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Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England
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**A Feast of Strange Opinions: Classical
and Early Modern Paradoxes on the
English Renaissance Stage**

Edited by Marco Duranti
and Emanuel Stelzer



SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies

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CEMP - Classical and Early Modern Paradoxes in England

The series of CEMP volumes offers studies and fully annotated scholarly editions related to the CEMP open-access digital archive. This archive includes texts pertaining to the genres of the paradox, of the paradoxical fiction, and of the problem, which were published in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and which are currently unavailable online and/or not open access (<https://test-01.dlss.univr.it/teipublisher-cemp/apps/cemp-app/index.html>). Our digital archive features diplomatic, semidiplomatic, and modernised editions of selected works, furnished with critical apparatuses and editorial notes, alongside related documentary materials, which, in turn, are relevant to poetic and dramatic texts of the English Renaissance. These texts provide fundamental testimony of the early modern episteme, functioning as a hinge joining widespread forms of the paradoxical discourse in different genres and texts and within the development of sceptical thinking.

The project is part of the Skenè Centre as well as of the Project of Excellence Digital humanities applied to foreign languages and literatures (2018-2022) Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at the University of Verona (<https://dh.dlss.univr.it/en/>).

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Thomas and Dudley Digges on the Early Modern Stage: *Four Paradoxes* and English Renaissance Drama

FABIO CIAMBELLA

Abstract

A few scholars have acknowledged the biographical connection between the Digges family and the circle of intellectuals who used to meet at the Mermaid Tavern, Cheapside, London, known as the Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen. Even playwrights such as Ben Jonson and John Fletcher, among others, attended the meetings of the circle, although some scholars doubt that William Shakespeare would have been part of the brotherhood. It is commonly believed, however, that Shakespeare and the Digges family had a close relationship, as evidenced by some extant documents and literary works. This article seeks to develop this topic further, showing whether and how Thomas and Dudley Digges's *Four Paradoxes* (1604) might have influenced or been influenced by English Renaissance drama. Interdiscursive echoes of *Four Paradoxes* have been acknowledged in such plays as Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, especially in relation to the Just War tradition. Nevertheless, the circulation of paradoxes and war discourse was so pervasive that a closer textual reading is necessary to identify strong points of contact between the Digges' work and early modern plays. For this reason, a lexicosemantic approach is adopted in this article to locate references to *Four Paradoxes* in plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, or vice versa.

KEYWORDS: Digges; *Four Paradoxes*; interdiscursivity; William Shakespeare; Ben Jonson

1. The Digges and Early Modern English Playwrights: Some Biographical Happenstances?

A few scholars have investigated possible biographical connections between the Digges family and early modern intellectuals and playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, or John

Fletcher, among others (see, for instance, Falk 2014, 162-9; Feinstein 2020; Hadfield 2020). Moving from alleged biographical circumstances, then considering intertextual and interdiscursive echoes between Thomas and Dudley Digges's *Four Paradoxes* (1604) and the English Renaissance drama, this article aims at understanding whether it is possible to establish a relation between the Digges' warfare treatise and war discourse on the early modern English stage.

Most researchers focus on possible direct or indirect – i.e., through a third party – connections between Dudley (1583-1639) and his younger brother Leonard (1588-1635) with William Shakespeare (1564-1616), since they were contemporaries and probably had common acquaintances, as we are about to see.¹

First of all, a biographical datum suggests that Dudley Digges and Shakespeare may have been acquainted. When Dudley's father Thomas died in 1595, his mother Anne St Leger re-married Thomas Russell of Alderminster (near Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, in Warwickshire), one of the two overseers of Shakespeare's will, along with Francis Collins.² Moreover, Shakespeare showed some gratitude towards Russell, declaring in his testament that he wanted to "give and bequeath . . . to Thomas Russell, Esquire, five pounds" (see note 2 above for bibliographical references). It has been said that it was Russell who suggested his younger stepson Leonard Digges embark upon a career as a writer and translator from Spanish, and due to Russell's connection with the playwright, Leonard "probably knew Shakespeare personally" (Vickers 1974, 27).

¹ Given the topic and aims of this essay, I will mainly deal with connections between Dudley Digges and English Renaissance drama, since his father Thomas died (in 1595) before Shakespeare's mature period and his younger brother Leonard did not contribute to the writing and collection of *Four Paradoxes*. For a thorough examination of Leonard Digges' connections with Shakespeare, see Hadfield 2020, esp. 4-13.

² As stated in Shakespeare's last will and testament: "And I do entreat and appoint the said Thomas Russell, Esquire, and Francis Collins, gent., to be overseers hereof" (the modernised transcription of Shakespeare's last will and testament is available at <https://shakespearedocumented.folger.edu/resource/document/william-shakespeares-last-will-and-testament-original-copy-including-three> (Accessed 12 March 2022)).

Nevertheless, neither Leonard's prefatory poem to the First Folio, nor his commendatory verses to the 1640 edition of Shakespeare's *Poems*, establish any kind of personal acquaintance between the two authors. Similarly, in a handwritten note to a third edition of Lope de Vega's *Rimas* (1613) that Leonard's friend James Mabbe gave their mutual acquaintance William Baker, Leonard inserted a short comment comparing Lope de Vega and Shakespeare, acknowledging them as the national poets of Spain and England, respectively, yet not exhibiting any personal connection with the English playwright.³ Leonard demonstrates he is a keen admirer of Shakespeare, one who knows his works quite well⁴ and who attended performances of his plays many times. Nevertheless, his dedicatory verses focus on the eternalisation of Shakespeare's works and his persona,⁵ and their resistance to time, but Leonard provides no biographical data suggesting some sort of acquaintance between them.

