

## **Mr Burgess, Mr Nye, Mr Shakespeare and Mr Pickleherring: representations of Shakespeare in Burgess and Nye**

We know everything and nothing about Shakespeare. In the last couple of years alone, several major biographies – by Park Honan, by Stephen Greenblatt and by Peter Ackroyd – have been added to the already enormous canon of work on this subject, including Burgess's contribution, published in 1970. Questions concerning Shakespeare's political and religious beliefs, his allegiances and his rivals continue to provoke the most partisan debate. Clare Asquith's *Shadowplay: The Hidden Beliefs and Coded Politics of William Shakespeare* is the latest such inquiry. Yet, despite the best efforts of this band of devotees, the facts of Shakespeare's life remain elusive, the few scraps of contemporary information scarcely added to over the centuries. He is thus, to the present generation, uniquely recognisable and uniquely invisible. His presence brings with it a rich accumulation of cultural baggage, making him a profoundly fertile resource for creative writers to work on. We can project almost anything on him, and it will still have resonance.

The protean figure of Shakespeare has proved rewarding for a number of novelists in the modern and contemporary era, and the present work deals with two of them: Burgess, of course, and Robert Nye. These novels also feature their authors, or at least characters who purport to be the authors, so as well as the fictional inscription of the real historical figure of Shakespeare, which lends a biographical element to fictional work, there is also the hint of autobiography. In this commingling of the two genres, edges become blurred in a typical post-modern play of competing and usually exclusive genres. This area, where fiction and biography meet, has been a fruitful one for recent British novelists. Most of Peter Ackroyd's output is of this type: *Chatterton*, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, *Hawksmoor*. Julian Barnes's *Flaubert's Parrot* and *Arthur and George* are other examples. A sub genre exists, where fictional characters are placed among historical people and events - William Boyd's *The New Confessions*, A.S. Byatt's *Possession* or Burgess's *Earthly Powers* and

*Any Old Iron*. An alternative related area is the (auto)biography of a fictional or historical character - making the fictional “real” – and this is the area in which Nye has specialised in such novels as *Falstaff*, *Merlin*, and *The Memoirs of Lord Byron*.

These last two authors form the main focus here, as both have used Shakespeare as a central character in novels, and have also used him as a peripheral figure elsewhere in their work. Both writers are explicitly postmodern in their approach, often using metanarratives which dramatise the process of writing, and in so doing they inscribe themselves into the Shakespearean world, appearing as characters in their own fiction. Their approaches are strikingly similar, and owe much to the stylistic developments of modernism and postmodernism. Indeed, one of the most noticeable features of each author’s approach to Shakespeare is how the narrative eschews any attempt at cod-Elizabethan narrative in favour of the employment of the full range of modern and postmodern narrative devices. In doing so, each author explores the boundaries and intersections between fiction, biography and autobiography.

The occasion for the writing of *Nothing Like the Sun* (1964) was mercenary: the quatercentenary of Shakespeare’s birth produced an outpouring of celebratory writing, and this novel, published on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, by tradition Shakespeare’s birthday, is Burgess’s contribution. It is not, however, as so many items produced at the time were, a matter of mere hagiography. Rather, it is an imaginative attempt at historical reconstruction, focusing on Shakespeare’s relationship with the “Dark Lady” of the sonnets, and dwelling on the often unsavoury aspects of London life at the end of the sixteenth century. The narrative is presented as the rambling final lecture before departure of a drunken English academic in a Malaysian college, Mr Burgess. This device allows Burgess the author the freedom to invent plausible but unsubstantiated details, such as Shakespeare’s contraction of syphilis as a result of his relationship with the dark lady, and his cuckolding by his brother.

Within this framework, the novel unfolds in a mixture of third-person narration interspersed with passages presented as interior monologue from Shakespeare's point of view, occasionally developing into a stream of consciousness, particularly when "WS" (Burgess's character name for the Shakespeare persona) is facing death at the end of the novel. In a disarming preface to the novel, written on its republication in 1982, Burgess suggests that the progressively looser syntax reflects the increasing delirium of the lecturer, induced by his growing drunkenness. The reader is presented finally with the dying thoughts of WS, his mind afflicted by the ravages of his disease, as he ranges over a series of disjointed images of his life. Ultimately, in a passage reminiscent of the conclusion of *The Waste Land*, the resolution of religious faith conquers the confusion, with WS echoing the voice of George Herbert's "The Collar".

