

Sample pages only

The Precise Man

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Introduction

Ned Tilney's diary for January through March of 1604 had lain unremarked in the archives of the British Library until, researching another matter entirely, I came across the tattered unbound pages.

I offer a few notes about my editing of the work.

First, the diary, written at irregular intervals, was penned in a mix of past and present tense. I have chosen to regularize it all in the present tense, based on a discussion between Tilney and Shakespeare and Tilney's thoughts thereupon.

Second, I have updated the language to correspond with contemporary usage. Scholars of early Jacobean times can wade through the original document, or wait until the Library makes it available in reproduction form on line, which I am assured they will do once funding is available. However, I do not wish the idiom of those times to be an impediment to

understanding Tilney's world and, perhaps, seeking parallels to our own.

Third, I have added chapter titles as aids in navigating the diary, particularly since e-readers often format poorly those books without chapters. I have done so only where there are clear breaks in the narrative. I would have preferred to use dates, but Tilney did not date his entries. While a few dates can be inferred from the contents of the diary, adding more would be purely speculative.

Other than these preliminary notes, I shall intrude on the document itself as little as possible.

-- Dr. Brent Salish, London, 2023

Chapter 1 – I Have Never Denied You

Will* rearranges my sheaf of papers well clear of the tankard Isobel has just brought him.

He rises and claps his hands to her shoulders, causing others in the smoky alehouse to briefly look his way in hope of an evening's brief entertainment. "We are having a debate, Ned and I." He speaks, for once, in a voice not pitched to carry to the far reaches of a theater... or the tavern. "We need your most able assistance†."

* Nowhere in the diary does Tilney identify Will other than by first name, the only personage accorded this familiarity. We can, with the power of 420-year hindsight, infer Will's surname. Historians argue today about how well known he was in his time, especially to those beyond the insular world of the theater. Tilney, though, was keeping this diary for his own purposes, not ours or posterity's, and presumably did not need to remind himself of Will's identity.

† Will uses "thy," according to the diary – "thy most able, etc." Thee/thou vs. you reflects the Elizabethan and Jacobean

“A *debate*.” Isobel wipes Will’s beer-mustache with her forefinger. “Then you must buy two more ales, as proper payment.” She giggles, like a girl of sixteen, though she has seen thirty and a few years more. A practiced giggle.

Which doesn’t make it inauthentic.

Isobel Switte is short, slightly rounded in the waist, small of breast, with hair of damp straw, green eyes, a round face that carries beauty despite markers of the pox. And a lively spirit undeterred by the constant calls and squeezing hands of a dozen of The Three Barks’ male patrons.

“Here is the question. Is there a woman in London desperate enough to marry Ned Tilney?” Will sits and guides the serving-woman onto his lap. “Certainly not a beautiful young woman like you.”

I refuse to react to Will’s gibe. His contempt for me is well known in the world of the theater, though I cannot tell whether he despises my office or my person. As I am Master of the Revels, he cannot put one of his plays upon the stage unless I license it, having inspected the work for ways in which it might prove offensive to his majesty. And Edmund Tilney the man is an easy target for mockery. I am neither personable nor easily liked.

emphasis on class structure, and there are massive implications in who uses which form when, implications that would bring the flow of this manuscript to a halt were I to expound upon them. Those inferences will be lost to a modern audience without, as it were, constant footnoting. Therefore I have taken the liberty of converting thee, thou, thy, and so on into the standard twenty-first-century simple “you,” “your,” and “yours.”

Or maybe it's simpler. Will, a tall man, enjoys looking down on others, but I match or even exceed his eye level.

I am twice Isobel's age, and even if I desired her, in marriage or in any unseemly manner, a gentleman couldn't wed a tavern-woman.

Isobel laughs loudly, because her livelihood depends on the good intent of patrons. "I am neither beautiful nor young, though I thank you for calling me such." She leans her head onto Will's shoulder. "Which side of the argument is yours?"

"That no woman would have him."

Will knows I was married, for nearly twenty years, but will not allow a simple fact to spoil a clever story.

She stands, examines my face this way and that without touching. However familiar we may be with each other, physical contact remains unseemly. "I judge Master Tilney as the winner of this debate, and thus Will shall buy his beer."

She curtsies to one of the three laughing men sitting at a far table. "You shall see me soon enough, Geoffrey," receiving a salute from him in return.