Dudley Digges's direct connections with Shakespeare seem to be even more improbable than his younger brother's. Frank Kermode was possibly one of the first scholars to be convinced that Dudley Digges and Shakespeare knew each other. In his introduction to the first Arden edition of *The Tempest*, Kermode asserts that Shakespeare had acquaintances among the members of the Virginia Company of London, one expedition of which was shipwrecked in the Bermuda Isles in 1609. The account of this shipwreck by William Strachey (initially suppressed by members of the Company for its

³ "Will Baker: Knowing that Mr. Mab: was to send you this book of sonnets, which with Spaniards here is accounted of their Lope de Vega as in England we should of our Will Shakespeare. I could not but insert thus much to you, that if you like him not, you must never never read Spanish poet. Leo: Digges".

⁴ Nevertheless, he is wrong when he bombastically states, in the poem published in 1640, that "he doth not borrow, / One phrase from Greeks, nor Latins imitate / Nor once from vulgar languages translate, / Not plagiary-like from others glean" (12-15).

⁵ In the prefatory poem to the First Folio, for example, Digges mentions "thy Stratford monument" (4) which, according to Park Honan, is the "earliest allusion to the playwright's monument at Holy Trinity church" (2001, 112).

accusations, then published by Samuel Purchas in 1625 as *A True Repertory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, July Fifteenth, Sixteen Hundred and Ten*, known as the Strachey letter, was probably one of the main manuscript sources for Shakespeare's romance:

Shakespeare's knowledge of this unpublished work . . . makes it probable that he was deeply interested in the story. He was certainly acquainted with members of the Virginia Company . . . He also knew . . . certainly Sir Dudley Digges, ardent in the Virginian Cause, whose brother Leonard contributed memorial verses to the First Folio, and whose mother married Thomas Russell, the 'overseer' of Shakespeare's will. Both Dudley Digges and William Strachey contributed laudatory verses to Jonson's *Sejanus* in 1605, and Shakespeare acted in the play. Shakespeare's friend Heminge was at Digges's wedding, and signed as a witness. It seems likely that Shakespeare knew Digges. (1954, xix)

Dudley Digges was among that group of venturers belonging to the Virginia company, but the fact that Strachey and he may have written some commendatory verses for Jonson's *Sejanus*,⁶ in which Shakespeare acted, does not prove any direct connection between the two authors. Similarly, the fact that Shakespeare was a friend to one of Dudley's friends, i.e., John Heminge, cannot be used as evidence of any acquaintance between them. On the contrary, a handwritten note by Ben Jonson confirms that Dudley Digges and he were friends. A copy of *A Geometrical Practical Treatise Named Pantometria* (1591) by Leonard (the Elder) and Thomas Digges (Dudley and Leonard's grandfather and father, respectively), now held at Worcester College, Oxford, is annotated by Ben Jonson, who wrote: "Sum Ben Jonsonii Liber ex dono amicissimi sui Dud: Digges auctoris filii" ("I am Ben Jonson's book from the gift of my very dear [friend] Dudley Digges, son of the author", translated in McPherson 1974, 40). Of course, the note cannot be dated 1591, since, although

⁶ Dudley did write some verses on *Volpone* (perhaps, since the poem is signed D. D.) and, in his "An Elegy on Ben Jonson" (1638), he does not even mention *Sejanus* among Jonson's Roman plays, but only praises *Catiline* (1611): "Bold Catiline, at once Rome's hate and fear, / Far higher in his story doth appear" (53-4).

Jonson was 19, Dudley was only 8. Another biographical connection between Dudley Digges and Ben Jonson is testified by Thomas Coryat's *Crudities* (1611) – complete title: *Coryat's Crudities Hastily Gobbled Up in Five Months Travels in France, Savoy, Italy, Rhaetia Commonly Called the Grisons' Country, Helvetia Alias Switzerland, Some Parts of High Germany, and the Netherlands* – one of the first examples of travel writing in early modern England. The book was introduced by a long series of “Panegyric verses upon the author and his book”⁷ by some of the most eminent poets and playwrights of the time, including Thomas Campion, George Chapman, John Donne, and Ben Jonson. Even Dudley Digges contributed a poem. According to Hadfield, “Dudley Digges’ contribution suggests that he might have been part of the circle who met in the famous Mermaid Tavern, a forerunner of the drinking societies that dominated much of English cultural life from the eighteenth century onwards” (2020, 13). As Thomas Coryat himself ascertains in one of the ‘greetings’ he sends from the Mogul court in Ajmer, India (collected in *Traveller for the English Wits: Greeting*, 1616, a series of letters he wrote to his friends during his voyage to the Middle and Far East), the so-called Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen was a group of intellectuals who “meet the first Friday of every month, at the sign of the mermaid in Bread Street in London” (1616, 37. Modernised version mine). Since many of the personalities who wrote dedicatory verses in Coryat's *Crudities* were part of the Fraternity, Hadfield suggests that Digges could also have been among those gentlemen, although no extant document seems to prove it; neither can any hypothesis about Shakespeare's involvement in the circle be firmly advanced.

