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Source: *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Oct., 1906), pp. 34-38

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713503>

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THE RELATION OF 'THE THRACIAN WONDER' TO GREENE'S 'MENAPHON.'

DYCE thought that *The Thracian Wonder* was 'partly founded' on Warner's doggerel narrative of Curan and Argentile (*Albion's England*, Bk. iv), of which Collier gives a grossly misleading account in his *Poetical Decameron*. Fleay, who, on insufficient evidence, assigns the play to Heywood and dates it circa 1617, says that the plot is drawn from William Webster's tract, which is elaborated from Warner's version. From Warner, we may suppose, Greene obtained the central idea of his *Menaphon*; and *The Thracian Wonder* is little more than a dramatic adaptation of Greene's pastoral romance. The chief incidents of the story are kept, and many passages are transferred almost without alteration from novel to play. A very few extracts, placed in juxtaposition, would serve to illustrate the nature of the borrowing. I give the most significant :

The Thracian Wonder.

(Hazlitt's *Webster*.)

Love is a law, a discord of such force,
That 'twixt our sense and reason makes
divorce.

(Spoken by Tityrus, Act i, Sc. ii.)

Love's a desire, that to obtain betime,
We lose an age of years pluck'd from
our prime.

(*Ibid.*)

'They're like the winds upon Lapanthae's
shore,
That still are changing.

(*Ibid.* Concerning women.)

A woman's love is like that Syrian
flower,
That buds and spreads and withers in
an hour.

(*Ibid.*)

Menaphon.

(Arber's *English Scholar's Library*.)

Love is a discord, and a strange di-
vorce

Betwixt our sense and reason....

(The author's own opinion, p. 89.)

Love's a desire, which for to waite a
time,

Dooth loose an age of yeeeres, and so
dooth passe

As dooth the shadow seuerd from his
prime.

(*Ibid.*)

To be briefe, as vppon the shoares of
Lapanthe the winds continue neuer one
day in one quarter, so the thoughtes of
a louer neuer continue scarce a minute
in one passion.

(Spoken by Menaphon, p. 25.)

...the trophees of my fortunes fell like
the hearbes in *Syria*, that flourish in the
morne, and fade before night.

(Spoken by Melicertus, p. 43.)

Like to Diana in her summer's weed,
Going to sport by Arethusa's fount.

(Spoken by Palemon, Act I, Sc. ii.)

Like to *Diana* in her Summer weede
Girt with a crimson roabe of brightest
die,

Goes faire *Samela*.

Whiter than be the flockes that strag-
gling feede,

When washt by *Arethusa* faint they lie:
Is faire *Samela*.

(Sung by Doron, p. 41.)

Could I dissemble love, make tears my
truceman,

Defile my faith with oaths that in the
utterance

Make the hearers tremble.

(*Ibid.*)

I'll fetch Senessa from the down of
swans

To be thy handmaid.

(*Ibid.*)

Teares are his truce-men, words doo
make him tremble.

(Sung by Menaphon, p. 78.)

Hir necke like to an yuorie shining
tower...

Or like the downe of Swannes where
Senesse wonnes.

(*Ibid.* p. 77.)

I take delight to gaze upon the stars,
In which, methinks, I read philosophy;
And by the astronomical aspects
I search out nature's secrets; the chief
means

For the preventing my lambs' prejudice.
I tell you sir, I find, in being a
shepherd,

What many kings want in their
royalties.

(Radagon to Tityrus, Act II, Sc. ii.)

Thou art a shepheard *Menaphon*, who
in feeding of thy flockes, findest out
natures secrecie, and in preventing thy
lambs preiudice conceitest the Astro-
nomicall motions of the heauens: holding
thy sheep-walkes to yeeld as great
Philosophie, as the Ancients discourse
in their learned Academies...and by
being a shepheard findest that which
Kings want in their royalties.

(Soliloquy of Menaphon, p. 24.)

Content shall keep in town and field,
When Neptune from his waves shall
yield

A Thracian wonder; and as when
It shall be prov'd 'mongst Thracian
men,

That lambs have lions to their guides,
And seas have neither ebbs nor tides;
Then shall a shepherd from the plain
Restore your health and crown again.

(Oracle, Act II, Sc. iii.)

When *Neptune* riding on the Southerne
seas

shall from the bosome of his Lemman
yeeld

Th' *arcadian* wonder, men and Gods
to please:

Plentie in pride shall march amidst the
field,

Dead men shall warre, and vnborne
babes shall frowne,

And with their fawchens hew their
foemen downe.

When Lambes haue Lions for their
surest guide,

and Planets rest vpon th' *arcadian*
hills:

When swelling seas haue neither ebbe
nor tide,

When equall bankes the Ocean margine
fills.

Then looke *Arcadians* for a happie
time,

And sweete content within your troubled
Clyme.

(Oracle, p. 22.)

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Comets portend at first blaze, but take
effect

Within the bosom of the destinies ;
So oracles at Delphos though foretold,
Are shap'd and finish'd in your council
house.

(Spoken by Pheander, Act III, Sc. i.)

