

## The Feud and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*: a Reconsideration

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Writers on Shakespeare have assumed the genesis and source of *Romeo and Juliet* to be purely literary, based chiefly on Brooke's 1562 poem, and perhaps Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*.<sup>1</sup> But is it possible that a set of real English circumstances was the spur, to set the scene and prod Shakespeare's imagination to make use of a thirty-year-old poem, transforming both true story and pedestrian poem into the famous play? For it is possible to identify an English situation containing many of the elements which make up the theme of *Romeo and Juliet*, some of which are not in Brooke, and to show the links with Shakespeare which mean that he knew the circumstances. These events of 1594-5 could also help to date the play's composition more closely.

The thematic elements of bitter feud, secret marriage between very young offspring of the chief adversaries, followed by public quarrel and killing between opponents, and exile, occurred during a divisive feud between leading wealthy families in Wiltshire in the 1590s. Violent feuds were frequent in Elizabethan England. But a secret marriage between offspring of the contending houses does not seem to have occurred in any other at this time.<sup>2</sup> The patron with whom Shakespeare was unequivocally connected from 1594, Lord Hunsdon, the Lord Chamberlain, was closely involved with these events and those taking part in them, as will be shown, thus providing a link by which the poet would have known of them by late 1594.<sup>3</sup> It is notable too that certain of the changes Shakespeare made to Brooke's poem seem to reflect the people or events involved in this par-

1 A. Brooke, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (pub. 1562, repr. 1587); G. Bullough (ed.), *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare* (London 1957) I. 270-74; K. Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources* (London 1957), pp. 21-30.

2 A. Hassell Smith, *Country and Court: Government & Politics in Norfolk, 1558-1603* (Oxford 1974), pp. 180-200; P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution* (Harvester Press 1977), pp. 261-2; N. H. Nicholas, *Memoirs of Sir Christopher Hatton* (1874), pp. 256-7, 321-3; L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford 1965), pp. 224-6, 228-34.

3 S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare A Documentary Life* (Oxford 1975), p. 136.

ticular feud, although the tragic outcome of both poem and play was absent from the more mundane miseries suffered by some of the actual participants. The true story would require disguise, in addition to the requirements of dramatic plot, for all the major actors in it were well known in London and at the Queen's Court.<sup>4</sup>

Sir James Marvin headed one of the rival households. He was the older of the two major contenders, and having only a daughter as heir, his hopes for succession of his estate at Fountell rested on his daughter's children, including a grand-daughter Maria Tuchet or Audley, who had a suitor of high birth, Mr Manners, at Court.<sup>5</sup> Marvin's allies included Sir John Danvers and his two hotheaded sons Sir Charles and Sir Henry.

John Thynne of Longleat was a leader of the other faction, closely helped by a friend and from 1594, brother-in-law, Sir Walter Long, and his brother Henry Long.<sup>6</sup> Sir Henry Knyvett also supported Thynne in the quarrels with Marvin, although he was of a more moderate nature and attempted to mediate.

We may follow actual events in the same order in which they appear in the play, in order to point up the major similarities. The long-standing quarrel dating from 1575 erupted in violent street affrays between large groups of followers of Marvin and Thynne at Salisbury, Hindon, and Marlborough, in which sev-

- 4 This factious feud was the major element in Wiltshire politics for many years. See A. D. Wall, "The Wiltshire Commission of the Peace 1590-1620: A Study of its Social Structure" (Unpublished M.A. thesis, Melbourne 1967).
- 5 For Marvin pedigree, see Bodl. MS Rawl. B435, 63; omitted from the 1565 and 1623 Visitation (P. R. O. Wills, 89 Wood). The will is printed in Sir William Drake, *Notes on the Family of Mervyn of Pertwood* (privately printed, 1873), Devizes Museum 35. Marvin was an esquire of the body to Queen Elizabeth. The suitor was presumably one of the family of Manners, Earls of Rutland. Between 1590-95 the young Earl of Rutland was at Oxford, Corpus Christi College, the same college as Thynne's son (*Dictionary of National Biography*). Marvin intended his chief estate at Fountell to go to an Audley grand-daughter and her husband of his choosing, rather than to Mervyn Audley the eldest grandson, who received other lands. This is clear from the will made in 1610.
- 6 Long married Thynne's sister Catherine in late 1593 or early 1594, securing their alliance at the height of the quarrels (P.R.O. C. 142 334/65). Evidence of bitter hostility also appears in correspondence of Joan Thynne, which I am editing for a future publication entitled *Two Elizabethan Women: Correspondence of Joan and Maria Thynne, 1574-1612*.