In addition to their uncertainty, the personal connections I have tried to outline above between the Digges family and early

⁷ As Hadfield suggests, “The verses serve a variety of functions, making the book stand out as an unusual and distinctive volume at a time when there were few works of travel writing published . . . perhaps disguising the possibly subversive ideas and opinions contained in parts of the volume, or simply as a means of self-protection in a censorious age; and, most significantly, to promote the character of the ‘Odcombian Leg-Stretcher,’ showing how embedded he was in a larger community of writers and supporters” (2020, 13).

modern English poets and playwrights (Shakespeare and Jonson in particular) are not enough to prove that the intellectuals belonging to the Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen read Dudley's works, in particular his *Four Paradoxes*. The book was published in 1604, and the first hint of Dudley's alleged acquaintance with members of the Fraternity is in Coryat's *Crudities* in 1611. Within seven years Dudley was knighted by King James (1607) and elected a Member of Parliament (1610), and his admission to the Mermaid Club might have depended upon one of these events, which occurred between 1604 and 1611. Since no contemporary early modern writer mentions *Four Paradoxes*, we may infer that the book had a scant circulation among intellectuals. The following section introduces Thomas and Dudley's collection of paradoxes and attempts to understand whether and to what extent it influenced (or was influenced by) early modern English plays. To do so, I will examine the circulation of paradoxical texts at a macro-textual level, as well as lexicosemantic clues at a micro-textual stage.

2. Thomas and Dudley Digges and Their *Four Paradoxes* (1604)

Four Paradoxes is a collaborative work by Thomas and Dudley Digges, published by Dudley in 1604, nine years after his father's death. The complete title of this collection gives precise information about its textual genre: *Foure paradoxes, or politique discourses. Two concerning militarie discipline, written long since by Thomas Digges Esquire. Two of the worthinesse of warre and warriors, by Dudly Digges, his sonne. All newly published to keepe those that will read them, as they did them that wrote them, from idlenesse*. As the complete title indicates, the book is a collection of four political paradoxes about war, warfare, and warriors, two by Thomas (nos. 1 and 2) and two by Dudley (nos. 3 and 4). It survives in a single quarto edition published by the printer Humphrey Lownes for the bookseller Clement Knight, as the frontispiece notes.

The first two paradoxes were written by Thomas Digges (1546-1595), one of the most important and well-known early modern English astronomers and mathematicians. The Digges family had an established reputation in the field of sciences, as well as a predilection for four-handed publications, as explained below. Thomas's father,

Leonard (1515-59), translated some chapters of Copernicus's *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (1543) into English, and Thomas published them after his father's death as part of an appendix to the 1576 fourth edition of Leonard's *A Prognostication Everlasting*, entitled "A Perfect Description of the Celestial Orbs". Leonard taught Thomas the fundamentals of mathematics and astronomy, with the help of the well-known Elizabethan mathematician John Dee. At the same time, between 1586 and 1594, Thomas was appointed muster-master general⁸ during the Eighty Years' War (i.e., the Dutch war of independence, 1566-1648), thus gaining expertise in matters of war and warfare. This event influenced the writing of paradoxes 1 and 2 "concerning military discipline" (xx)⁹ in the collection analysed here. In *Four Paradoxes*, Thomas quotes another four-handed treatise, written with his father, i.e., the *Stratitotics* (1579). The book, which considers matters of warfare, was mainly written by Leonard and then expanded by Thomas (for details, see Webb 1950; Geldof 2016). Being the earliest English treatise to deal with ballistics (Swetz 2013), the *Stratitotics* anticipates some of the contents of *Four Paradoxes*, albeit adopting a purely arithmetical and geometrical perspective (Lawrence 2003, 323), which heightens its level of technicism.

As noted above, Thomas's eldest son Dudley did not develop an aptitude for astronomy, mathematics or warfare, and paradoxes 3 and 4 of the collection attest to this. After graduating from Oxford in 1601, he became a politician and a diplomat. In 1601 he financed Henry Hudson's expedition to the New World, an economic engagement that resulted in Hudson naming 'East' and 'West Digges' two islands in Hudson Bay.

According to Rosalie Colie, "the paradox is oblique criticism of

⁸ "An officer in charge of the muster roll of part of an army or (less commonly) of a dockyard, penal colony, etc.; a person responsible for the accuracy of a muster roll" (*OED*, n.1a). Muster roll: "An official list of the soldiers in an army or some particular division of it, or of the sailors in a ship's company, convicts in a penal colony, etc." (*OED*, n.1b).

⁹ All quotations from Thomas and Dudley Digges' *Four Paradoxes* are taken from the modernised edition edited by Fabio Ciambella (2022). Only the number of the paradox from which the quotation is taken and the line number(s) referred to are given in brackets to ease readability.

absolute judgment or absolute convention” (1966, 10). Agreeing with Colie’s definition of paradox, Peter G. Platt calls such absolute judgement and convention “stable truths” (2009, 19). Moving from Colie’s and Platt’s assertions, *Four Paradoxes* must be read as a thematically homogenous treatise aimed at justifying wars and warriors’ behaviour, when virtuous and right, against a long-standing tradition of “absolute judgement” and “stable truths” represented by writings condemning the rightfulness of wars and soldiers. For instance, in the first edition of his *Adagia* (1500), Erasmus had already stated his position on war by commenting on the Latin proverb “dulce bellum inexpertis” (war is sweet for those who have not experienced it). However, he returned to this thorny topic in his *Querela pacis* (1517, translated into English as *The Complaint of Peace* by Thomas Paynell in 1559), a treatise that condemns war because “it is unnatural since animals do not make [it]” (Tallett 1992, 238). In addition to the eminent Dutch philosopher, “Thomas More, Baldassare Castiglione and Juan Vives [as] ‘Christian Humanists’” opposed war (Marx 1992, 49), with only scant exceptions when dealing with the Just War tradition against the Turks, as will be seen later.

