



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE	KING LEAR	HAMLET	MACBETH	OTHELLO	ROMEO AND JULIET	JULIUS CAESAR	CORIOLANUS
CYMBELINE	TITUS ANDRONICUS	TIMON OF ATHENS	TROILUS AND CRESSIDA	ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA	KING JOHN		
HENRY IV, PART 1	HENRY IV, PART 2	HENRY V	HENRY VI, PART 1	HENRY VI, PART 2	HENRY VI, PART 3	RICHARD III	
HENRY VIII	ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL	AS YOU LIKE IT	THE COMEDY OF ERRORS	LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST			
MEASURE FOR MEASURE	THE MERCHANT OF VENICE	THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR	A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM				
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING	PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE	THE TEMPEST	TWELFTH NIGHT	THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA			
THE TWO NOBLE KINSMEN	THE WINTER'S TALE	LOVE'S LABOUR'S WON	<u>THE HISTORY OF CARDENIO</u>	A LOVER'S COMPLAINT			
THE RAPE OF LUCRECE	THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM	VENUS AND ADONIS	THE PHOENIX AND THE TURTLE	SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS			

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The History of Cardenio

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about

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Main Characters

The Tyrant — usurped the king's throne

Govianus — the king; in love with the Lady

The Lady — Govianus's love, and pursued by the Tyrant

Helvetius — the Lady's father

Memphoniuss, Sophoniruss, and Bellariuss — nobles of the court

The Wife — wife of Anselmus

Anselmus — brother-in-law of Govianus

Votariuss — Anselmus's best friend

Leonella — the Wife's servant

Introduction

A mystery surrounds the play **Cardenio** — a mystery of authorship and text. Although it is now considered to be a lost play by William Shakespeare, it took centuries to find its true author. It

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is thought to have been written around 1613 (with John Fletcher) when Shakespeare lived in Stratford-upon-Avon. The play was not attributed to Shakespeare until it appeared until 1728. It was then that Lewis Theobald published a play called **Double Falsehood**; or **The Distressed Lovers**, which he said was based on the story of Cardenio and Lucinda in Cervantes's **Don Quixote**. Theobald said that he had revised the play and "adapted to the stage" from an old manuscript "originally written by Fletcher and Shakespeare."

What we do know about **Cardenio**'s history is that that on May 20, 1613, John Heminges, who ran the King's Men, was presented a sum of money for performing six plays, one of which was titled **Cardenio**. It did not list the playwright's name. Then, in 1653, the printer Humphrey Moseley entered in the Stationers' Register several plays, including "**The History of Cardenio**, by Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Shakespeare." Even earlier, in 1612, one scholar argues that an untitled, anonymous, handwritten draft of a play was delivered to Sir George Buc, the Master of the Revels to King James I. Confused by the lack of a title, or a playwright's name, he referred to it as "this **Second Mayden's Tragedy**." That play might have been **Cardenio**.

Yet, the story is not complete, as it had not been positively attributed to Shakespeare. Some of those who examined the manuscript concluded that it was the work of Thomas Middleton. Then in 1994, historian Charles Hamilton published the script, along with 140 pages of testimony (**Shakespeare with John Fletcher: Cardenio**; or **The Second Maiden's Tragedy**. New York: Marlowe & Company, 1994). The final analysis of this extended inquiry stated that the play, **Cardenio**, was coauthored by Shakespeare and Fletcher. **Cardenio** was now the first play — perhaps the last — to be added to the Shakespearean canon since the publication of the Fourth Folio more than 300 years ago.

The Play

Cardenio has two distinct plots that are linked by the relationships of the main characters. One plays against the other in a scene-by-scene progression that neatly uses one plot to contrast with, and comment on, the other. Act 1 opens in the midst of a coup, as Govianus, the rightful king, loses his throne to an obsessive Tyrant. Rubbing salt in an open wound (and recalling Richard III and Lady Anne), the Tyrant proceeds to woo Govianus's love, referred to in the play only as the Lady.

Why is John Fletcher considered to be the coauthor of the play?

It is well known that John Fletcher was a great admirer of Cervantes, and he was probably able

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to read **Don Quixote** in its original Spanish. Shakespeare and Fletcher might well have written a play based on the Cardenio episodes in volume 1 of **Don Quixote**.

She remains steadfast in her devotion to Govianus, even in the face of her own father's appeals to make things easier for everyone by simply appeasing the Tyrant and giving him what he wants. Govianus and the Lady are imprisoned. Frustrated by the Lady, the Tyrant sends his soldiers to force her to submit to him. Rather than be "borne with violence to the Tyrant's bed," she begs Govianus to kill her.

He can't bring himself to do that, so she kills herself instead. Undeterred and angry that the Lady has managed to thwart him, the Tyrant steals her corpse from its tomb intent on making her his queen anyway. Govianus is released, finds his way to court, and avenges her death. Restored to the throne, Govianus returns her body to the tomb.

In the subplot, a jealous lord, Anselmus, brother-in-law to Govianus, convinces his best friend, Votarius, to seduce his wife as a test of her fidelity. Surprised by their unexpected passion for each other, Votarius and the Wife begin a clandestine affair. To divert her husband's suspicions, the Wife and Votarius plot to have Anselmus overhear a conversation in which the Wife will seemingly spurn Votarius' advances with a sword. The Wife's servant, however, has poisoned the sword's tip, and the Wife unwittingly kills her lover. As the various plots and deceptions are revealed, all are slain.

Commentary

Those who want to pursue the authorship question should start with Charles Hamilton's **Cardenio**; or **The Second Maiden's Tragedy** and Anne Lancashire's **The Second Maiden's Tragedy**.

For those who consider the play a lost Shakespeare piece, the evidence is seen in the characterizations, particularly of the women, such as the Lady herself, who seems to continue the lineage of the spiritually powerful princesses of **Cymbeline**, **The Winter's Tale**, and **Pericles, Prince of Tyre**. The language also seems to be Shakespeare's by its delight in new words and powerful imagery.

For each list of arguments that tries to link Shakespeare's and Fletcher's works to **The Second Maiden's Tragedy**, an equally persuasive list of comparisons can be made with the plays of Thomas Middleton.

Proving a play's authorship is something of a detective game. Hamilton, for example, based part of his evidence on handwriting analysis. The manuscript contains stage directions, censor's cuts, and slips of paper with textual corrections in the same hand as the body of the text, leading some scholars to conclude that the manuscript was handwritten by the playwright, while others believe it is a copy, prepared by a professional scribe. Particularly puzzling is that there is no character named Cardenio in **The Second Maiden's Tragedy**.

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