New Light on Dekker's *Fortunati*

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To scholars of English literature, the best-known rendering of the story of Fortunatus and his magical purse and wishing hat is Thomas Dekker's *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus*, published in 1600.¹ But *Old Fortunatus* was not the first English Fortunatus play; indeed, *Fortunatus* has an interesting, if elusive, history. *Henslowe's Diary* contains six entries concerning receipts for performances of *Fortunatus*, dated February 3, 10, and 20, 1595, April 14, 1596, and May 11 and 24, 1596, the first of these recording the play as “the j p of fortewnatus” (*The First Part of Fortunatus*). There are three additional entries in November 1599 (9, 24, 30) for payments to Dekker, as playwright, for “the hole history of ffortunatus” (*The Whole History of Fortunatus*), the last of these specifying “in full payment.” Two other entries concerning payments to Dekker follow, the first on [sic] November 31, 1599 “for the altrenge of the booke of the wholl history of fortewnatus” (for the altering of the book of *The Whole History of Fortunatus*), the second on December 12, 1599 for payment “for the eande of fortewnatus for the corte” (for the end of *Fortunatus* for the court).² The text that we know today, *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus*, is the text Dekker prepared for court performance—the altered *Whole History of Fortunatus*—which, according to its title page, was performed by the Admiral's Men before the Queen during the Christmas season 1599.

There is also a Fortunatus play, in German, in a volume published in Leipzig in 1620. Compiled by Frederick Menius, *Engelische Comedien und Tragedien*, in addition to two Pickelherring plays and six interludes, collects eight plays—*Esther and Haman, The Prodigal Son, Fortunatus, A King's Son of England and a King's Daughter of Scotland, Sidonia and Theagenes, Nobody and Somebody, Julio and Hypapolita*, and *A Very Lamentable Tragedy of Titus Andronicus*—all performed by English actors in towns and at courts in Germany.³ Menius, who was public notary at Wolgast in Pomerania from 1617 to 1621, may have seen the English actors perform there, for Philip Julius, Duke of Pomerania, nephew to Heinrich Julius of Braunschweig, hosted several troupes of *englische Komödianten* at the Wolgast court between 1606 and 1623. Menius apparently took pride in the volume: not only did he publish the plays but he did so in a form that would enable them to be
easily acted ("dass sie gar leicht darauss Spielweiss widerumb angerichtet ... können"), and he made the point that none of the plays in the collection had been previously published (i.e., in German).

But Fortunatus had been previously performed; indeed, on the Continent it appears to have been a staple of the English actors' repertory. A letter from the Archduchess Maria Magdalena to her brother, Archduke Ferdinand (later Emperor Ferdinand II), documents a performance during Fasching 1608 in Graz, Austria, when a visiting English troupe presented ten plays: the play about the prodigal son, about a pious lady of Antwerp, Doctor Faustus, about a Duke of Florence who fell in love with a nobleman's daughter, about nobody and somebody, Fortunatus's purse and wishing hat ("von des fortunatus peitl und Wünschhietel"), the play about the Jew, another play about the 2 brothers King Ludwig and King Friderich of Hungary, about a King of Cyprus and a Duke of Venice, and about the rich man and Lazarus. Prior to that performance, in the winter of 1606/1607, a Fortunatus play was performed in Kassel, along with other plays in the Graz repertory and two plays that appear in the 1620 collection. And on July 11, 1626, a Fortunatus play ("von Fortunato Wünschhütlein") was presented in Dresden, which, over nine months, saw English actors perform numerous plays, including four others that are also in the 1620 volume.

The performances in Kassel, Graz, and Dresden were almost certainly of the play published in 1620; hence we need to ask what the relationship is between that text and Dekker's The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus. In 1886, Charles H. Herford, asking that question, studied both versions. Although he dismissively called the 1620 Fortunatus and other German prose versions of English plays "barbarous pieces," he was sure that the German Fortunatus published in 1620 derived from Dekker's play, stating that although the German text "is a meager epitome of its original," it is "undoubtedly Decker's play," a conclusion that Paul Harms endorsed in 1892. I do not wish to challenge Herford's and Harms's observations concerning the indisputable kinship between these two plays. But I do wish to redraw the genealogy tree and propose that the Fortunatus published in German in 1620 may, through its English original, antedate Old Fortunatus. That is, the Fortunatus published in 1620 may derive not from Dekker's The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus, published in 1600, but from the lost Whole History of Fortunatus, which Dekker was paid to write and re-write in 1599.