The structure of the novel is more complex than it appears on the surface. Although the narrative is apparently the creation of the drunken Burgess character, he appears very rarely, but he *does* appear, reminding the reader of the shaky provenance of the information, and emphasising the fictionality of the piece. Burgess is also conscious of creating a literary portrait that conflicts with the anodyne figure of previous fictional representations of Shakespeare. In the opening sentences, for example, a Joycean neologism, "spurgeoning" is a sly reference to the fanciful suppositions of Caroline Spurgeon, the thirties Shakespeare scholar, whose book, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us* was influential on a generation of students. A little later, the young WS is depicted using his verbal facility to make associations in a passage which, though suggested by Spurgeon's conjecture that the patterns of ripples in the water under Clopton bridge may have provided Shakespeare with the source of some of his images, in spirit owes much to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* :

Goat. Willow. Widow. Tarquin, superb sun-black southern king, all awry, twisted snake-wise, had goat-like gone to it. So *tragos*, a

tragedy. Razor and whetstone. But that was the other Tarquin. WS saw great-bellied slack whiteness in the spring of a southern country, a Lucy lawn peacock ghost -aglimmer, Arden, patrician, screaming. No willow she. But a willow was right for death. He watched the strange back-eddy under the arch. Back to the strait that sent him on so fast.<sup>i</sup>

The images, juxtaposed for dramatic effect by WS and by Burgess, are drawn from the opening domestic scenes from the early life of the "word-boy". He has inadvertently happened upon his parents in bed, witnessed the birth of lambs, and is at Clopton Bridge in Stratford, where his sister has spoken of 'goat-willow.' These ideas coalesce with his reading of Ovid to produce a kind of internal narrative, illustrating the boy's talent for fashioning vivid The stream of consciousness these random images elicits is moulded in the mind of the young WS into a pre-echo of some lines from *The Rape of Lucrece*.

The chronology of the novel is relatively straightforward, with a short introductory section establishing Shakespeare as a romantic troubled by visions of a goddess-like muse, (to whom he writes a sonnet, invented for the purpose by Burgess) falling for the charms of Anne Hathaway and entering a forced marriage with her. When WS escapes her nymphomania, finding employment as a tutor near Bristol, he has his first encounter, in a whorehouse, with a black woman, whose image haunts him, replacing in his mind the image of his early dark-haired love in Stratford. The first section concludes with his return to Stratford and Anne; the second section shows a twenty-eight year old WS in the thick of the London theatre scene in the early 1590's, meeting Mr WH, Florio, Burbage, Marlowe, Henslowe, Greene and other theatrical luminaries. The intervening years are silently passed over, by Burgess and by the Burgess character.

The central section of the novel focuses on the relationship between WS and Henry Wriothesley, third earl of Southampton, and dedicatee of *Venus and Adonis*. Burgess has Florio commission the sonnets to persuade the earl of the benefits of marriage, but when the commission is unmasked, the complex relationship between the two men is celebrated in Shakespeare's verse instead. This section also describes the growing infatuation of WS for a black woman, Fatimah, otherwise known as Lucy Negro, who embodies his enduring vision of a dark goddess. The novel switches to diary form at this point, as WS's infatuation leads to his possession of her, and her installation as his mistress, the prose taking on a more intimate tone as WS recounts a relationship doomed from the beginning, and ended by Southampton's rejection of boys in favour of her. Later, they are reconciled, after she has produced a child, probably his, which will be dispatched back to the east, and whose influence will resurface in the names of the students in Mr Burgess's Malaysian class. The section concludes with WS's realisation that he has contracted a venereal disease from her, a realisation that coincides with the completion of the new Globe.

The novel's coda again skips some years, taking the reader to WS's final moments in New Place. The initial passage recounts his time in London after partial recovery from the syphilis, and then gives a rapid summary of the years of his success as a playwright, culminating in his final monologue, in which the syntax finally breaks down altogether, and closing with the ambiguous "My Lord", which must, the reader imagines, refer to Southampton as much as Christ.