The fact that *Four Paradoxes* belongs to the genre of Renaissance paradoxes is bolstered by the sense of bewilderment that pervades the collection when it provides examples from Latin and Greek war history. This tradition celebrated great warriors, such as Alexander the Great or Coriolanus, and justified wars as a necessary means to obtain peace. Moreover, the Digges continually state that Greek and Latin warriors were braver and less corrupt than early modern ones, although corruption affected ancient soldiers as well. This aspect also contributes to the text’s paradoxicality, since it attacks the Renaissance “stable truth” of the notion of historical progress, which in this period “begin[s] to emerge in English thought” (Escobedo 2004, 207).

As previously anticipated, the frontispiece of *Four Paradoxes* states that the first two texts, which concern military discipline, were written by Thomas Digges, while paradoxes 3 and 4, focusing on “the worthiness of war and warriors”, were written by Dudley. The two authors’ spheres of competence are clear from the outset: Thomas deals with military discipline, sometimes even letting

himself be carried away by the impetus of his memories and experiences of war in the Netherlands. Conversely, Dudley's focus is purely political: by examining cases of corruption within ranks and governments since ancient times, he tries to defend the military profession (paradox 3), even justifying the benefits of war for the sake of peacekeeping (paradox 4).

As to their date(s) of composition, intratextual clues may help with this issue. In fact, Thomas Digges mentions Odet de la Noue's *Discours politiques et militaires* more than once in his two paradoxes. This work by the French diplomat, soldier and poet was published in 1587 and translated into English by Edward Aggas that year. Since Thomas Digges died in 1595, his two paradoxes must have been written between 1587 and 1595. Dudley, on the other hand, praises King James's great learning in his texts; hence, there is little doubt that his paradoxes were written sometime between 1603 (when the Stuart monarch ascended the English throne) and 1604 (when *Four Paradoxes* was published).

The first paradox is an invective against corrupt soldiers and officers who take advantage of their privileged position to steal public money and rise in rank undeservedly. Nevertheless, not even European states and rulers are spared in Thomas Digges's complaint, since, if soldiers were adequately paid, they would not try to obtain extra money by committing fraud. In this sense, this paradox also owes much to the satirical genre. All the European states and princes – except, of course, Elizabeth I – are the target of Digges's invective, as they pay their soldiers and officers too little, forcing them to corrupt others or becoming corrupt themselves. Dishonesty and fraud are personified by Mistress (sometimes Lady) Picorea, who corrupts warriors by bewitching them. The name Picorea is a French borrowing which indicates plunder and pillage. It is in this sense that the French noun *picorée* is employed in de la Noue's *Discours*, one of the main sources of Thomas's paradoxes, as seen above. Thomas Digges thus suggests more money be spent on soldiers' salaries, so that any nation can prosper without corruption among the ranks. The second part of the paradox introduces a two-column comparison, called "conference", aimed at illustrating the stereotypical behaviour of good and bad officers. The conflict between good and bad officers depends on the degree of corruption

exercised by Lady Picorea on soldiers.

The second paradox compares early modern artillery with the Greek and Roman militia, even though Thomas Digges provides no actual example from the past. In particular, Digges relates about Spartan warriors whose conduct he hopes late sixteenth-century armies and their commanders will adopt. Nonetheless, *tristia exempla*, i.e., negative examples, of cowardly and corrupt soldiers from the past are mentioned as well.

The third paradox, by Dudley Digges, is about “the worthiness of warriors” and thus aims to dignify the military discipline. Continual references to Greek, Roman and contemporary European authors help highlight virtuous and unvirtuous military behaviour. In Dudley’s paradoxes, however, negative examples from ancient and recent history surpass positive ones. Thomas’s son includes tyrants, inept commanders, and dissolute officers whose reprehensible conduct led to the defeat of their armies. Stylistically, Thomas Digges’s plain writing, almost a scientific prose, contrasts sharply to his son’s long and elaborate sentences, filled with quotations from Greek, Latin, Italian and French writers whom Dudley always acknowledges in marginal glosses. This sometimes complicates sentences a great deal and makes reading strenuous. Unlike his father, who had not received any university education, but had acquired notions of warfare through John Dee’s mathematical and physical approach and through direct experience in the Netherlands, Dudley had graduated from Oxford and, as stated above, was a diplomat and politician; hence his style differs markedly from Thomas’s.