She tucks a strand of hair back under her bonnet and rubs Will's balding forehead. "*Some* men show more appreciation than others." With a head toss, she saunters off to another of the tavern's dozen tables, most of them smaller than that which the innkeeper reserves for me and my work.

I do not understand the liberties she and Will take with each other, but they both seem comfortable with their assumed roles.

Will places a long-fingered hand on the manuscript upon the table, a draft of a play – a bad play – by Tom Middleton. “And how do you appreciate young Tom’s words?”

“Between you and me, as not yet fit for the king.”

“Quality, or content?”

My office requires me to adjudicate what may be allowed in the theaters. As for quality, the audience will make their opinion clear, if I license the play.

Will snorts in response to my head-shake. He picks up the tankard. “You can’t judge a play’s worth for good reason. You’re utterly without revelry. Master of the Revels?” He sets the tankard down without drinking, but carefully, to avoid Middleton’s pages. “That title sits on you like water on a duck: it does not adhere, but is apt to fall away at the slightest shimmer of movement. I can think of no one less suited to the office.”

His words sting. I do not dispute my lack of mirth, yet I protected the queen’s name for twenty-four years. I have done the same for James these past nine months. “I have never denied you a license. Who would you have as Master in my stead?”

Will spreads his palms, the gesture of one schooling an inferior intellect in what should be obvious. “I believe Syd would perform your office most excellently. If good Syndony can manage this tavern,

surely she could keep the ledger on London's playwrights. Or perhaps you and she might, um, share the load."

I know he mocks somehow, and wish I understood. I admire Syd Good with all my heart. Few women run a tavern as she does, with grace, smiles, and unwatered ale. But I dare not seek explanation. Instead, I point to the room of necessity whose narrow door lies near the Wood Street entrance, and join the short line waiting to relieve themselves on a night too cold to piss in the street.

When I return, Will has gone, his second tankard emptied.

Middleton's play, too, has vanished.

Chapter 2 – Take Some of Your Words

“This is a fine play. A great play.” De Vere* pounds his fist on his manuscript. “The best play.”

Edward de Vere knows the last, at least, to be untrue.

He smiles, lips turned up wide, the skin around his eyes crinkling. “The best from us nobles. A few men devote themselves to nothing but writing, but I am far too important to our king. I can write only in whatever moments I can find.”

He pushes the pages toward me again.

* Tilney styles the name de Vere, De Vere, De Veare, deaver, DV, dv, V, Oxford (as in the seventeenth earl thereof), Oxf, Ox, O^d, and more. I have chosen to condense all references into the common form of de Vere, even within quoted dialog, which I think the reader will find helpful. Consider how many Shakespearean tragedies we have all sat through trying to sort out characters sometimes called by title and other times by name.

De Vere exudes power. The man can make and break lives, but he looks older than I, though I know him to be some fifteen years younger. His square face remains boyish in shape, if florid in tone, and he is clean-shaven, the mustache of his younger years gone, perhaps because it showed the gray that he thinks he can hide elsewhere by powdering his hair. But his back is stooped, and today especially, when he stood to welcome me to his Hackney manor, both his rise and the return to his seat were labored.

He had no obligation to stand for me at all. In the years I have known him, though, he has played at being a friend and equal to those about him. The late queen did not appreciate such behavior, because no one was *her* equal, *or* her true friend, and de Vere paid the price. However, King James has restored his lands, his favor, and his annuity of a thousand pounds a year*.

I page through the manuscript, crabbed – de Vere’s handwriting is more suited for scrawling on a wall than for a fine quill – and full of hasty revisions. “You know that I need a fair copy before I can issue a license.” The manuscript must be both readable and unaltered, because the law requires the actors say the words exactly as written. Which is not completely true, since clowns such as Will Kemp can extemporize freely, as long as they avoid touching on the monarchy.

* It is hard to draw a modern equivalent to a thousand pounds, paid out of the monarchy’s general funds and thus backed by taxation. One might say that de Vere was wealthy but not as rich as many of his peers.

However, the other actors are expected to speak the script with reasonable fidelity.

“Of course you do. Just tell me you will license it, and you will have a fair copy. The finest scribes in London do my bidding.”

I take a deep breath. We have entered the circular argument of a terrier chasing its tail. Not only can I not win, de Vere will not even recognize the speciousness of the discussion. We have had similar fruitless conversations over other plays.

And in the end, he *will* win, as he – mostly – has. He is not just nobility, but a noble close to the king. Maybe Sir Robert Cecil can contravene him, but I cannot.