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eral men suffered serious injuries.<sup>7</sup> A servant on one occasion said "A company followeth me, and I think they are Mr Thynn's men, I am not provided for them for I have no weapon". We might note here that one of Shakespeare's alterations to Brooke is to commence his play with a street brawl, following insults exchanged between the factions, with servants and followers very ready to fight.

These fights were very widely known at the Court and elsewhere during years 1589-92 because of the consequent very bitter Star Chamber cases (in which each side accused the other of starting the affrays) which gave rise to a Privy Council Commission, representing the effective intervention of the Crown.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps this is echoed in Prince Escalus' call to peace in the play.<sup>9</sup> It is notable too that in this speech the Prince mentions "three civil brawls, bred of an airy word".<sup>10</sup> One of the many links with Hunsdon, later to become Shakespeare's patron, arose from the battles and court cases. For Hunsdon was involved directly as a Privy Councillor, but also more closely still. He was specifically lobbied on Thynne's behalf during the quarrel, so he must have been very familiar with the details. Moreover Thynne's ally Knyvett was in Hunsdon's train in 1590 at Chichester during discussion of the feud with Marvin. Hunsdon was also directly involved in another quarrel of Thynne's in 1591. The Earl of Pembroke, a putative candidate as a Shakespeare patron, was also drawn in by Knyvett.<sup>11</sup>

7 These occurred at the highly public events of Assizes and Quarter Sessions 1589, and gave rise to much lengthy litigation in Star Chamber (P.R.O. St.Ch. 5T 39/16, also St.Ch. 5M 35/26, and 5T 8/9). Very many witnesses were listed for interrogation including nearly all the Wiltshire gentry. Such incidents occurred elsewhere in England, but this was very well known and involved quite large numbers; Thynne alleged Marvin had three score, Marvin admitted in another, sixteen "weaponed", followers.

8 Note Lady Danvers' comment on the feud — "as all the country knows", HMC Cecil vi. 267-8, 1596.

9 *Romeo and Juliet*, I. i. 79ff.

10 Cf. R. A. Law, "Shakespeare's Changes of his Source Material in *Romeo and Juliet*", *Texas Studies in English*, IX, 1929, p. 95.

11 Longleat MSS, Thynne Papers, vi, f. 113, South to Mompesson, 6 October 1589. Also Thynne, vi, f. 152; Thynne vi, f. 172. Knyvett also discussed the case with other high officials at Court (Thynne, vi, f. 120). I am indebted to the Marquess of Bath for allowing me to consult manuscripts in his possession at Longleat. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford 1923), ii. 128-9, points out that Pem-

The law cases and the feud simmered on into the early 1590s, and about 1592 a friend advised Thynne that Marvin had not forgotten the old grudge and would still persecute Thynne's friends.

The next highly dramatic incidents occurred early in 1594. Thomas Thynne, eldest son of the faction leader, was aged sixteen, and a student at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. He had with him such romantic and chivalric books as *Orlando Furioso* and Sidney's *Arcadia*, also a lute and lute-book. From the earlier of two later portraits which still hang at Longleat, we know that he was dark, with strong features, long face with full red lips, and sensitive eyes, and certainly created a romantic manly impression.

Also at Oxford (Exeter College) was a fellow Wiltshire boy, Henry Willoughby, whose family was on very close terms with the Thynnes, and who lived at Knoyle, close to the Marvins. There is a tenuous Shakespearean affinity here too, if this Henry Willoughby has any connection with *Willobie His Avis*, published September 1594, and containing the first reference to Shakespeare as a poet.<sup>12</sup> Willoughby's brother William married Eleanor Bampfield, whose sister married Shakespeare's friend and overseer of his will, Thomas Russell. John Thynne had a close connection with a certain John Bampfield at Oxford, as well as with Willoughby, and may therefore have known the Bampfield girls well.<sup>13</sup> Willoughby's position in the feud may have been as a neutral, friend of both Thynnes and Marvins, but more important is the link he provides in possibly channelling information to Shakespeare. But although these conjectures may

12 *Willobie His Avis or the True Picture of a modest maid, and of a chaste and constant wife* (1594), ed. G. B. Harrison (London 1926); Schoenbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5.