The fourth paradox is the shortest of the collection, although it is certainly the most interesting from an interdiscursive perspective. It introduces Dudley’s belief that sometimes wars are necessary to maintain peace. This concept is not Dudley’s, but rather reflects the *multis utile bellum* principle whose foundation can be traced to such classical author as Lucan (in his *Pharsalia* or *Bellum civile* 1.182), as clearly stated in the subheading of the paradox. Nevertheless, alongside Dudley Digges several Renaissance intellectuals had embraced this principle, such as Machiavelli in his *The Art of War* (see Ciambella 2022, 207-8; 210).¹⁰ One of the themes that paradox

¹⁰ *Dell’arte della Guerra* (1521) was translated into English by Peter Whitehorne

4 shares with other contemporary writing is the exaltation of wars against Turks and infidels (whom Dudley calls “dogs”). This is the principle of the Just War (see Pugliatti 2010), according to which Christian princes should employ their armies against the Ottoman empire, instead of fighting futile and debilitating wars against each other. Dudley’s position in this paradox is a thorny one; hence, he often turns to the principle of *auctoritas* to support his hypotheses with quotations from Latin and Greek sources such as Dio Cassius, Diodorus Siculus, Ovid, Horace, among others, and the Bible.

Overall, as stated above, the *Four Paradoxes*’ pretentious Ciceronian style and the excessive, sometimes unnecessary, repetitions of the same concepts and ideas make it a hard read. If it is true that “the didactic ideal of imitation and repetition is still fully present at the end of the [sixteenth] century” (Berensmeyer 2020, 99), this text perfectly follows recurrent patterns of English Renaissance stylistics, thus explaining why repetitions and duplications of the same concepts are particularly marked, at least in Thomas Digges’s paradoxes, while Dudley’s style, full of quotations from Latin and French, as well as his English translations of them, impedes reading fluency.

3. *Four Paradoxes* and Early Modern Theatre: a Look at Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity

Before dealing with connections between *Four Paradoxes* and the early modern theatre, it is worth clarifying how the paradox as a genre contributed to the development of the warfare discourse in the English Renaissance. As hinted at in the previous section, each text of the Digges’ collection goes against common shared opinions: paradox 1 affirms that soldiers need to be paid more, otherwise corruption among the ranks arises, paradox 2 states that the ancient militia was more advanced than modern one, although modern weapons are technologically more efficient, in paradoxes 3 and 4, Dudley Digges affirms that wars, especially those against the Turks, are better than peace, because they cure the European nations’ internal conflicts, focussing the attention of

people on issues external to the nation. No other text of the period tackles the problem of war and warfare under such a paradoxical perspective.¹¹ Then what could these texts offer to early modern playwrights? Or, better said, what shared paradoxical features about war do we find both in the Digges' and in English Renaissance plays? In the attempt to answer this latter question, the examples from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century drama that follow do not demonstrate any direct intertextual connection between the Digges' text and Renaissance plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries; nonetheless, they testify how and to what extent the culture of paradox permeated any aspect and genre of sixteenth and seventeenth century, especially drama. If it is true that early modern culture is an epoch characterised by the "paradox as a mode of thinking and configuring experience" (Bigliuzzi 2014, 7), interdiscursivity and recurring paradoxical patterns can be found in a variety of cultural manifestations of the time, as this section aims at demonstrating. To paraphrase Platt, the Renaissance culture of paradox provided early modern playwrights with a vocabulary and a conceptual framework for their presentation of a dizzying array of perspectives on love, gender, knowledge, and truth, in the optics of their interest in challenging assumptions and orthodoxies (2009, 1).

The connections between *Four Paradoxes* and early modern drama, and with Shakespeare in particular, have rarely been investigated (more generally, on Shakespeare and war, see Jorgensen 1956; de Somogyi 1998; Barker 2007; Bertram 2018).¹² As we have seen,

¹¹ To my knowledge, only Thomas Scott's *Four Paradoxes* (1602) contains a paradox "Of War", in verse, that focuses on some of the issues dealt with by the Digges. See Ciambella 2022.

¹² Although Michael Neill has highlighted interesting interdiscursive echoes between paradoxes and tragicomedy (in Fletcher's *A King and No King* in particular), understanding both genres as "kind[s] of *discordia concors*" and "art[s] of wonder and surprise" (1981, 319), the two collections of paradoxes scrutinised in this book do not seem to have strict connections with such a theatrical genre. See also Mukherji and Lyne's introduction to their edited collection of essays about early modern English tragicomedy for an understanding of tragicomedies as paradoxical plays in a broader sense (2007, 1-14). As previously noted, even John Marston's *The Malcontent* represents an interesting interweaving of satire and paradox applied to tragicomedy, this relation being more explosive and evident here than in ear-

whether Shakespeare had some kind of personal relationship with the Digges family is unclear, yet scholars have tried to find some intertextual and interdiscursive echoes between the Shakespearean canon and *Four Paradoxes*.

In 1899, William Craig was probably the first to note some references to Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 1* (1596-98) in *Four Paradoxes* (95). He believed that Falstaff's assertion to Prince Hal that "the tree may be known by the fruit as the fruit by the tree" (2.4.349-50) seems to echo Thomas Digges's "by the fruits judge unpartially of the trees" (1.876). However, this is highly unlikely for at least two reasons. Firstly, the metaphor of the fruit providing information about the tree is a literary cliché deriving from Matthew 12.33, as early modern contemporary works demonstrate; e.g., John Lyly's "No, no, the tree is known by his fruit" (Croll and Clemons 1916, 42), which Shakespeare parodies in *1 Henry IV*, or Stephen Gosson's "the tree [is known] by the fruit" (1841, 41). Secondly, *Henry IV, Part 1* was probably written between 1596 and 1598, and Thomas Digges had died in 1595. For this reason, it is impossible that Digges attended a performance of Shakespeare's play, just as it is hardly credible that the playwright could have read Thomas Digges's two paradoxes before their publication in 1604.