...that Comets did portend at the
first blaze, but tooke effect in the dated
bosome of the destinies ; that oracles
were foretold at the *Delphian* Caue, but
were shapte out and finished in the
Counsell house.

(Discourse of Democles, p. 22.)

I saw a face of such surpassing beauty,
That Jove and nature, should they both
contend

To make a shape of their mix'd purity,
Could not invent a sky-born form so
beautiful as she.

(Pheander, Act IV, Sc. i.)

Not *Ioue* or Nature should they both
agree

To make a woman of the Firmament,
Of his mixt puritie could not inuent
A Skie borne forme so beautifull as
she.

(‘Melicertus description of his mistres,’
p. 52.)

The stars from earthly humours gain
their light,

Our humours from their lights possess
their powers.

(*Ibid.*)

The starres from earthly humors gaine
their light.

Our humors by their light possesse
their power.

(‘Melicertus Madrigale,’ p. 55.)

There are many minor resemblances in actual language; and the correspondence of situation and characterisation is often striking. The scene has merely been shifted from Arcadia to Thrace. *Menaphon* ends very abruptly. Greene's characters appear to have so entangled their affairs that there is no easy and probable way out of the difficulty. The author impatiently introduces a ‘prophetess’ who benevolently blabs everybody's secrets. The dramatist of *The Thracian Wonder* felt the necessity of action and dramatic probability. There is a good deal of fighting in the latter part of his play, and the plot develops without intrusion of any other supernatural element than the working out of the oracle. But the main lines of the original story are kept.

For the sake of comparison, I give here a list of the principal characters of *The Thracian Wonder* side by side with their proto-types :

The Thracian Wonder.

Pheander, King of Thrace.
Alcade, King of Africa.
Sophos.
Radagon, *alias* Menalcas.
Eusanus.
Ariadne, *alias* Mariana.

Menaphon.

Democles, King of Arcadia.
King of Thessaly.
Lamedon.
Maximius, *alias* Melicertus.
Pleusidippus.
Sephestia, *alias* Samela.

Casual resemblances between the minor characters need hardly be noted.

An examination of the parallel passages quoted above will show that even when the actual words of the novel are conveyed, they are by no means invariably assigned to the correspondent characters and situations in the play. In fact, notable expressions are sometimes culled from widely separated passages in *Menaphon* and combined in a single speech. It is obvious from this familiar method of borrowing, no less than from the careless freedom with which the story is treated, that the playwright had a very intimate knowledge of the romance. He certainly did not sit down with the book before him deliberately to dramatise a work with which he had only the general reader's acquaintance. He trusted a memory stored with particular lines and images, and was careless whether the details of the plot were reproduced exactly or transformed. He shows precisely the kind of intimacy with his subject which we should expect from him if he himself had written *Menaphon*. He treats his material much as we might expect Greene to do if he were dramatising one of his own novels shortly after the date of its composition. *Menaphon* was issued in 1589: let us provisionally date *The Thracian Wonder* about 1590. The mention of 'old Menophon' in the second scene of Act IV is a distinct reference to the source of the plot, but I fear it cannot be induced to shed any light on the questions of authorship or date. But in Act V, scene ii, there is what may be taken as a reference to another of Greene's works:

Pal. Nay, fly me not, my fair Angelica.

Clown. Put up thy bilbo then, my mad Orlando.

Such explicit reminiscence on the part of the clown was hardly needed to draw attention to the close family resemblance of Palemon in his madness and the unconvincing lunatic lover of *Orlando Furioso*. There is doubt as to the actual date of production of Greene's plays, for none of them was printed until after his death. But *Orlando Furioso* was probably written in 1590 or 1591. It is possible, though not at all likely, that the sketch of Palemon preceded the more elaborate portrait of Orlando; and the reference in *The Thracian Wonder* may, in that case, be taken as an indication that Greene's mind was already dwelling on Ariosto's work. *A Looking Glasse for London*, in which Lodge collaborated with Greene, came out about 1590. It contains a character, Radagon, whose name is identical with that of one of the chief personages in *The Thracian Wonder*. In style the latter play seems to belong to the earliest and poorest group of Greene's dramatic works. It may have undergone some corruption,

revision and alteration before its publication in 1661, but the variations in the verse are such as we might expect from Greene, and there are some peculiarities—such as the use of 'gracious' as a trisyllable (= 'g'racious')—which certainly favour the theory of a sixteenth century origin.

There is one allusion in *Menaphon* which I believe nobody has explained. What is the meaning of 'the downe of Swannes where *Senesse* wonnes'? I was inclined to believe that 'Senesse' might be an invented term for 'old age.' But capitalization and change of type signify allusion to a definite personage; and the comparative freedom from misprints is fair evidence that Greene overlooked his own proof-sheets. In *The Thracian Wonder*, 'Senesse' becomes 'Senessa,' and her personality and sex are confirmed. If 'Senesse' is 'old age,' Greene was not the author of *The Thracian Wonder*: but if, as is probable enough, 'Senessa' is the name of a lady celebrated in sixteenth century Italian romance or elsewhere, the question of authorship is still an open one.

J. LE GAY BRERETON.