Yet from what I have read of this play, he does his majesty ill with his words, starting with the title, *A Gentle Man Aggrieved*.^{*} Or maybe *A Gentleman Aggrieved*, because he parcels out spaces between his words as if they cost threepence apiece. I might guess the latter, because little about de Vere is gentle, and he is, however ill-disguised, the main character of his play.

Were I to license the work without revision, he and I would both have to answer to the king, or to Cecil, which would amount to the same thing. While de Vere

^{*} I scoured the British Library as well as contacting a number of de Vere scholars, but the play appears to have been lost to history. Sir James Edwards, a leading Oxfordian, suggested the work in question could be *Timon of Athens*. One might think the existence of Tilney’s diary would put to rest the conjectures that de Vere was the man behind the most famous works of the English theater, yet later Tilney himself must wrestle with this issue.

might lose his thousand pounds, I'd lose my office, already in jeopardy, and possibly my head.

He is a noble, and I am not.

He has lands and other sources of funds – he must, with nobility and birthright in play – and I do not.

And though his neck is flaccid and slack, by birthright it will be less subject to severing than mine.

Still, I have a responsibility to both my office and my sovereign. “With respect, I fear that his majesty may take some of your words the wrong way.” De Vere’s play even dares upbraid his fictional sovereign for being of foreign birth, a point that, however true, is known to raise the ire of King James.

“Why, his majesty is my friend. And my patron. I would in no way do him ill.”

“Of course, your lordship.” I strive for a tone that is merely obsequious, because only his majesty deserves absolute fawning. “I merely suggest that he might misunderstand. In just a few places.” Like in Act I and Act II and, if his majesty could sit that long and there were such a thing, in Act VI as well.

“Those places, that’s where politics are played. Where messages are sent. Even under the nose of the king’s dwarf.” He cackles, in what seems like a forced laugh, though maybe it’s the only laugh he owns. He has no more mirth than I do.

Yet it is dangerous, even in private, to insult Cecil, his majesty’s – very short – spymaster. Even now, the man probably has ears among de Vere’s servants.

I hold up a hand. "Be careful." For if word is passed that de Vere speaks ill of Cecil, the next word will mention the man to whom he spoke.

"No matter." De Vere waves away my objection with an open palm, as if it were a bothersome fly. "Yet even to *my* words, brilliant as they are, no one will listen. Do not mistake, Tilney: How does the king react? Theater is what happens when those about the king maneuver for position. For power. His majesty may watch the actors, but we all watch each other. Who nods, who gestures, who laughs, who keeps silent, who merely stares."

"Yet as you say, his majesty does hear the words."

De Vere grimaces, an expression so fleeting as to be gone before it becomes real. "You really should use my haberdasher. In Cheapside*."

I long ago learned not to so much as blink at his wild changes of subject, especially when he does not care for the direction of the conversation. "If your garb is an example of his work, he is most excellent indeed."

De Vere is dressed today in a tight-fitting robin's-egg doublet beneath a tawny pearl-studded

* British usage, then and now, is that one is "in" a street rather than "on" a street, a style that Lerner and Loewe disregarded for the paean to young love in *My Fair Lady*: "On [sic] the Street Where You Live." Needless to say, in the original (*Pygmalion*), George Bernard Shaw used the British form: "in Wimpole Street" (thrice) and "in Dover Street." I've elected to maintain the British style throughout. When de Vere refers to a shop "in Cheapside," for example, he's speaking of a relatively fashionable street a few hundred yards south of The Three Barks rather than a district of London.

collared jerkin that struggles to close, straining at the gold chain taut below his heavy stomach. His trunk hose and ornamental knee pads match his doublet. Indoors, he wears no sword at his hip, and his leather-and-gilt sword-belt hangs awkwardly at his left side. About his throat lies a lace falling-band collar, as is becoming common at James's court, rather than a ruff.

I dress as fine as I might, perhaps more than I should, certainly more than I can pay these days were I to acquire new clothes. But de Vere outshines me, at least in dress, like the moon to a distant star.

"He is excellent." De Vere preens, because by complimenting his haberdasher I have applauded his taste, and commended the expense as well. "I shall give you his name."

"I appreciate that, your lordship. But I fear I could not afford him."

"Oh, nonsense. You must look good to fulfill your office. You are a fine-looking man, I suppose, for someone as old as you, but your dress is... plain. Shabby, even." He looks me over in some detail, and I think for the first time he deigns notice me. "Did you ride here, or walk?"

