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A Brief Supplement to the Two Oldcastles of London[1]

Abstract

Previous investigations of the history play *Sir John Oldcastle* (2017) that were carried out with Rolling Delta and Rolling Classify, are viewed again and supplemented by the results of the General Imposters method and the investigations of Lupić in 2018. The Shakespearean character of the play is also supported by *Oldcastle* n-grams from Rizvi's data bank which match *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Henry V* (1599) and *As You Like It* (1599).

Introduction

The standard narrative about the history play *Sir John Oldcastle* is based upon empirical evidence. The diary of Philip Henslowe (16 October 1599) asserts that Anthony Munday, Michael Drayton, Richard Hathwaye and Robert Wilson were paid £10 "for the first pte of the lyfe of Sr Jhon Ouldcasstell."

Fig. 1 Screenshot of Henslowe's Diary, p. 113

Its first quarto (Q1), dated 1600, states, 'it hath been lately acted by the right honourable the Earle of Notingham Lord high Admiral of England his servants.' The quarto was preceded by an entry in the Stationers Register on 11 August 1600. Both a first part and a second part were entered by Thomas Pavier as (1) "The first parte of the history of the life of Sir John Oldcastell lord Cobham", and (2) "The second and last parte of the history of Sir John Oldcastell lord Cobham with his martyrdom". Valentine Simmes printed Q1 late in 1600: (https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/stationers-register-entry-sir-john-oldcastle-and-stationers-register-entry). Chambers informs us that a performance of *1 Sir John Oldcastle* took place in November 1599 (vol. II. p. 172). The general assumption is that part 2 has apparently not survived even though Drayton was paid for it, or it may never have come into being.

This narrative was heavily challenged when Q1 was subjected to the stylometric tools of R Stylo (Eder, Rybicki, and Kestemont, 2016). The text was identical with Q2, which was printed in 1619 by William Jaggard for Thomas Pavier, and which credited William Shakespeare as author. Q2 carried the false imprint 1600, and was apparently intended to form part of Pavier's Shakespeare collection, as DEEP suggests (http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/search.php). My 2017 paper, mentioned in the title, was able to show that the authors allegedly responsible for Q1 did not surface stylistically and that Shakespeare's style dominated the play instead.

How was this possible? A closer look into secondary literature reveals a misjudgement. Chambers (1923), for example, writes:

> On 6 March 1600 the company [Chamberlain's Men] had an opportunity of rendering direct service to their patron Lord Hunsdon, by playing *Henry IV*, still oddly called *Sir John Oldcastle*, after a dinner which he gave to the Flemish ambassador, Ludovic Verreyken, presumably at his house in the Blackfriars (vol. II. p. 204).

Chambers, and with him many more literary critics, simply assumed that *Sir John Oldcastle* referred to *Henry IV* in which the name Oldcastle had to be changed into Falstaff following the interventions of the politically influential Brooke family of whom Oldcastle was an ancestor. It did not occur to anyone, (and neither was there any empirical evidence), that Shakespeare might indeed have written a new history play in which the originally unfavourable presentation of Oldcastle was corrected. What reasons for a new presentation there were is unknown, but the Shakespeare Internet Editions, in their performance history of *1 Henry 4*, provide us with some historical background to the somewhat precarious situation of the Chamberlain's Men, particularly when the puritanical Sir William Brooke, tenth Lord Cobham, was their patron and they were looking to open their Blackfriars theatre in 1596. The lease of *The Theatre* in Shoreditch was about to run out, but Brooke was unsympathetic, and perhaps this was a reason as to why Shakespeare painted an offensive picture of Brooke's ancestor. However, by now the *Globe* had come into being and the Lord Chamberlain's Men did not want to cause further offence. The Internet Shakespeare continues with an example: 'In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* too, the name Brooke, assumed by a comically jealous character, was altered to "Broome."' (https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/doc/1H4_Stage History/index.html).