Paradox 3 by Dudley introduces an important invective against merchants, especially Venetians, shared by other Elizabethan writers.¹³ The author considers that idleness is the worst flaw a gentleman can have, besides being corrupted and corrupting others, which is what Venetians do: "I ever thought nothing worse for gentlemen than idleness, except doing ill, but could not at the first resolve how they might be fitliest busied: to play the merchants was only for gentlemen of . . . Venice, or the like that are indeed but the better sort of citizens" (3.83-7). Therefore, driving away idleness by entering the military service is a noble thing to do,

ly modern English tragicomedies written after Fletcher's codification of the genre in 1608.

¹³ See also, among others, William Segar's *Honor military, and ciuill contained in foure bookes* (1602): "The Venetian, albeit reputeth himselfe the most noble gentleman of the world, . . . holdeth it no dishonour to traffique in marchandise" (230).

contrary to becoming a merchant. According to Ferber (1990, 437) and Rutter (2006, 198), the corruption of Venetian merchants had been already explored by Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* through such characters as Antonio and Shylock. In the comedy, Shakespeare distinguished between merchants driven by highly moral aristocratic values, i.e., Antonio, and those driven only by money and personal interests, i.e., Shylock. When Antonio accepts to pledge his pound of flesh to save Bassanio from debts towards Shylock, Ferber defines this gesture "heroic soldierly fashion" (1990, 432), a consideration that helps associating Antonio's character with noble military values although the real soldier is Bassanio, rather than base money-centred mercantilist attitudes. I argue that another important parallelism between *Four Paradoxes* and *The Merchant of Venice* can be drawn. In act 1, scene 1, when Bassanio asks Antonio to lend him money to court Portia, the merchant answers that "all [his] fortunes are at sea; / Neither ha[s he] money nor commodity / To raise a present sum" (1.1.176-8). As Thomas Digges stated at the very beginning of Paradox 1, such merchants as Antonio are "miserable foolish" (1.30) and ill-equipped, since they do not consider saving some money for other necessities and risk losing all their earnings:

[I]f a merchant, setting forth his ship to the seas, fraught with merchandise, shall know that (to rig her well, and furnish her with all needful tackle, furniture and provision) it will cost him full 500 pounds: yet, of a covetous and greedy mind to save thereof some 100 pounds, or two, he shall scant his provision, wanting perhaps some cables, anchors, or other like necessaries, and after (by a storm arising) for fault thereof shall lose both ship and goods. (1.22-9)

As paradoxical as it may seem, saving some money and goods, instead of investing all of them in business, can prevent bankruptcy. One can imaginatively and hyperbolically assert that had Antonio "read" Thomas Digges' advice about saving some money and had he not sent all his ships at sea, he would not have needed to suggest Bassanio to ask Shylock for a loan, thus activating the series of events that characterises *The Merchant of Venice*.

Other echoes from *Henry IV, Part 2* and *Othello* can be treated as evidence of interdiscursive practices in early modern England

rather than as actual intertextual references by Dudley Digges to Shakespearean plays. In the final part of paradox 3, Dudley offers a prophecy against those who despise war:

The time will come their country will leave fawningly to offer up her wealth to those her unworthy children that live by sucking dry their parents' blood, and rather motherlike respect those sons that are her champions, and seek to purchase her ease with painful industry, her honour with effusion of their blood, her safety with loss of life. (3. 701-6)

Aside from snobbish parallelisms with the Second Letter to Timothy ("the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers", 4:3), this passage also seems to echo Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2* (3.1.75-6), when Bolingbroke, now King Henry IV, quotes Richard II's "proved prophecy": "The time will come that foul sin, gathering head, / Shall break into corruption". In fact, the late king Richard II also focuses on the corruption of the English militia and the entire nation, foreseeing a dark future for England. One cannot state with certainty that Digges might have been inspired from the 1600 quarto of *2 Henry IV*, where the two lines can be found, or witnessed a performance of Shakespeare's play, but the similarity between the incipit of Richard's prophecy and the beginning of this final paragraph of the Digges' third paradox is interesting from both a lexicosemantic and content viewpoint.

The above quotation is not the only excerpt from Dudley's two paradoxes that recalls *Henry IV, Part 2*. In the fourth paradox, Dudley compares wars with drugs, ascertaining that "foreign war [is] a sovereign medicine for domestic inconveniences" (4.258-60). Moreover, this idea seems to echo *Henry IV, Part 2*, when the king advises Prince Harry "to busy giddy minds / With foreign quarrels" (4.3.342-3). As stated above, this does not necessarily imply that Dudley Digges had read or seen Shakespeare's history play, since, as Meron observed (1993; 1998), this idea was quite common and shared by sovereigns in early modern times.¹⁴ Nevertheless, it

¹⁴ Also, as Wallis noted (2006, 3-4), it is a widespread Renaissance tradi-

suggests that celebration of foreign wars as ‘distractions’ from internal crises were widespread and important interdiscursive practices in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England.