"I rode, your lordship." His manor is two, maybe two and a half miles north of the city, through Bishopsgate and past Spitalfields, a reasonable walk in a good season. December is not such a season, not on most days. Snow fell yesterday evening, as I discovered when I left The Three Barks for my chambers in Ironmonger Lane, I thought it best to hire a horse this morning.

“That explains it. Horseback, I presume?”

I nod. I cannot afford a carriage. Even the horse was dear enough – not only to my diminishing purse but to my declining strength. It was all I could do to climb upon his back with neither assistance nor audible groans.

“Well, then, that explains your rather worn attire. A man who calls on someone such as my own personage must dress well, yet....” He shrugs. “I suppose you must wear clothes suitable for sitting a horse in foul weather. You might have said so.”

“Your lordship, your powers of observation are well known.” Well known to be nil, because that would require him to care about others. “I thought not to waste your time making excuses for my dress.”

“I do like you, Ned. You are a wise man. And I know you’ll license *A Gentle Man Aggrieved* shortly.”

So there *is* a space between the second and third words, which means I have learned at least one thing amidst our fencing.

“John Lyly would issue license, were he the Master of the Revels.” De Vere smiles as he reminds me how tenuous my position remains. “I prefer you, but were his majesty to grant Lyly’s or even George Buck’s petition to take your patent, I fear I would not be able to stem that tide.” He nods once. “I thank you for coming today.” He makes no pretense at rising.

And so I am dismissed.

I suppose the meeting has gone well, in that I haven’t actually committed myself to any action, not

even to visit his haberdasher to stare at clothing items I cannot afford.

De Vere's stablehands have neither fed nor brushed the horse. They do not laugh at my struggles to mount the beast, but neither do they help. Undoubtedly de Vere shall hear of my misery before I've reached Shoreditch.

Both horse and rider are feeling put upon as we pass below the arch of Bishopsgate and return to London.

Chapter 3 – The Secret to a Long Life

“What do you think of my play?” Thomas Middleton towers above my table at The Three Barks.

What shall I say? Proclaim the first act offensive, the second boring, and the remaining three possessed by Will rather than me? But I must handle Middleton with care. He is of gentle birth, he has an Oxford education, and he is a published poet now seeking his name in the theater. He also has the silver to pay for the license.

I read the first few scenes before Will stole the manuscript. “Do you know the secret to a long life? Don’t offend our sovereign king.” Or his ministers. Or the peers of the realm.

Nine months into his reign, King James remains an enigma.

Middleton nods, then sips from his tankard, ignoring my gesture toward the other chair. “Where does it give affront?”

From the first speech to the last. *The Phoenix* portrays the ruling duke as an unwise old man incapable of governing his kingdom effectively. James, should he remain awake through two hours of bad verse, cannot fail to find himself in that character.

But I say simply, “I have not yet finished. Another night, or perhaps two. I’ll mark what must be changed.”

A troubled look flashes beneath his long curls. “The Children of Paul have offered to play this at court. A few weeks from now.” He nods at me, forced obsequiousness that doesn’t reach his eyes. “With your approval, of course, Sir Edmund.”

Sir Edmund. I have thrice been denied that title, one which by all rights should be mine. I wish, not for the first time, that I could parse faces as fluidly as manuscripts. I cannot tell whether he has misspoken out of lack of knowledge or whether he brims with flattery. Or both.

He takes a final sip from his tankard. “Master Pearce has secured a date in three and a half weeks – the twenty-fourth, I think.” His sweeping exit is more theatrical than anything I recall from his opening pages.

Edward Pearce oversees the children’s company of St. Paul’s cathedral, devoting more time and money and attention to his teenage players than to such minor tasks as fixing the incessant leaks in the

roof. I suppose he prays, too, but I have seen only the drips. Sooner than I wish, I shall learn the efficacy of sporadic prayer and sagging belief.

Pearce commands attention at the court, and I am wary of crossing his wishes. Nor would I benefit by denying young Middleton his opportunity to impress the king, who, unlike the Lord Mayor, is not opposed to theatrical performances.

I have brought other pages in my leather satchel that I might censor or approve, but tonight my mind churns. Today's meeting with de Vere did nothing to ease my fears that his new play is an excuse to ensnare me in a challenge to the king. Even the whisper of sedition would cause his majesty to strip me of the privilege of my office. De Vere would see my position handed to John Lyly, or perhaps George Buck. I'm not sure de Vere cares for Lyly, who is to theater as winter to a tree, but I am certain de Vere cares nothing for me.

