Robert Greene (1560-1592)

Robert Greene (baptized 11 July 1558, died 3 September 1592) was an English author popular in his day, and now best known for a posthumous pamphlet attributed to him, Greenes, Groats-worth of Witte, bought with a million of Repentance, widely believed to contain an attack on William Shakespeare. He is said to have been born in Norwich. He attended Cambridge, receiving a B.A. in 1580, and an M.A. in 1583 before moving to London, where he arguably became the first professional author in England. Greene published in many genres including romances, plays and autobiography.

Greene is thought to have attended the free grammar school at Norwich, although this cannot be confirmed as enrolment documents for the relevant years are lost. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, provided scholarships for students from the Norwich grammar school, and for this reason Greene's matriculation as a sizar at St John's College, Cambridge, has been considered 'strange'. A reason offered for Greene's enrolment at St John's is that some of the gentry of South Yorkshire attended St John's, and among the dedicatees of, or authors of commendatory verses for, Greene's books were members of the Darcy, Portington, Lee, Stapleton and Rogers families, all centered at Snaith, Yorkshire; according to Richardson, the Robert Greene from Norwich who was an innkeeper may have been an immigrant from Yorkshire connected to 'a large family of Greenes' who lived in the parish of Snaith, and may actually have left Norwich to reside at Snaith from 1571 to 1577.

There is no record of Greene's having taken part in the dramatic productions at Cambridge in 1579 and 1580, although 18 of his classmates and Fellows of the Cambridge colleges acted in Hymenaeus, and 46 in Richardus Tertius. His academic performance as an undergraduate at Cambridge was mediocre; on 22 January 1580 he took his BA, graduating 38th out of 41 students in his college, and 115th out of the total university graduating class that year of 205 students. He 'apparently transferred to Clare College for his 1583 MA', where he placed 5th out of 12 students in his college, and 29th of the 129 students at the university. It was 'rare for a student to migrate to another college (as Greene did) after he had received the baccalaureate', and no record of Greene's transfer to Clare College has been discovered, nor does his name appear in the Clare Hall Buttery Book for 1580-84. Greene's claim to association with Clare College is found in the second part of Mamillia, which was not published until 1593, after Greene's death, in which the dedicatory epistle to Robert Lee and Roger Portington is signed 'Robert Greene. From my Studie in Clarehall the vii. Of Julie'.
Greene died 3 September 1592. His death and burial were announced by Gabriel Harvey in a letter to Christopher Bird of Saffron Walden dated 5 September, first published as a 'butterfly pamphlet' about 8 September, and later expanded as Four Letters and Certain Sonnets, entered in the Stationers' Register on 4 December 1592. Harvey attributed Greene's demise to 'a surfeit of pickle herring and Rhenish wine', and claimed he had been buried in 'the new churchyard near Bedlam' on 4 September. No record of Greene's burial has been found.
Cupid Abroad Was Lated

CUPID abroad was lated in the night,
His wings were wet with ranging in the rain;
Harbor he sought, to me he took his flight
To dry his plumes. I heard the boy complain:
I oped the door and granted his desire,
I rose myself, and made the wag a fire.

Looking more narrow by the fire's flame,
I spied his quiver hanging by his back.
Doubting the boy might my misfortune frame,
I would have gone, for fear of further wrack;
But what I drad did me, poor wretch, betide,
For forth he drew an arrow from his side.

He pierced the quick, and I began to start,
A pleasing wound but that it was too high;
His shaft procured a sharp yet sugared smart.
Away he flew, for why is wings were dry;
But left the arrow sticking in my breast,
That sore I grieved I welcomed such a guest.

Robert Greene
Farewell To Folly

1  Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content;
2       The quiet mind is richer than a crown;
3  Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent;
4       The poor estate scorns fortune's angry frown:
5  Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss,
6  Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.

7  The homely house that harbours quiet rest;
8       The cottage that affords no pride nor care;
9  The mean that 'grees with country music best;
10      The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare;
11  Obscured life sets down a type of bliss:
12  A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

Robert Greene
Fawnia

AH! were she pitiful as she is fair,
Or but as mild as she is seeming so,
Then were my hopes greater than my despair,
Then all the world were heaven, nothing woe.
Ah! were her heart relenting as her hand,
That seems to melt even with the mildest touch,
Then knew I where to seat me in a land
Under wide heavens, but yet there is not such.
So as she shows she seems the budding rose,
Yet sweeter far than is an earthly flower;
Sovran of beauty, like the spray she grows;
Compass'd she is with thorns and canker'd flower.
And were she willing to be pluck'd and worn,
She would be gather'd, though she grew on thorn.

Ah! when she sings, all music else be still,
For none must be compared to her note;
Ne'er breathed such glee from Philomela's bill,
Nor from the morning-singer's swelling throat.
Ah! when she riseth from her blissful bed
She comforts all the world as doth the sun,
And at her sight the night's foul vapour 's fled;
When she is set the gladsome day is done.

O glorious sun, imagine me the west,
Shine in my arms, and set thou in my breast!

Robert Greene
Maesia's Song

SWEET are the thoughts that savor of content;
The quiet mind is richer than a crown;
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent;
The poor estate scorns Fortune's angry frown.
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss,
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.

The homely house that harbors quiet rest;
The cottage that affords no pride nor care;
The mean that 'grees with country music best;
The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare;
Obscurèd life sets down a type of bliss:
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

Robert Greene
Menaphon: Sephesta's Song To Her Child

- Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
- When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
- Mother's wag, pretty boy,
- Father's sorrow, father's joy;
- When thy father first did see
- Such a boy by him and me,
- He was glad, I was woe,
- Fortune changed made him so,
- When he left his pretty boy
- Last his sorrow, first his joy.
- Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,
- When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
- Streaming tears that never stint,
- Like pearl-drops from a flint,
- Fell by course from his eyes,
- That one another's place supplies;
- Thus he griev'd in every part,
- Tears of blood fell from his heart,
- When he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,

When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

The wanton smil'd, father wept,

Mother cried, baby leapt;

More he crow'd, more he cried,

Nature could not sorrow hide:

He must go, he must kiss

Child and mother, baby bless,

For he left his pretty boy,

Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,

When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.