Burgess interweaves accounts of historical events with the fictional detail of WS's life, showing how the playwright may have garnered material for the plays. There are similar passages in Burgess's biography of Shakespeare, published in 1970, where the novelist asks for indulgence: "The reader will recognise the fiction-writer at work and, I hope, will make due allowances."<sup>ii</sup> Later, after a section which speculates freely on the

naming of Shakespeare's children, Burgess concludes disingenuously: "The whole of this paragraph is very unsound."<sup>iii</sup> Given the dearth of sound biographical material on Shakespeare, Burgess's invention in the later volume is understandable. In *Nothing Like the Sun*, it is essential. The central motif, of the goddess like figure who inspires the writer, is reminiscent of the device Burgess uses to inspire Enderby, and the identification is comically complete when, in *Enderby's Dark Lady*, the modern poet is forced to impersonate Shakespeare in the ludicrous musical play which is at the centre of that novel's action. John Bayley suggested in a review of *Napoleon Symphony*<sup>iv</sup> that Burgess's Napoleon and WS are both versions of Enderby. The interweaving of the fictional and the factual is Burgess's stock-in-trade in both novels, and, indeed, is a feature of a number of his novels. Quite apart from the private incidents which inspired several narratives, and the use of historical detail in early works such as the Malayan trilogy and *A Vision of Battlements*, novels such as *Earthly Powers*, *The End of the World News* and *Any Old Iron* all use "real" characters and events as the backdrop to the fictional action. Burgess's inscription of a version of himself in *Nothing Like the Sun* goes a stage further though, than the various

In this novel, Burgess is able to suggest sources for Shakespeare's work by "planting" references in the text. These occur frequently, and emphasise the playful fictionality of the enterprise, a fictionality so frankly admitted to in the *Shakespeare* volume. The young WS, for example, is called upon to deliver gloves to a gentleman, and is plunged into a scene of riotous drunken revelry, complete with the singing of bawdy catches, reminiscent of the scene in *Twelfth Night* where Belch, Aguecheek and Feste engage in singing catches loudly enough to wake the house. A sly passing allusion to the pub sign of the two fools, the We Three, adds to the identification. Later, when dismissed from the post as tutor which this encounter has led him to, WS joins forces with a rogue, whose trickery recalls that of Autolycus in *The Winter's Tale*. More darkly, the sexual relationship between Anne and Will borders on the sado-masochistic, and the descriptions of their love-making suggest the mixture of loathing and

ecstasy hinted at in references to sex in, for example, *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear*. Later, after a particularly spectacular bout of violent lovemaking with Fatimah, he descends to a level of post-coital self-loathing first hinted at in the early scenes with Anne Hathaway:

And after, in a cold and rainy May evening, I sit  
in mine own lodging, feeling truly in a wretched  
dim hell of mine own making, spent, used,  
shameless, shameful.<sup>v</sup>

The connection with Sonnet CXXIX “An expense of spirit in a waste of shame” is readily apparent. This is one example among many where Burgess adduces biographical detail from the literary record.

Burgess’s WS, then, exists in a fabricated approximation of Elizabethan England, as does the Shakespeare figure in the science fiction story *The Muse*, appended to *Enderby’s Dark Lady*. He and his colleagues speak dialogue which has the virtue of being understandable, as well as conveying the flavour of the time. Burgess never allows the reader to forget, however, that the text is an invention- indeed, the invention of an invention, the “Mr Burgess” character. The ludic nature of the enterprise, announced in the novel’s subtitle, and in Burgess’s foreword, is reinforced by the periodic interventions of the Burgess character, usually associated with the consumption of a little more *samsu*, the fermented Chinese rice drink with which he becomes progressively intoxicated as the novel proceeds. The conceit of the drunken Burgess character also allows the novelist to move from a relatively straightforward prose style, to the freer, stream-of-consciousness style used at the end of the novel where a pox-ridden dying Shakespeare produces a rambling monologue, reviewing his life. That life is described in the central section, with Burgess demonstrating his linguistic knowledge in an exuberant prose style which makes playful use of images and tags from the plays. The framing of the narrative by the meta-narrative of the drunken lecturer adds to the sense

of playfulness: this is an end-of-term lecture, carrying with it associations of release from the serious business of scholarship.