13 There were friendly letters and references to Thynne's ward Willoughby; John Bampfield writes to John Thynne as his grandfather, and Thomas Bampfield as father, which is not possible. I still hope to find more light on this matter, and possibly thence on *Willobie His Avis*. (Thynne Papers, v. f.233, Brown to Thynne, 19 December 1582. Thynne, v. f.240 John Bampfield to Thynne, 26 February 1582/3. Thynne, vi, f.267, Thomas Bampfield to Thynne, 15 March 1593/4.)

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broke's players were in the West, including Bath in 1592-3, and that some of the plays seem to have been worked on by Shakespeare. *Titus Andronicus*, entered Stationers' Register February 1594, had been played by Pembroke's Men (Schoenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 124 and p. 125).

add to it, they do not affect the main argument regarding the Thynnes, the Marvins and the feud.

Thomas Thynne was at Oxford in the spring of 1594, having been there about two years. On the Thursday in Whitsun week, Thomas rode with two friends to a supper given by some of the Marvins at the Bell Inn at Beaconsfield, a stage on the road to London.

At the supper Thomas and Maria met for the first time. One John Marvin, Thomas' very familiar friend (not of the direct Marvin line and normally associated with the Thynnes) stated later that Thomas had never seen Maria before he met her at Beaconsfield. Maria was in her teens, dark haired, vivid and of a very lively nature.<sup>14</sup> They talked, drank, and supped at the Inn. Later the same evening they were married by candlelight in an upper chamber, by one Welles, a minister who was brought in, and without the knowledge of the Thynnes. The boy and girl parted next morning and kept the marriage secret for a time, although a friend took messages to Thomas in London afterwards.<sup>15</sup>

The parallels with the play are clear enough, and notably one of Shakespeare's alterations of Brooke is that Romeo goes to the Capulet supper with two acquaintances.<sup>16</sup> At this point, however, the real-life model, if such it was, diverged from the literary one. For Maria's mother was not only present at the clandestine marriage, but had encouraged the young pair to marry immediately if they liked one another. Certainly the impulse to marriage seems to have come from Maria and her mother (her father's attitude is not known).<sup>17</sup> But if they were pleased, they knew the Thynnes would be outraged. They would be outraged because they felt more bitterly about the feud, and

14 Her portrait, painted about 1610, is also on public view at Longleat. It is reproduced in the guidebook, and in Daphne Bath, *Longleat* (The Longleat Estate, 1949), p. 35.

15 Thynne Papers, Book 190.

16 However, the two were Tennant and Mosely, the former a Marvin retainer, rather than an ally as in the play.

17 One factor in reality may have been the illicit betrothal twenty years earlier between Maria's mother and Thomas' father; their friendship had been severed by the Thynne family's opposition. But this was probably not generally known in the 1590s, nor would it have been known to Shakespeare. (Thomas and Maria's love shows very clearly in Maria's extant letters after 1601, which will be included in my edition.)

had put far more effort into prosecuting the Marvin side in the Star Chamber in 1591 than vice versa. Moreover such a marriage, without dowry agreement, would bring Maria into the Thynnes' great lands which Thomas would inherit, but without her contribution. Thomas assisted in keeping the secret for nearly twelve months, whereas his aunt's marriage to Walter Long the same year was quite public and well known, serving to cement the faction.

The next phase of the story, the insults, brawl, death, and exile which followed, in October 1594 involved not the faction leaders Marvins and Thynnes, but their close respective allies and friends: Danvers on one side, against the Longs who had so recently become kinsmen of the Thynnes.<sup>18</sup> As members of the factions, the Danvers and Longs had sparred for some time, convicting each other's servants for crimes, and in an affray the Longs' servant killed a Danvers servant. Challenges and insulting letters passed between them; Henry Long goaded Charles Danvers, threatening to whip him and calling him "Asse, Puppie, foole, and Boye".