And my office is all I have.

More than the title Master of the Revels, I wish that [unreadable*]

Promises, Ned.

I promised myself, when I began this project, that for a full three months I would examine myself as honestly as a man can, and set down what I learn, in the hope that I could conquer both my occasional temper and constant self-loathing.

* Here two lines are blotted out, with quill strokes and even scratches that suggest a raw fury at odds with the temperate tone Tilney uses throughout at least the first half of this journal.

Yet here I am, two days in, and already a failure at my simple task.

I indeed do care about my title.

I *am* the Master of the Revels. I am Edmund Tilney, I am Ned, I am just Tilney or That Damned Tilney, but most of all, I am that title.

In truth, I am master of very little. Not of my destiny, for I have fallen to a state so low one must stoop to see my path. Not master of my funds, for I owe more than I can pay. Not of my life, a mere shadow since the death of my Mary. Not master of actual revels, because revelry implies joy, real or feigned, and I've known little joy of late.

Master of a table in The Three Barks tavern. I can claim that much. I have ceded my official quarters, all but a small closet with stamps and documents, but Syd does not charge me by the tabletop – as long as I pay her weekly bill for my food and ale.

“Cheer up, man.” Geoffrey Newgate slides into the seat across from me. He is a prosperous importer of Italian cloth and goods, a prodigious drinker, a sour singer, and a joyful scowler.

The first manifests itself in his dress, a fine linen shirt with black embroidery, a blue and gray patterned doublet with copper buttons, matching fine-wool breeches over pale hose and knee-caps, and polished leather boots with heels an inch or two higher than necessary.

For the second, Isobel seems hard-pressed some nights to keep Newgate's tankard filled, yet he shows few signs other than the redness of his nose. His

gait and speech remain steady until closing time. He wears a ring, yet once or twice a week I have seen him disappear with Isobel for twenty minutes, to return with a glazed look, satisfied walk, and a need to sing to the tavern, where even I, as unmusical as I may be, can discern that his voice holds but passing acquaintance with the notes he strives to capture despite the intensity with which he pursues them. Luckily for the rest of us, his nightly pair of drinking companions have both mellifluous voices and a knack for convincing Newgate to listen to rather than accompany them.

Finally, his face is set in a permanent scowl, yet if something is amiss in his life, I do not know it, for he is always filled with laughter in *The Three Barks*.

And though I rarely visit his table and friends, he two or three times nightly stops at my table to repeat a joke or gossip or simply ask after my health – generally on his way to the jakes, since he and his friends sit near the Maiden Lane door*, as far from the noisome necessary area as possible.

“What are you writing? A play of your own?” Newgate can read, surely, but he is polite and makes no attempt to examine the sheets on which tonight I try to capture my own thoughts rather than analyze offense in the words of others.

* As a corner building, *The Three Barks* had exits into two streets, north to what was then Maiden Lane and east to still extant Wood Street. The tavern building itself no longer exists, possibly rebuilt after the Great Fire (1666) but certainly gone by 1845 when Maiden Lane was widened and incorporated into Gresham Street. A five-story modern black-steel and glass office block now occupies the site.

“I am no playwright.”

He laughs and pounds the table with the side of his meaty fist. “If you were, how would you know whether to license your own play? You would pay yourself, too, I bet. An honest man, is Ned Tilney.” He thumps the table again. “Honest. A grave failing in a playwright.” And with that, he rises, laughs again, and continues his journey to free himself of beer in order to make room for more.

At least *his* destination is clear.

Chapter 4 – Deliver a Message

The London skies are gray as my mood as I seek out Will in his rooms, in search of Middleton's playscript. Low clouds and lower smoke confine my spirit even as my warming body winds through narrowing lanes to Silver Street.

The most direct route from my chambers passes both the Wood Street Counter and The Three Barks. In the former, debtors and sundry villains are locked away. Men who cannot repay their debts share the darkness with sots held for public drunkenness. The Counter looms as my own abode if de Vere makes good on his threats. It would be a blessing compared to what might happen if de Vere prompts the court to think I am plotting against the king.

As for the Three Banks, I do not welcome Middleton finding me without his manuscript.