The final section recalls the concluding passage in *The Waste Land*, a work which had proved fruitful for Burgess since *The Malayan Trilogy*, as broken image follows broken image in an increasingly syntax-free and apparently meaningless kaleidoscopic first person account, prompted by questions from an unknown voice:

*Subject matter?*

Oaklings, footsticks, cinques, moxibustion, the Maccabees, the Lydian mode (soft, effeminate) the snow-goose or whitebrant, rose-windows, government, the conflagration of citadel and senate-house, Bucephalus, the Antilegomena, Simnel Sunday, the torrid zone, Wapping, my lord's top-boots, the shoeflower, prostitute boys, dittany, face-ague, cosmic cinefaction, the Antipodes, the Gate of Bab, Fidessa, Rattlin the Reefer, Taliesin, the dead head in alchemy, the bar, dungeons, skylarks, the wind, Thaumast, the dark eyes of London, the fellowship of the frog, *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, Myrddhin, faithful dealing, A Girle worth Gold, viticulture, the Queen that's dead (bee, meadow, chess, Bench, regnant) impostos of arches, pollards, sea-fox and sea-hog and sea-heath, the sigmoid curve, cardinals, touchability.

*What would you have now?*

No more. No no no more. Never again.

*One last word. One last last last word.*

My Lord.<sup>vi</sup>

The novel ends, then, with an affirmation of faith that is also a declaration of love. The images evoked in this bravura finale are difficult to reconcile with what has gone before. Tantalising glimpses of the plays, dimly suggested, are present: “soft, effeminate” might refer to Cordelia in *King Lear*; “bee, meadow” may suggest Ariel’s song in *The Tempest* and that play may also be evoked in the references to chess and to the sea which follow, Burgess’s character, like Shakespeare’s, breaking his staff at the end of the play. Equally, the associations might be random, balancing the logical ones at the beginning of the narrative where the boy WS creates patterns out of unrelated images. The technique is similar to that employed at the end of *Napoleon Symphony*, and there is more than a suggestion that, as in the later novel, Burgess may have had recourse to a dictionary or encyclopaedia to create the collage effect. That effect is, however, a self-consciously modernist one, and shows how far from the straightforward historical account Burgess had travelled.

In sum, the novel works well as a historical recreation. The boldness of using Shakespeare as the central character, and also of using the plays as quarries to mine for incidents in the life, is matched by the verbal invention. Finding an idiom which avoids the trap of rendering Elizabethan English in the “Olde Englishe” locutions of Hollywood films on the subject, but which also conveyed the intensity of experience which Burgess felt communicated through the plays and poems, was the major obstacle. Burgess’s solution juxtaposes third-person narration in a relatively modern voice with dialogue and inner monologue which revels in the particularity of Elizabethan phraseology. For example, the following passage, in which Shakespeare travels up the Thames, is clearly indebted to the interior monologues of Joyce’s characters:

Far from the river now. North of the divers fair and large  
builded homes for merchants and suchlike. North even of  
the City Wall and the fair summer houses north of the wall.  
Good air in Shoreditch. The theatre a finer playhouse than

the Rose. Burbage as good a man of business any day as Henslowe and an old player too, though, from what I see, of no great skill. But his son now, his son promises, this Richard. He may yet go further than Alleyn Is that Giles Alleyn from whom old Burbage got the land of Ned's kin? It may be so. In '76 it was. A lease of twenty-one years. A mere patch with rank grass and dog-turds, even a man's bones they say. A skull grinning up at surveyors.<sup>vii</sup>

The realism of the third person narrative interacts with the stream of consciousness sections to produce a believable portrait both of Shakespeare and the age in which he lived. Perhaps Burgess's greatest achievement in this novel is to bury once and for all the cosy picture, developed by nineteenth century hagiographers, and continued by Shakespeare apologists in the present century, including the current version of Shakespeare as a national heritage icon, of "the bard", a man of inspirational genius with few unsavoury characteristics, and a romantic stereotype, as in the film *Shakespeare in Love*. Burgess expresses his distaste for these sanitised versions of Shakespeare in his 1970 biography. He quotes F.J. Furnivall's idealised portrait of "our chestnut-haired, fair, brown, rosy-cheeked boy...as full of life as an egg is full of meat, impulsive, inquiring, sympathetic; up to any fun and daring..."<sup>viii</sup> and suggests that such speculation is a pointless. The facts being absent, the biographer must perforce be silent, or speculate with intelligence. The Burgess biography of Shakespeare is largely speculation, but solidly grounded. *Nothing Like the Sun*, though purely fictional, concentrates on presenting a believable portrait, rather than one to fit the accepted norm.

Shakespeare also features as a character in Burgess's *Enderby's Dark Lady*. This novel, published in 1984, is very much a coda to the previous novels featuring Enderby, and by some distance the least successful of the sequence.