Clearly the young Danvers brothers (in their early twenties) were hotheaded and very ready to fight. (Moreover Charles Danvers continued his rashness, joining later in the Essex revolt and losing his life on Tower Hill.) Henry Danvers had served with the army in the Netherlands and France, initially as page to Sir Philip Sidney, and was knighted by Essex in 1591 before Rouen. It is tempting to speculate that most elements of Tybalt's character portray Danvers, in his lively eagerness to fight, his French phrases, and perhaps also the "captain of compliments" refers obliquely to his army service.<sup>19</sup> He could perhaps be considered a gentleman of the first house, for his mother was

18 The following section is based partly on Star Chamber cases, of which there was a long series. The chief ones used here are: St.Ch. 5/D14/33; 5/D12/13; 5/D1/28; 5/E5/35; 5/D26/14; 5/D31/12. Also *Calendar of State Papers Domestic 1595-1597*, pp. 31, 34, 337; *Cal. S.P. Dom. 1581-1590*, p. 570: wrongly dated 1588: it refers to the murder of Henry Long which took place in October 1594; *Cal. S.P. Dom. 1598-1601*, p. 78; H.M.C., *Cecil*, v. 267, 288; viii, 9, 269. There is an account of the murder in the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* I, No. 3, p. 305 "Murder of Henry Long, Esq, A.D. 1594", taken from B. M. Lansdowne MS 827. See also *Wilts. Arch. Mag.* VIII, 24, p. 239; P. MacNamara, *Memorials of the Danvers Family* (London 1895).

19 *Romeo and Juliet*, II. iv. 18.

a Nevill. Moreover, his portrait as engraved by Lodge, and the one at Woburn, make his whiskery face and hair somewhat cat-like in appearance.<sup>20</sup>

The climactic affray on Friday 4 October 1594 involved Sir Walter and Henry Long and several other gentlemen of their faction who sat at dinner in the house of one Chamberlayne at Corsham. Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers burst in with about sixteen followers, determined "with some small disgrace to requite so many great disgraces", and in the brawl Henry Danvers killed Harry Long, with a pistol. Following the outrage, the Danvers brothers fled immediately to the Earl of Southampton and thence into exile in France, as is well-known from the printed account in the *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* and elsewhere. They had been outlawed after a coroner's inquisition on 5 October at Corsham, on oath of twelve men after view of Henry Long's body, and two accomplices were indicted with them.

The Thynnes were closely interested, and a cousin reported at length to John Thynne about the aftermath.<sup>21</sup> He told Thynne about the execution of one of Long's murderers at Corsham early in March, and about the events concerning a Dorsetshire gentleman (bound over by the Earl of Hertford for assisting the knights to escape overseas), who insulted Hertford. Soon after, the gentleman and the Earl of Southampton were indicted as accessories and sent to the Fleet. Essex's intercession with the Queen for Southampton via Lord Buckhurst failed to secure his release, but he was later licensed to keep his own house for health reasons.

We need to consider whether or not Southampton rather than Hunsdon was the link between the feud and Shakespeare. Shakespeare's relationship with Southampton has been very widely discussed, and the dedication of the two poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* certainly show an eagerness for the young earl's patronage, but the desire for patronage does not prove it was given, and as Schoenbaum points out, there is no evidence that Southampton ever extended help to Shakespeare or that Shakespeare was ever a member of his household.<sup>22</sup> He

20 E. Lodge, *Portraits of Illustrious Personages*, iv (London 1849-50).

21 Thynne, vi, ff. 300-301, Bosden to Thynne, 7 March 1594/5.

22 *Venus and Adonis* entered Stationers' Register 18 April 1593, *Rape of Lucrece* entered 9 May 1594. Schoenbaum *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4, discusses the tradition that Southampton actually helped Shakespeare.

knew Southampton presumably as a member of the Court, possibly also if Shakespeare was, as some have argued, acting with the Earl of Pembroke's men. One might assume that Southampton offered encouragement, or willingness to receive dedication, but that need not involve material help.

But the dedication of *The Rape of Lucrece* in May 1594 was in any case the last concrete reference by Shakespeare to Southampton. On the other hand, there is documented evidence connecting Shakespeare most directly as a servant of Hunsdon's by 1594, and Hunsdon was involved in the events at many stages.

News of the murderous affray between the gentlemen and of the flight of the Danvers travelled far and wide, the hue and cry for their apprehension following across the county of Hampshire. On 7 October, Hunsdon together with Lord Keeper Puckering wrote on the Queen's behalf from the Court at Nonsuch with an account of the outrage, demanding to know the full truth from all the gentlemen then present, and charging them to apprehend those that were in the action. The letter was to the sheriff and all the J.P.s, including John Thynne. Hunsdon and Puckering's letter showed considerable knowledge of the affray. With Hunsdon's close involvement, the link between the factions, the patron, and the playwright tightens considerably. By December 1594 the first recorded connection of Shakespeare with an acting company shows that he was by then a leading member and joint payee, with Burbage and Kempe, of Hunsdon's players, as "servaunts to the Lord Chamberleyne" for performances before the Queen at