But Middleton will accept my emendations without recourse, and likely with minimal complaint, once I have his script again in hand. I will not have it so easy with de Vere.

Though no playwright, I enact scene after scene in my mind's theater, each a revision on the last. Enter Tilney, de Vere seated. They argue. Exit Tilney, with no solution.

I should not wish to see the follow-up to that scene in Act V. Enter Tilney and de Vere, in the presence of the king. They speak. His majesty listens for ten seconds before leaving them to their brief future. *Exeunt omnes*, laughing. *Exitus ego*, headless.

Lost in my thoughts, I find myself at St. John Zachary and must retrace my steps back up Noble toward Muggle Street*, where a pinch-face standing in the doorway informs me that Will is not in his quarters. When I ask after his return, the narrow man quotes Cain's question to me.

Will has never spoken of a brother in blood, so I take his inquiry for ill-chosen metaphor. "Might you deliver a message?"

"If you seek to challenge him, I will gladly be your second."

"I seek only to alert him I need to see him this evening."

The man examines me. Standing two steps above, he meets my eyes on the level. "And how should

* Later Monkwell Street, and later still removed so larger buildings could be constructed.

I describe you? Unseemly tall, unseemly arrogant, unseemly suit of black.” He nods. “I’ll deliver your challenge, if I see him. But if describing your height and manner are insufficient, how else might you be identified?”

“I am Edmund Tilney, Master of the Revels.” Oh, how I wish I could name myself with one more word, just three letters. My lack is a nettle on my soul, yielding stabs and pangs that I cannot rub away for lack of knowing where to scratch.

“Rebels? We do not support rebels in this house, but pledge our love to King James.”

“Revels. Vuh, not buh.”

“Are you French, to pronounce it that way?” He taps his chest. “*Moi, non rebel,*” stressing the final syllable.

“*Re-vell.*” I stress the second syllable to correct him. Then, seeing no comprehension, I correct *myself*. “*Re-bel.*” No, another correction. “Revel. *Re-vels.*”

“*Oui.*” He smiles sadly, shaking his head at my obtuseness. “I’ll tell Master Will a right fool seeks him out for the evening. And since in London foolishness does not set you apart, I’ll remind him of your profession.” He retreats within the building, closing the door, only to open it a second later. He beckons me close with a finger. “Mind you, do not speak again of rebels, or I’ll thrash you myself, gentleman or not.” He laughs and again shuts himself within the house.

Rebel. Revel. I mouth the words silently as I wander toward the tavern. Buh. Vuh. Lips bursting open for one, already parted for the other. I believe I

did not confuse the sounds. Rather, the angular man was having a jest upon me. I think.

Revels. Rebels. I am ever surprised how such small differences bloom into large matters. John Lyly and George Buck both seek to usurp my patent as Master of the Revels – I again form that word in my mind to ensure I choose rightly – and are again petitioning his majesty. Their shadows, present always, hover above me, forcing me to toil almost every waking minute, yet without enough money to rehire my assistant. Such labor may not tire my muscles nor dampen my skin with sweat, yet my work occupies all hours. I have no time to devote to even limited conviviality or to seeking a wife, despite Mary having lain in the ground since before the height of the plague.

Rain, cold as the sea, starts to fall as I hobble down Staining Lane, morning's promise becoming afternoon's breach. I wrap myself tight within my cloak, having wasted nearly an hour in fruitless travel and even less rewarding conversation. And only now do I realize Will was probably attending a rehearsal with The King's Men.

Perhaps I chose the time for that reason, so I could tell him – or tell myself – I made the effort yet wouldn't be seen as a beggar. Now, he'll come to me.

Still, I dread telling Middleton of the [loss] theft* of his play.

* Tilney crossed out "loss" and directly above it wrote "theft," from which we learn that Tilney must have reread his words at some point. Given that his intent in writing the diary seems to be for his own betterment, as he notes in what I have labeled Chapter

I *should* tell him where *lies* his play. Middleton, taking Will for a thief of words, shall seek him out. Will is taller than average, but so is Middleton. The latter is broader in the shoulders, and quicker to anger, noted as one who enjoys fights and scuffles.

I will need to convince Middleton of *Will's* guilt rather than mine, before the man calls *me* out. I have few skills in such intrigue, but surely the Master of the Revels could set one playwright desperate for my license against another.

Could master a very small rebellion.

1, with no assumption others would learn his thoughts, I posit that he made the change either immediately or later that night in looking over what he had written.