The main narrative is bookended by two pieces, Enderby "originals", which, arguably, the novel would be better without. This impression is reinforced when it is seen that the two pieces are self-contained short stories, both published by Burgess before their appearance in this volume. On the other hand, both pieces interact with the central narrative, using fictionalised versions of Shakespeare as a linking theme. Indeed, in this novel, Enderby himself becomes a version of Shakespeare when circumstances force him to take the leading part in his own play concerning Shakespeare's life. So it is in this novel that the various elements of the Shakespeare - Enderby- Burgess amalgam are fully explored. The action of the novel, which features the disastrous attempt by Enderby to salvage his musical of Shakespeare's love life covers some of the same ground as *Nothing Like the Sun*; Burgess, or a representation of him, features in both, as Mr Burgess in *Nothing Like the Sun* and Enderby in *Enderby's Dark Lady*; Shakespeare features as the central character in *Nothing Like the Sun*, and in both the stories wrapped around *Enderby's Dark Lady*; Enderby/Burgess becomes a stage Shakespeare in the production of his musical, and so on.

The first of these stories recalls *Nothing Like The Sun*, and features Ben Jonson as a spy involved in covert action against the conspirators plotting the blowing up of parliament in 1605. Shakespeare also appears, working with the committee (including Jonson) translating the King James Bible in 1610, contriving to ensure that his name is featured in psalm 46. This squib, apparently written by Enderby (though actually published originally in a limited edition in Italy in 1977 by Burgess) is the occasion leading to Enderby's being commissioned to write lyrics and dialogue for a stage musical on Shakespeare's life, with particular reference to the dark lady of the sonnets. The story is, however, irrelevant to the main body of the text, as is the final section, a science fiction short story originally published by Burgess in 1968, in which a time-traveller encounters Shakespeare (or a version of him) and inadvertently provides the Bard with his plays, which he copies, "never blotting a line" from the texts provided. In a further self-

reflexive move, the writing of such a story is suggested to Enderby by the dark lady of the novel.

Robert Nye has had several parallel careers, and although he considers himself primarily a poet, it seems to me that his novels are equally worthy of attention. There are some parallels with Burgess, in particular the playful intertextuality of much of the work, which draws freely on historical and literary texts for its material. Figures as various as Byron, Faust, Joan of Arc, Falstaff and Merlin feature as central characters in Nye's work, so it is no surprise that Shakespeare makes his appearance in two relatively recent novels.

The first of these, *Mrs Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (1993) purports to be the writings of Anne Hathaway, compiled in a vellum volume given to her by her daughter Susanna in 1622.. In a series of short chapters, printed in italics to suggest handwriting, Shakespeare's wife reflects on her life with her husband, and casts light upon a number of issues which have exercised Shakespeare's biographers. For example, she gives an account of the famous "second-best" bed, and why it was bequeathed to her, and also identifies the dark lady of the sonnets as herself. She professes not to have read her husband's works, preferring her Bible instead, but Nye insinuates some of Shakespeare's best-known phrases into her account, suggesting she may have been the source of such lines as "I know a hawk from a handsaw". The novel is light-hearted in tone, with much of the humour deriving from the ironic juxtaposition of Shakespeare's genius and Anne's determinedly down-to-earth sensibilities. The whole is a gallimaufry of pleasant delights, replete with recipes, anecdotes and reports of historical events. The Anne who emerges from this account is more than a Warwickshire housewife: she is a lively, intelligent woman with a sharp preference for plain speaking at all times: she entreats her husband at one point to abandon his poetic language and "tell us in plain words." Nye has Anne completing her story in 1623, the year of the First Folio: her "complete works" are thus ranged against his. Shakespeare is thus a character in this novel, but a shadowy

figure, providing the foil for Anne's reflections. Clearly, though, the idea of Shakespeare as character appealed to Nye, and he returns to it in a later, more substantial novel, *The Late Mr Shakespeare* (1998).

The narrator here is Pickleherring, an eighty-one year old former boy actor, looking back on his career from the a restoration London recently free of the plague and about to be engulfed by the Great Fire. Nye's choice of narrator echoes that of Burgess in *A Dead Man in Deptford*, where another fictional boy actor presents an account of his life with Marlowe.