Another lexical similarity between paradox 4 and one of Shakespeare’s plays introduces macro-textual parallels concerning the Just War theory. In line with many Renaissance European intellectuals, Dudley affirms that a just war against the Islamic threat from the East is desirable. In doing so, he compares the Turks to dogs, actually not an unusual trope in early modern English texts:¹⁵ “I assure myself shall never be extinguished till the names of those dogs be clean extirpated” (4.448-9). This metaphor recalls Shakespeare’s Othello’s last words about having killed “a malignant and a turbaned Turk . . . the circumcisèd dog” (5.2.351-3). Both Dudley Digges and Shakespeare compare the Turks to dangerous stray animals to be eliminated.

Some critics have also focussed on the possible influences that the Digges’ treatise might have had on Shakespeare’s canon. The publication of *Four Paradoxes*, with its classical sources and quotations, anticipates Shakespeare’s return to the Roman history he had somewhat set aside after writing *Julius Caesar* in 1599. After 1604, Shakespeare wrote *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606), *Coriolanus* (1608) and *Cymbeline* (1610), plays ranging from the first republican period to imperial Rome. Among the plays mentioned earlier, *Coriolanus* might be the most indebted to *Four Paradoxes*, given Dudley Digges’s various references to the historical figure of the republican general who fought against the Volsci at Corioli, in the area known today as the Roman Castles. According to Jorgensen (1956, 182-84) and Muir (1959; 1977, 240), in *Coriolanus* the more Shakespeare distances himself from his main source, i.e., Norton’s translation of Plutarch’s *Lives* (1576), the closer he gets to Digges’ interpretation of Coriolanus’ story, especially when Digges affirms that Coriolanus’ ascent to consulship was hindered by the “two peace-bred tribunes Sicinius and Brutus” (qtd Muir 1959, 139). In paradox 4, Dudley affirms that when Rome was a

tion that doctors and war heroes were sometimes paralleled, when considering war as a bitter yet inevitable drug to cure sick countries

¹⁵ See, among others, Burton 2005, esp. ch. 5, 196-232.

“contentious commonwealth” (4. 290), Sicinius and Brutus tried to prevent Coriolanus from obtaining power and make war against the Volscians “to ease their city of . . . dearth . . . and appease . . . tumultuous broils” (4.285-7). There is no mention about the tribunes’ attempt to hinder Coriolanus’ ascent in Plutarch’s *Lives*, Shakespeare’s main source;¹⁶ yet, in Shakespeare, Sicinius and Brutus convince the plebs to take back their votes for Coriolanus for his “malice towards you [the people]” (2.3.168), something Dudley Digges defines as Coriolanus’s “cruelty” (4.294). In both Shakespeare and Digges, the tribunes depict the Roman general as a malignant, cruel would-be tyrant, a dangerous threat for the Romans’ new republican freedom.

Similarly, Bliss (2000, 13) attributes the unPlutarchan metaphor of war as a “dangerous physic” which “jump[s] a body . . . / That’s sure of death without it”, in *Coriolanus* 3.1.155-6, to Dudley Digges’ “extended praise of war”, seen as “a sharp and merciless physician, and a violent purgation” (1.466-7). Moreover, the scholar considers “the [first] Volscian servingman’s comic preference for war over peace” in 4.5.208-11 to be an echo of Digges’ paradoxical view – rather than Lucan’s – of the *multis utile bellum* principle:

FIRST SERVINGMAN Let me have war, say I; it exceeds peace as far as day does night. It’s sprightly walking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy; mulled, deaf, sleepy, insensible; a getter of more bastard children than war’s a destroyer of men.

The same principle, says Pugliatti (2010, 108), is applicable to Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613), where “there [does not] seem to be any regret or nostalgia for the activities of the time of peace suddenly interrupted by war”. The celebrations for Theseus and Hippolyta’s wedding are interrupted by the three queens who ask Theseus to avenge their husbands’ deaths at the

¹⁶ It is well known that Shakespeare drew mainly on Thomas North’s translation of Plutarch’s *Lives* (1580). He may also have considered Livy’s *Ab urbe condita*, whose English translation by Philemon Holland was published in 1600. Nevertheless, Livy does not even mention the tribunes and their attempt to impede Coriolanus’ ascent.

hand of the Theban tyrant Creon. The married couple listens carefully and compassionately to the queens' mourning speech and, moved to compassion, decides to avenge the death of the three lords without a second thought by waging war against Creon. In doing so, they embrace Digges' *multis utile bellum* principle, since the husband and wife's initial status of peace is interrupted by their voluntary declarations of bellicose intent which will benefit *multos*.

Alleged influences and confluences between Shakespearean drama and the Digges' *Four Paradoxes*, be they shallow or extensive, prove the pervasiveness of the paradox and of paradoxical war discourse in early modern English culture. Borrowing from Hadfield and his sceptical view of a direct influence of *Four Paradoxes* on *Coriolanus*' insistence on the *multis utile bellum* principle:

The argument [of *multis utile bellum*] is eloquently put, albeit simple enough: war cleanses a nation and makes it virile, manly, and honorable, whereas peace encourages complacency. This was a common complaint made against the "carpet knights" who were encouraged by Elizabeth in her final decade and James in his first, at the expense of the truly virtuous military men who had suffered in the field for queen, king, and country . . . Shakespeare may – or may not – have read *Four Paradoxes*. Its logic fits in well with that of *Coriolanus* and with the ways in which Shakespeare often used his sources, exploiting the paradoxes latent within them and often overturning their arguments and conclusions. (2020, 16)

We have noted at the outset that Dudley Digges knew Ben Jonson personally. Nevertheless, few elements seem to connect the playwright's work with *Four Paradoxes*. Although the copy of Leonard (the Elder) and Thomas Digges' *Pantometria* that Dudley gave Ben Jonson was published in 1591, we do not know when Jonson was actually given it, as Dudley was only eight when his father published his treatise about geometry, as hinted at above. The only certain date that connects both Dudley and Ben Jonson is 1611, when they wrote commendatory verses in the introduction to Coryat's *Crudities*. Thus, perhaps they got to know each other during those years, long after the publication of *Four Paradoxes*.