The remainder of the narrative remains opaque. One might wonder why Thomas Pavier printed Shakespeare's play and ascribed it to the Lord Admiral's Men. He certainly held the copyright for it, according to the entry of 11 August 1600. The performance of the play in November 1599 has been so far linked to Anthony Munday, Michael Drayton, Richard Hathwaye and Robert Wilson (see Fig. 1), but it is equally possible that they did not come to terms with the subject and/or the dates and Shakespeare may have been glad to leave it to Henslowe, more or less clandestinely for financial reasons. A further aspect should be viewed in connection with the new General Imposters method. Both Rolling Delta (http://www.shak-stat.engsem.uni-hannover.de/eauthoroldcastle.html) and Rolling Classify (http://www.shak-stat.engsem.uni-hannover.de/eclassoldcastle.html) roughly divided SJO into 80 % Shakespeare and 20 % Rowley. In fact, Rowley worked for Henslowe in the late 1590s. As it is quite likely that he may have been involved with other companies in the early 1590s – and furthermore, possibly wrote *The Famous Victories of Henry V* – his role may have been that of an intermediary. It is quite a fascinating conjecture that Rowley himself wanted to see a play published to which he had contributed. There is a ring of intrigue to this enthralling matter. The tabular survey gives a brief summary of the phases.

Table 1 Tabular survey

16 October 1599	1st to 8th November 1599	6 March 1600	11 August 1600	late in 1600
Thomas Downton	SJO played for the first time	Lord Chamberlain's Men play 1 *SJO*, misinterpreted	Stat. Reg. entry by	*SJO* Q1
receives 10 £ from Henslowe for **Munday,**	(entry by Rowley)		Thomas Pavier for	Title page reference to
	Lord Admiral's Men	as *Henry IV*	1 SJO and 2 SJO	Lord Admiral's Men
Drayton, Wilson and **Hathway** for two parts		‖		Stylometry attribution to **Shakespeare and Rowley**
of *SJO*				

A completely different perspective emerges from the research of Ivan Lupić (2018, pp.98-99), who examined the casebooks of Simon Forman (1552 – 1611), a well-known astrologer and citizen of London, in which he found the information that Forman had attended a performance of *SJO* at the *Rose* on 15 March 1600. Three days earlier, on 12 March 1600,[2] as Lupić (2018) explained by adding "[i.e. 1600]" to the diary entry below, Henslowe had paid 30 shillings to a tailor who had provided properties for the production of the *Second part of Sir John Oldcastle* (see Fig. 2). [dd = dedi, I gave]

dd vnto the littell tayller at the apoyntment of Robart shawe the 12 of marche 1599 to macke -xxxˢ thinges for the 2 pte of owld castell some of . . .

Fig. 2 Screenshot of Henslowe's Diary, p. 119

Lupić's (2018) assumption, based on the nature of Forman's report and the matching dates (see also Cerasano, 1993 passim), is that the play performed was *The Second Part of Sir John Oldcastle.* This would have been the play for which Drayton had been paid. If Lupić is right in his conjectures, the play printed for Thomas Pavier as Q1 of *Sir John Oldcastle* late in 1600 could be Drayton's play and would be the first reference text of Drayton that has become available. Moreover, Q1 would then represent the second part of *Sir John Oldcastle*, and the private performance by the Lord Chamberlain's Men on 6 March in honour of the Flemish diplomat Verreyken would remain in the dark. A process of clarification might be offered in the following procedure.

The General Imposters Method

As one of the more recent additions to the stylo program package (Eder, Rybicki, Kestemont, 2016), the General Imposters method (GI) is also known as the second verification system. With the advent of GI in 2018, an additional check of similarity in writing style became available. In his post "Authorship verification with the package 'stylo'" Maciej Eder gives a detailed account of the new method, referring to its introduction by Koppel and Winter (2014) and Kestemont's application to the study of Julius Caesar's disputed writings (Kestemont et al., 2016). He also quotes the authors' description of the capacity of the new feature:

the general intuition behind the GI, is not to assess whether two documents are simply similar in writing style, given a static feature vocabulary, but rather, it aims to assess whether two documents are significantly more similar to one another than other documents, across a variety of stochastically impaired feature spaces (Eder, 2012; Stamatatos, 2006), and compared to random selections of so-called distractor authors (Juola, 2015), also called 'imposters'." (Kestemont et al., 2016a: 88).

Eder (2018) then describes the prerequisites necessary to use the function `imposters ()`, namely that all the texts

"are already pre-processed and represented in a form of a matrix with frequencies of features (usually words). The function contrasts, in several iterations, a text in question against (1) some texts written by possible candidates to authorship, or the authors that are suspected of being the actual author, and (2) a selection of "imposters", or the authors that could not have written the text to be assessed. Consequently, a given candidate's class is assigned a score between 0 and 1."