Like *Falstaff*, the novel is arranged in a hundred short chapters with often whimsical titles: "In which Anne Hathaway" and "About silk stockings" are two examples, but this book is a much more substantial offering than *Mrs Shakespeare*. Anecdotes about the life of Shakespeare are interspersed with digressions on Pickleherring's room, and the whore he can observe plying her trade through a peep-hole in the room below. Having baldly stated "All the facts about Mr Shakespeare" on one page, Pickleherring, like other of Nye's narrators, emphasises the fictional nature of his enterprise: "These twelve facts are all there is to be known for sure about William Shakespeare from the public records.

But a man's life does not just consist of facts.

Least of all, the life of our Shakespeare."

In that willingness to build fictional flesh and blood on such bare factual bones, Nye shares an enterprise with Burgess.

Nye takes these bare facts, and weaves them dextrously into an energetic narrative which includes not only the various legends which have attached themselves to Shakespeare's biography (for example, the youthful stealing of deer) but also some bizarre new inventions. In an entertaining section, competing suggestions that Shakespeare's mother might have been Elizabeth I, or that his father may have been the vicar of Stratford, for instance are explored and discarded. This might be Nye's pre-emptive

strike at bardolatrous critics who dislike this kind of playfulness - or perhaps a swipe at the lunatic fringe of Shakespeare studies.

One very noticeable feature of Pickleherring's narrative is the anachronistic inclusion of various well-known remarks about Shakespeare, either in their correct form, or, more commonly, somewhat adapted. The reader is implicitly invited to identify the sources from a list appended as a postscript: some sixty-six names are listed, from Shakespearean scholars such as Schoenbaum and Dover Wilson, to contemporaries of Shakespeare such as Marlowe and Raleigh. Also included are a range of writers who have, at some point commented on Shakespeare- Borges, (but not Burgess) Keats, Emerson, Hardy and so on. In a typical in-joke, one name on the list is Robert Nye, and one of Pickleherring's chapters, "Some tales that Shakespeare told his mother" echoes the title of Nye's early collection of short stories. Thus Nye, like Burgess, inserts himself into a life of Shakespeare, and like Burgess, revels in the juxtaposition.

Pickleherring has a theory for every detail of Shakespeare's career, and presents alternative versions for several episodes. For example, the "lost years" are, he suggests, either spent at sea (his preference), as a tutor (as Burgess suggested in *Nothing Like the Sun*), apprenticed to a lawyer, or as a soldier. In each case, textual references are ingeniously adduced to support the competing theories. In the case of the sea theory, Shakespeare's knowledge of seafaring practice in many plays is mentioned, but the detail that convinces Pickleherring, and perhaps the reader, is Jaques's use of the obscure term "remainder biscuit" in *As You Like It*. At times, the novel reads like a speculative investigation into the biographical evidence provided by the works of the type written by A.L. Rowse, for instance. Nowhere is this more apparent than when Pickleherring presents the case of four women who might have been the Dark Lady of the sonnets. The conclusion, that the lady was a prostitute, Lucy Negro, is enlivened by an account of her working practices.

Nye's ludic narrative includes several other postmodern elements. Like Julian Barnes in *Flaubert's Parrot*, Pickleherring offers readers a mock examination paper on his subject. He also presents a "missing" sonnet by Shakespeare, beginning "Shall I compare thee..." but continuing with lines culled from various other sonnets. This recalls Burgess's practice in NLTS, where the reader is presented, piecemeal, with a sonnet written by Burgess's Shakespeare. It is not canonical, but a Burgessian invention, and was recently re-published in Burgess's *Revolutionary Sonnets*.

At one point, Pickleherring muses "Sometimes I think that Mr Shakespeare lived a life of allegory, and his work was a commentary upon it." Nye's novel brilliantly uses the work to illuminate the man, and in so doing attempts, as Pickleherring puts it, "to come at the truth by telling lies." That epigraph seems a suitable point on which to conclude. Both these authors take advantage of the knowledge that the reader brings. Both manipulate the reader's horizon of expectations, confounding the usual conventions of the historical novel, using anachronism creatively to construct a version of Shakespeare which in a series of eminently believable (in NLTS) and increasingly surreal (in TLMS) episodes, enliven contemporary fiction with something of the vigour of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.

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<sup>i</sup> *Nothing Like The Sun*, p.4

<sup>ii</sup> Burgess, A. (1970) *Shakespeare* (Cape) p.11

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65

<sup>iv</sup> *New York Review of Books* 19 August 1974 p.33

<sup>v</sup> *Nothing Like the Sun*, p.155

<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid.*, p.234

<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid.*, p.136

<sup>viii</sup> *Shakespeare*, p.27