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The sonnets often linked with Southampton probably belong to 1593-4. G. P. V. Akrigg, *Shakespeare and the Earl of Southampton* (London 1968) and A. L. Rowse, *Shakespeare's Southampton* (London 1965), do not produce any clear evidence for their confidently stated central point. Rowse has assumed that Shakespeare knew of the Long murder, but only via his assumption that Shakespeare was in Southampton's household at the time, i.e. late 1594, which is extremely unlikely. Rowse does not show awareness of the full story, moreover misses the point made in *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine*, *Cal. S.P. Dom.*, MacNamara, and elsewhere that Long was shot, not stabbed. Mary Edmond's article "Pembroke's Men", *R.E.S. N.S. XXV* (1974), 129-36 adds further weight to the conclusions of Chambers and others that Shakespeare was not in Pembroke's, and was with his permanent company the Chamberlain's Men from the start; they were playing for Henslowe at Newington Butts in June 1594 (Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, ii. 129-30, 193-4).

Court.<sup>23</sup> This was to remain Shakespeare's company, and he became a shareholder, as well as dramatist and player.

Since Shakespeare was already a leading member of Hunsdon's company by December, it is most likely he was with that company three months earlier when it was in Wiltshire during the feuding, at Marlborough. The players certainly heard public discussion of the factions, their enmity and insults, in particular since one of the notorious affrays of Marvins and Thynnes occurred at Marlborough Quarter Sessions before scores of witnesses, who were called for evidence in the Star Chamber cases. Marlborough was not far from the Danvers seat at Dauntsey nor the Longs' at Draycot, and the main London road passed through Corsham and Marlborough, bringing speedy news via travellers. It is notable too that on the very day after Hunsdon wrote about the slaying of Long, 8 October 1594, he was writing to the Lord Mayor of London to secure winter quarters at the Cross Keys for his "newe companie of Players". So clearly the troop was well established but not yet legally housed in London, and clearly too Hunsdon was concerned with the feud at the same time that he was closely concerned with his players. Although the patron of a company was not necessarily very closely in touch with it, Hunsdon's interest in the players suggests that he was. Moreover he was the chief champion of players in London. His family was also to become very closely related to that of those participants in the feud.

The feud was widely discussed outside Wiltshire, as well as locally. The open slaughter of a prominent gentleman was more notorious than those of servants, as expressed in Hunsdon's letter, where he says "Her Mat<sup>t</sup> ys deserous to be Informed of the Truth of so outrageous a fact . . ."<sup>24</sup> Lady Danvers' reference to "this quarrel . . . as all the country knows" in a letter to Principal Secretary of State Robert Cecil may represent common usage of

23 Schoenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 136, with facsimile of the Exchequer Pipe Office Declared accounts entry. Hunsdon seems to me to have been too readily dismissed as a bluff soldier. His taste was sufficient to have the greatest playwright and some of the greatest actors of his time under his protection, and to champion them staunchly. Naunton, *Fragmenta Regalia* (London 1814), pp. 78-9, said he was firm to his friends and servants. So far a search of much of his correspondence in Bodl. MSS yields no information on his players, but I hope to find more.

24 Printed in *Wiltshire Archaeological Magazine* VIII, No. 24, pp. 239-40.

the word for county,<sup>25</sup> but there are many references in the State Papers, Cecil's correspondence, Chamberlain's comments, and of course the Star Chamber cases, to bring in a greater public at Court.

Sir John Danvers, father of the killer, died two months after the event, "slain with dolour and grief" as his wife complained to Cecil, reminding us of Romeo's mother dying of a broken heart, in the play. Lady Danvers soon afterwards married Hunsdon's son Edmund Carey, who had land in Wiltshire, allegedly to use his influence and close relationship to the Queen to gain pardon for her exiled sons.<sup>26</sup> Here then is yet another close link between Shakespeare's new master, and the "Houses at variance with each other".

The final aspect of this line of argument concerns a possible dating of the play. The various links between these dramatic and notorious events, Hunsdon, and his player Shakespeare as shown above make it certain that Shakespeare knew most of the story by Christmas 1594. But one key element, the secret marriage between the children of the faction leaders, was kept secret until mid-April 1595. That was when the Thynnes found out about it. They were horrified, and hoped that the marriage might be annulled. They disliked the match chiefly because it was with the adversary's family, but also because such a marriage destroyed their hopes to make a good match for their eldest son, a match which would have brought a dowry and advantageous alliance. Moreover, in the intervening period since the match, the feud had been embittered by the public slaying of Henry Long.