Initially Eder had claimed that on theoretical grounds, any score above 0.5 would suggest that the authorship verification for a given candidate was successful. However, the latest development is an optimized procedure which checks the grey area of doubtful attributions. Jan Rybicki developed a so far unpublished script which gives the boundaries of the grey area.[3] Values above the upper boundary (column C of Table 2) indicate authorship, values below the lower boundary (column B of Table 2) exclude authorship. The investigations were carried out with the delta classifier to which Eder had added two more distance measures, Cosine delta (Wu), developed by the Würzburg computational stylistics group, and Ružička metrics (Ru). The latter consumes a very high computation time, but is regarded as highly reliable. Kestemont et al. (2016) who had reported on the role of nearest neighbours in determining the authorship of anonymous texts, and of the metrics used "to calculate the distances between vector representations of texts in a higher-dimensional space" (246) reached the following conclusions in the evaluation of the Ružička distance: "Comparative evaluations across a variety of benchmark corpora show that this metric yields better, as well as more consistent results than previously used metrics" (246).

The tests comprised words (mf1w), word bigrams (mf2w), character bigrams (mf2c), and character trigrams (mf3c) which means that in combination with delta, wu and ru each of the checked texts was evaluated four times. Scores above the grey area are highlighted in bold white letters and a black background in Table 2. The highest values in the grey area were given a grey background. The following carefully selected texts were checked:

anon_oldcastle.txt, chettle_hoffman.txt, day_bednalgreen.txt, day_humbreathms.txt, dek_satiromastix.txt, dek_shomholi.txt, heyw_fairmaidwest.txt, mid_cheapside.txt, mun_kentcumber.txt, row_wheny.txt, shak_2henry4.txt, shak_12thnight.txt, wilson_3ladieslondon.txt

Table 2 General imposters assessments

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1	delta	low	high	chettle	day	dek	heyw	mid	mun	row	shak	wilson	

		low	high	chettle	day	dek	heyw	mid	mun	row	shak	wilson	
2	anon_oldcastle	0.01	0.99	0	0.81	0	0.02	0.01	0.43	0.27	0.05	0.13	mf1w
3	anon_oldcastle	0	1	0.4	0.04	0.66	0	0	0	0.05	0.57	0	mf2w
4	anon_oldcastle	0.4	0.59	0.03	0.23	0	0.18	0.11	0.02	0.01	0.99	0	mf2c
5	anon_oldcastle	0.08	0.88	0	0.87	0	0.37	0	0.12	0	0.26	0.08	mf3c
6													
7	Würzburg	low	high	chettle	day	dek	heyw	mid	mun	row	shak	wilson	
8	anon_oldcastle	0	0.37	0	0.13	0	0.01	0	0.48	0.73	0	0.36	mf1w
9	anon_oldcastle	0.06	0.83	0.05	0	0.05	0	0	0.6	0.75	0.19	0.16	mf2w
10	anon_oldcastle	0.17	0.76	0.24	0.06	0.03	0.28	0.07	0.11	0.58	0.25	0.04	mf2c
11	anon_oldcastle	0	0.48	0	0.26	0.01	0.2	0	0.28	0.63	0	0.24	mf3c
12													
13	Ružička	low	high	chettle	day	dek	heyw	mid	mun	row	shak	wilson	
14	anon_oldcastle	0.22	0.76	0.09	0.21	0	0.16	0	0.01	0.45	0.89	0	mf1w
15	anon_oldcastle	0.05	0.19	0.08	0.28	0	0.03	0	0	0.41	1	0.02	mf2w
16	anon_oldcastle	0.43	0.5	0.07	0.38	0	0.34	0	0.01	0.54	0.51	0	mf2c
17	anon_oldcastle	0.05	0.1	0	0.24	0	0.05	0	0.01	0.38	0.98	0	mf3c
18													

Even though variables and distances follow their specific mathematical kernels there is an overall focus on Shakespeare and Rowley, confirming the results of Rolling Delta and Rolling Classify that have been described in "The Two Oldcastles of London" (Ilsemann, 2017).[4] At the time when SJO was composed and performed in March 1600 Shakespeare had just finished *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *Henry V* (1599), *Julius Caesar* (1599) and *As You Like It* (1599). Pervez Rizvi's data bank lists the following 170 n-grams of *Sir John Oldcastle* which can also be found in the aforementioned plays.