In paradox 3, Dudley talks about "[s]ome thankful poet that hath drunk store of castalian liquor and is full of fury" (3.46-7). The

reference to somebody drinking Castalian liquor¹⁷ is perhaps to Ben Jonson's prologue to *Every Man out of His Humour* (1599), where Carlo Buffone (Thomas Dekker's representation), describing Jonson himself, says: "This is that our poet calls Castalian liquor, when he comes abroad now and then, once in a fortnight". This reference to the noun phrase 'Castalian liquor' is the only one found on EEBO prior to 1604. It is well known that Dekker's identification with Carlo Buffone in *Every Man out of His Humour* is parodic: on more than one occasion, Jonson tells his readers not to trust this character. After all, *buffone* is an Italian noun meaning 'buffoon', both in the sense of "a comic actor, clown; a jester, fool" (*OED*, n.2.a) and "a wag, a joker (implying contempt or disapprobation)" (*OED*, n.3). This passage from Dudley's paradox is ambiguous. He is certainly criticising the "thankful poet" who is "full of fury" and so he "cannot do better than . . . sing[ing] in verse excelling / wars worth the muses telling" (3.46-51). Nevertheless, one cannot understand whether Dudley is talking about Jonson or Dekker. Is Dudley speaking about Jonson as portrayed by Buffone/Dekker? Is he punning on Dekker? Considering Dudley and Jonson's friendship, maybe the author of *Four Paradoxes* is criticising Dekker. Yet, as stated above, in 1604 no evidence can be offered regarding Dudley and Jonson's acquaintance, not even the commendatory

¹⁷ Digges' reference to Castalian liquor is ambiguous here, although little doubt can be raised about interlexical echoes from Ben Jonson's *Every Man Out*. Yet, from a semantic perspective, it is not clear whether Digges is alluding to the Canary wine Carlo Buffone talks about in the Prologue of Jonson's work or he is referring to the Castalian springs/fountains at Delphi from which poets drew inspiration in Greek and Roman times, understanding 'liquor' as "A liquid; matter in a liquid state . . . *Obsolete*" (*OED*, n.1.a). After all, the reference to the Castalian springs/fountains was extremely common in Latin poetry, not infrequently read by English authors in the original texts. For instance, the phrase *Castalius liquor* is attested in Latin in Venantius Fortunatus' *Carmina* 8.1 ("Castaliusque quibus sumitur arte liquor"). Moreover, focusing on Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* (1593), Martindale and Martindale (1990) state that "Shakespeare used a quotation from Ovid's *Amores* as an epigraph for *Venus and Adonis*: *vilia miretur vulgus; mihi flavus Apollo / pocula Castalia plena ministret aqua* (1.15.35f.) (Let the crowd wonder at cheap things; for me let yellow-haired Apollo give cups full of the water of Castalia)" (57).

verses to Jonson's *Volpone*, which are attributed to Dudley (albeit only signed D. D.), and which could not have been written before 1605-6, when *Volpone* was staged for the first time. The War of the Theatres (Poets' War or Poetomachia, as Dekker called it) had just ended in 1604, after four years (1599-1602) of satirical exchanges between Ben Jonson, on one side, and Dekker and Marston, on the other, in the form of plays.

4. Conclusion

The analysis of intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between Thomas and Dudley Digges's *Four Paradoxes* presented above has demonstrated that there are evident echoes of paradoxical instances connected to war and warfare in early modern plays, especially in the Shakespearean canon. Nevertheless, the biographical happenstances analysed herein, concerning the Digges and English Renaissance playwrights, are not sufficient to establish an out-and-out, direct, and certain influence of *Four Paradoxes* on the plays of Shakespeare or Ben Jonson, and vice versa. The scant information we have about personal connections between the Digges family (Dudley in particular) and the English playwrights of the Fraternity of Sirenaical Gentlemen provides no valuable biographical data that might account for or explain any mutual close intertextual relationships between the Digges' text and early modern English plays. On the contrary, such echoes should be understood as interdiscursive patterns highlighting the pervasiveness of the paradox as a genre and a philosophy in English Renaissance culture.

As this essay has tried to show, themes and conceptions such as the Just War theory or the *multis utile bellum* principle belong to a long-standing paradoxical Renaissance European tradition that does not directly and exclusively connect *Four Paradoxes* with Shakespearean plays such as *Coriolanus* and *Henry IV, Part 2*. Nonetheless, the Digges' treatise shows many points of contact with early modern plays, demonstrating that certain principles and ideas did circulate among intellectuals and writers (see for example Henry Chettle's *The Tragedy of Hoffman* and its engagement with military matters as analysed in Honda 2006), thus permeating many

cultural domains.

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