Early in May 1595 Joan Thynne was writing to her husband at his well known Cannon Row house in London about their son's secret marriage, and she confided in two cousins about her great grief and sorrow, which was apparently noticeable. Since the matter was being discussed by letter and in person among a number of people, some widely dispersed, this is likely to be the time when news of it reached more people and percolated Court circles in London. For now there were the eight or so people who would have known at the time, and another group of at least four, and probably also Joan Thynne's sister Elizabeth, in London, as well as other relatives.<sup>27</sup>

25 H.M.C., *Cecil* vi. 267-8.

26 J. Aubrey, *Brief Lives* (ed. Clark, Oxford 1898), i. 193-4.

27 Thynne Papers, v, ff. 80, 82, 84, vii, f. 200.

The aftermath was not, however, the tragic one of the play, with resultant reconciliation of the warring factions. Instead there was a long-drawn-out wrangle, with a case in the Court of Arches over the validity of the marriage. It was to be acknowledged in 1601, but contrary to the expressed hopes of the Marvins, did not reconcile the two houses in friendship.

It remains conjecture whether Shakespeare would have heard of this aspect of the feud about May 1595, which seems likely, or whether he first heard of it early in 1597, when the court case began. Causes matrimonial in the Court of Arches were heard in the Church of St Mary le Bow, in London. If we take a date about 1595 for the composition of *Romeo and Juliet*, this puts the play definitely into the period when Shakespeare was writing plays with topical allusions, in particular *Love's Labours Lost*, and makes it more likely therefore that the events described here prompted him to write. Moreover, an early date might seem to square with Hunsdon's earlier friendship to Thynnes, in that Shakespeare seems to give more sympathetic treatment to Romeo and the Montague friend Mercutio, than Tybalt (i.e. before the Hunsdon marriage link to Danvers). The first edition of the play, the quarto of 1597, states it was acted by "Lord Hunsdon's servants" which was the title of the Lord Chamberlain's players only between Henry Carey's death in July 1596 and March 1597 when the second Lord Hunsdon succeeded to his father's office and they were again the Chamberlain's men. By this time the marriage of one of the participants to one of Hunsdon's sons had taken place, also drawing attention to the events.

The publication of, by then, an old play, in 1597, and a "bad Quarto" may suggest someone was capitalizing on the now publicly known link of the play to a newly stirred-up scandal — remembering that the Court case on the secret marriage commenced in April 1597, keeping John Thynne continuously, perhaps conspicuously, in London, over this "prowd undutiful son [hoped . . . that] I may no more spend in that sute my time and charges in vain".<sup>28</sup>

*Romeo and Juliet* too is in many aspects more an example of a Renaissance comedy, turning to tragedy only in the last part. Because of this, audiences of the time were more likely to expect topical allusions as they did in comedy, this is therefore a further point in favour of the argument that the play referred partly to well known events.

28 Thynne Papers, v, f. 110.

Further evidence of continuing interest in the feud at the Court, by so highly placed a personage as Robert Cecil, appears in a mysterious undated letter of his to a lord, almost certainly Essex.<sup>29</sup> The letter probably belongs to about August 1598, which was when the Danvers were allowed to return from exile.<sup>30</sup> Cecil refers to Sir Henry Danvers' return, and mentions his own dealing in his favour. He goes on at some length to say that the Queen's favour to the recipient is proved by her treatment of Danvers, for "you dyd y<sup>e</sup> Jentleman a high Favour to imploy him in an acceptable Messadg", and that now she abstains from punishing Danvers, but wonders how ("y<sup>e</sup> world having taken Notice of his Errours") she could admit him access.

Hunsdon and Shakespeare may have had a twofold purpose in preparing a play on the effects of feud combined with romantic headlong passion. First was dramatic and public success. A subsidiary motive may have been to capitalize on a newly famous story, in using the device of portraying vice to commend virtue. In other words, to point up the tragic consequences which could follow from that sort of vendetta which had created the major problem for the young lovers.

29 Bodl. MSS Add. C.307.

30 M. E. McClure, *The Letters of Joan Chamberlain* (Philadelphia 1939), i. 43 (London, August 30, 1598: "Sir Charles and Sir Henry Danvers are come. I saw them both yesterday").