessed 25 May 2014).

<sup>9</sup> They assumed that in 1578 Spenser travelled to Lancashire in Northern England and, based on records of a Spenser family there, assumed this may have been his birthplace. But there is no evidence for this trip or confirmation that this was Spenser's childhood home—and Long successfully challenges the idea.

<sup>10</sup> Desmond O'Connor, "Florio, John (1553–1625)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 20 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 165-68.

<sup>11</sup> Frances A. Yates, *John Florio: The Life of an Italian in Shakespeare's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 54. This is an old work to quote for an *absence* of a record, but neither John Florio's nor Samuel Daniel's latest entry in *ODNB* mentions the name of the woman in question.

<sup>12</sup> Long, "Spenser's Rosalind," 80.

<sup>13</sup> James Jackson Higginson, *Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar" in Relation to Contemporary Affairs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912), 212.

<sup>14</sup> Higginson, *Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar,"* 216, points out that "In spite of the amount of labor which Grosart [in *The Works of Gabriel Harvey*] expended to prove Spenser's connection with that part of England, the basis of his theory and his methods of reasoning were erroneous, and his identification of Rosalind with an imaginary Rose Dinley is therefore entirely without foundation."

<sup>15</sup> Louise Schleiner, *Cultural Semiotics, Spenser, and the Captive Woman* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1995), 263.

<sup>16</sup> Higginson, *Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar,"* 216.

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- <sup>17</sup> Ben Colburn and Mark Ynys-Mon, "Kirtling," *The Cambridgeshire Churches* <http://www.druidic.org/camchurch/churches/kirtling.htm> (accessed 30 May 2014).
- <sup>18</sup> Bushby, *Three Men of the Tudor Time*, 178.
- <sup>19</sup> Paul E. McLane, "Spenser's Political and Religious Position in the *Shepherd's Calendar*," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 49 (1950): 324-32.
- <sup>20</sup> Ashley H. Thorndike, *English Comedy* (1919; New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1965), 252.
- <sup>21</sup> Lynn Staley Johnson, "*The Shepherd's Calendar*": *An Introduction* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 137.
- <sup>22</sup> H. R. Fox Bourne, *Sir Philip Sidney: Type of English Chivalry in the Elizabethan Age* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1891), 195-96.
- <sup>23</sup> Higginson, *Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar,"* 301.
- <sup>24</sup> Cyndia Susan Clegg, "Censorship," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed's Chronicles*, ed. Paulina Kewes, Ian W. Archer, and Felicity Heal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 43-60; 48.
- <sup>25</sup> Higginson, *Spenser's "Shepherd's Calendar,"* 177.
- <sup>26</sup> Long, "Spenser's Rosalind," 103.
- <sup>27</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The Histories of the Worthies of England ...* (London, Printed by J. G. W. L. and W. G. for Thomas Williams, and are to be sold at the sign of the Bible in Little Britain, 1662), 220.
- <sup>28</sup> William Winstanley, *The Lives Of the most Famous English Poets, Or the Honour of Parnassus ...* (London, Printed by H. Clark, or Samuel Manship at the Sign o the Black Bull in Cornhil, 1687).
- <sup>29</sup> George Sandys's *Anglorum Speculum, Worthies of England, In Church and State ...* (London, Printed for John Wright at the Crown on Ludgate-hill, Thomas Passinger at the three Bibles on London-Bridge, and Willia Thackary at the Angel in Duck-lane, 1684).
- <sup>30</sup> J. Payne Collier, Introduction to *Shakespeare's Comedies, Histories, Tragedies, and Poems*, ed. J. Payne Collier (London: Whittaker and Co., 1858), 1:96n4.
- <sup>31</sup> John Nichols, ed., *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth ...* (London: John Nichols and Son, 1823), 2:219-21.
- <sup>32</sup> J. Payne Collier, Introduction to *The Works of Edmund Spenser*, ed. J. Payne Collier (London: Bell and Daldy Fleetstreet, 1862), lxvi note ix. See also Roger A. Geimer, "Spenser's Rhyme or Churchyard's Reason: Evidence of Churchyard's First Pension," *The Review of English Studies* New Series 20 (1969): 306-9.
- <sup>33</sup> [Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser], *Three Proper, and wittie, familiar Letters: lately passed betwene two Vniversitie men ...* (Imprinted at London, by H. Bynneman, dwelling in Thames Strete, neere unto Baynardes Castell, 1580), 13.
- <sup>34</sup> Douglas Brooks-Davies, *Edmund Spenser: Selected Shorter Poems* (London: Longman, 1995), 80.
- <sup>35</sup> Jonathan Goldberg, *Sodometries: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 75.

<sup>36</sup> Jean R. Brink, *The early Spenser, 1554-80: 'Minde on honour fixed,'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 79. See also Kenneth Spencer Research Library, MS 240A:1024.