Robert Greene
Samela

LIKE to Diana in her summer weed,
Girt with a crimson robe of brightest dye,
Goes fair Samela.
Whiter than be the flocks that stragglung feed
When wash'd by Arethusa faint they lie,
Is fair Samela.
As fair Aurora in her morning grey,
Deck'd with the ruddy glister of her love
Is fair Samela;
Like lovely Thetis on a calmed day
Whenas her brightness Neptune's fancy move,
Shines fair Samela.

Her tresses gold, her eyes like glassy streams,
Her teeth are pearl, the breasts are ivory
Of fair Samela;
Her cheeks like rose and lily yield forth gleams;
Her brows bright arches framed of ebony.
Thus fair Samela
Passeth fair Venus in her bravest hue,
And Juno in the show of majesty
(For she 's Samela!),
Pallas in wit,—all three, if you well view,
For beauty, wit, and matchless dignity,
Yield to Samela.

Robert Greene
Sephestia's Lullaby

WEEP not, my wanton, smile upon my knee; When thou art old there 's grief enough for thee. &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Mother's wag, pretty boy, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Father's sorrow, father's joy; &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;When thy father first did see &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Such a boy by him and me, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;He was glad, I was woe; &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Fortune changed made him so, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;When he left his pretty boy, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Last his sorrow, first his joy. Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee; When thou art old there 's grief enough for thee. &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Streaming tears that never stint, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Like pearl-drops from a flint, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Fell by course from his eyes, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;That one another's place supplies; &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Thus he grieved in every part, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Tears of blood fell from his heart, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;When he left his pretty boy, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Father's sorrow, father's joy. Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee; When thou art old there 's grief enough for thee. &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;The wanton smiled, father wept, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Mother cried, baby leapt; &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;More he crow'd, more we cried, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Nature could not sorrow hide: &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;He must go, he must kiss &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Child and mother, baby bliss, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;For he left his pretty boy, &nbsp;&nbsp;&nbsp;Father's sorrow, father's joy. Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee, When thou art old there 's grief enough for thee.

Robert Greene
Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content;
    The quiet mind is richer than a crown;
Sweet are the nights in careless slumber spent;
    The poor estate scorns fortune's angry frown:
Such sweet content, such minds, such sleep, such bliss,
Beggars enjoy, when princes oft do miss.

The homely house that harbours quiet rest;
    The cottage that affords no pride nor care;
The mean that 'grees with country music best;
    The sweet consort of mirth and music's fare;
Obscured life sets down a type of bliss:
A mind content both crown and kingdom is.

Robert Greene
The Description Of Sir Geoffrey Chaucer

HIS stature was not very tall,
Lean he was, his legs were small,
Hosed within a sock of red,
A buttoned bonnet on his head,
From under which did hang, I ween,
Silver hairs both bright and sheen.
His beard was white, trimmèd round,
His countenance blithe and merry found.
His sleeveless jacket large and wide,
With many plights and skirts side,
Of water camlet did he wear;
A whittle by his belt he wear,
His shoes were cornered, broad before,
His inkhorn at his side he wore,
And in his hand he bore a book.
Thus did this ancient poet look.

Robert Greene
The Shepherd's Wife's Song

Ah, what is love? It is a pretty thing,
As sweet unto a shepherd as a king,
And sweeter, too:
For kings have cares that wait upon a crown,
And cares can make the sweetest love to frown:
Ah then, ah then,
If country loves such sweet desires do gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

His flocks are folded; he comes home at night
As merry as a king in his delight,
And merrier, too:
For kings bethink them what the state require,
Where shepherds, careless, carol by the fire:

He kisseth first, then sits at blithe to eat
His cream and curds, as doth a king his meat,
And blither, too:
For kings have often fears when they do sup,
Where shepherds dread no poison in their cup:

To bed he goes, as wanton then, I ween,
As is a king in dalliance with a queen;
More wanton, too:
For kings have many griefs, affects to move,
Where shepherds have no greater grief than love:

Upon his couch of straw he sleeps as sound
As doth the king upon his bed of down;
More sounder, too:
For cares cause kings full oft their sleep to spill,
Where weary shepherds lie and snort their fill:

Thus, with his wife, he spends the year as blithe
As doth the king at every tide or sithe,
And blither, too:
For kings have wars and broils to take in hand,
Where shepherds laugh and love upon the land:
Ah then, ah then,
Since country loves such sweet desires do gain,
What lady would not love a shepherd swain?

Robert Greene
Weep Not, My Wanton

WEEP not, my wanton, smile upon my knee:
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Mother's wag, pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.
When thy father first did see
Such a boy by him and me,
He was glad, I was woe:
Fortune changèd made him so,
When he left his pretty boy,
Last his sorrow, first his joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee:
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
Streaming tears that never stint,
Like pearl drops from a flint,
Fell by course from his eyes,
That one another's place supplies:
Thus he grieved in every part,Tears of blood fell from his heart,
When he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee:
When thou art old there's grief enough for thee.
The wanton smiled, father wept;
Mother cried, baby lept;
More he crowed, more we cried;
Nature could not sorrow hide.
He must go, he must kiss
Child and mother, baby bliss;
For he left his pretty boy,
Father's sorrow, father's joy.

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