Much Ado About Nothing (1598)

If you can stop
master Constable!
leisure serves, I will
I'll send for him, And
the law. Go to,
I will break with
The best I can my Lord
my Lord, if they be
the old church,
they are both in a
I am sorry for my
your Grace Was too
a fool, and thou
fear ye not my
you have killed a
suspicious persons
by my troth: there
he wrote to me
these ill news.
proceed, According
but you are more

God help us
no matter let him
life behind
thou know, that the
daughter and heir
in great haste
me to the death,
let me go no
it Pleaseth God,
you must come to
but what of this
keeping peace
knowing him to be a
justly say
have passed between
I do not know you.
i'faith my Lord, I
methinks you look
up and down to
you will be in

Henry V [1599]

I know thy errand. I will

the discipline of war, And
the discipline of war, And
barley broth
I charge ye in his
but by the mass
he would keep his word,
King Harry and
bring to light This
may it please your majesty,
To
four yards
in his majesty's name
Earl of Cambridge, and
Earl of Cambridge, I
Shall I attend your
my Lord of Cambridge
usurp the Crown
give it to this
my Lord, Your noble
bid thee stand
a pot of ale
great assemblies
my Lord some of
secretly whispers

I'll none of your
cam'st thou? King From the
Uncle Exeter
sir Thomas Grey
what art thou, thou
cut the throat of
hundred poor
Enter Constable
please your majesty to
if he knew of
the holy church
Earl of Cambridge,
will, I am in a
Thomas Grey
King Harry
Cambridge, Scroop, and
Grey
majesty's name
you so good a
patience to endure
conveys himself
and they are both
my Lord, Shall we
to the Crown and
so my lord of
Cambridge, Scroop, and
Hoping your majesty
you must come to
canst thou love me
my noble Lord, Of
martial law:
touching France:
I am glad thou
my Lord of Warwick
told your majesty
is this? I would
honour, God
I warrant you you
please your majesty to

Julius Caesar [1599]

is so resolved, I
true and honourable
Do so, for we
posting back
thou dost, dost thee
be, no matter let
hope it is but
Sirrah, what news?
quite confounded.
come unto this place
wise, and honourable
Hast thou been at
is grown so great
wounds, look
to the world
It shall be done, my Lord
patience to endure
but my Lord, he
fellow. Friends
almost choked,
Than you shall see
so it be for
in't, I am a
was done my lord
was it that ye
Who comes here? a
I am but as
in all my life. I
was it that ye
ye shall not come

As You Like It [1599]

no other argument but that?
as clean as a
where we might rest,

the world wags,
eat my word
begin new
that thou and I were
charge ye in his
court? Yea
It is a hard
you have well deserved,
what a world is this?
call us back
Yes faith will I
you give us leave
By my troth, thou
so, But he hath
money mean
parish Church
the man and woman
I think that all
Then I am but
brought me out of
shall be hanged, and
you have no money
he standeth still
and what wouldst thou
Forbear I say
am as true a
marry do I, Sir
and on my life
they are ready to
I have, Are all
I do beseech your grace,
Who comes here? a
I am but as
as she is, and
second brother
the fittest time
twenty mile

N-grams are not sufficient proof of authorship, but they strongly support the Shake-speare connections laid down above in the results of the General Imposters method. If Q1 of *Sir John Oldcastle* was in fact the second part and written in collaboration with Drayton and Rowley the stylistic similarity with Shakespeare's style would be all the more striking. How-ever, until new evidence becomes available, we have to speculate that 1 and 2 SJO, composed by Munday, Hathway, Wilson, and Drayton (who also wrote part 2), got lost, and Q1 of SJO which was published late in 1600 is in fact the Shakespeare play performed by the Lord Chamberlain's Men on 6 March 1600 in honour of the Flemish diplomat Verreyken.

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Notes

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[1] The title refers to the following publication: Ilsemann, H. (2017). The Two Oldcastles of London, Digital Scholarship in the Humanities, 32(4), 788–796; https://doi: 10.1093/llc/fqw039

[2] The last 1599 entry in Henslowe's diary was in December and the following first entry in January also said 1599; this was possibly an error by the scribe or the editor.

[3] Jan Rybicki's script makes use of optimized cross-validations. It has not been published yet and was attached to a private email in February 2022.

[4] In contrast to the rolling procedures of *delta* and *classify* the General Imposters method seeks to find the author of a play. Collaborators are not the main target, but values in the grey area or the restrained values of the Würzburg distance provide a hint at collaborative situations, so that it makes sense to take an integrative look at all evaluations.