The story of Fortunatus and his sons Andelocia and Ampedo is a rags-to-riches tale with a sorry end. Its first known printing was in Augsburg, Germany, in 1509, when an anonymous author placed this folk hero at the center of a prose narrative that enjoyed considerable popularity. As Debra Prager reports in "Fortunatus: 'Aus dem Künigreich Cipern': Mapping the World and the Self," the Volksbuch was published in multiple editions—twenty in the sixteenth century, eleven in the seventeenth, and nine in the eighteenth—
and was translated into thirteen languages. Moreover, at the Frankfurt Fair in 1569 one vendor sold nearly two hundred copies of the *Fortunatus* chapbook—more than any of his other books. The popularity of this early prose version of the story may well have inspired Hans Sachs in 1553 to create the first dramatic version of the tale, *Der Fortunatus mit dem Wunschseckel*, “Tragedia mit zweihundzwanzig personen und hat fünf actus” (*Fortunatus with the Wishing Purse, Tragedy with twenty-two persons and five acts*), in rhymed couplets.

Several late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century German scholars have compared the various texts of *Fortunatus*, documenting Dekker’s debt to the *Volksbuch*. There is little doubt that Dekker knew the *Fortunatus* of the *Volksbuch*, for, as Alexis F. Lange points out, both the 1509 Augsburg edition and the 1551 Frankfurt edition resonate in his play. In 1599, however, when Dekker was writing *Old Fortunatus*, there may not yet have been an English translation: at least none is now known to have existed. Moreover, it is unlikely that Dekker’s use of the *Volksbuch* was indirect, i.e., through the now lost *First Part of Fortunatus*, for, given its title, that play was unlikely to have dramatized events beyond Fortunatus’s death, as *Old Fortunatus* and, presumably, *The Whole History of Fortunatus* do. In search of Dekker’s source, a number of scholars have proposed that Dekker read the story in Dutch translation (several of his plays suggest his familiarity with that language). But here, too, there is a problem, for the first known edition of *Fortunatus* in Dutch dates from the seventeenth century. Without extant sixteenth-century English or Dutch editions, we can only assume, without evidence, that Dekker read the *Volksbuch* in the original German.

Even as the question of the playwright’s access to the *Volksbuch* remains unresolved, it is clear that his *Old Fortunatus* and the *Fortunatus* published in the 1620 collection are closely related. In all four versions of the story—the *Volksbuch*, Hans Sachs, the play published in 1620, and *Old Fortunatus*—the impoverished Fortunatus is alone in the wood when Fortune appears, but Echo, who repeats fragments of Fortunatus’s lament, is “present” only in *Old Fortunatus* and the 1620 text. Conversely, the Hermit who helps Fortunatus remove his horns appears in the *Volksbuch* and Sachs but not in the two later texts. And it is only in these two later plays that the two lords, after eating the apples Andelocia peddles, grow horns—unwelcome additions to their hairlines that provide a motive for their cruelty toward Andelocia.

Most noticeable are the otherworldly characters—especially the condemned Spirits and Virtue and Vice—who appear only in the two later plays. In *Old Fortunatus*, such characters participate in the grand spectacle that turns an unhappy tale into *A Pleasant Comedy*. Mary Leland Hunt describes the extravagance: “Fortuna mounting to her throne on the necks of chained and conquered kings, the fairy troops, Vice and Virtue and their trees, the dance of satyrs about the dead Fortunatus, together with considerable song
and music.”17 Although the supernatural characters’ roles are not nearly so prominent in the 1620 text, there, too, they provide moral weight and theatrical appeal. Indeed, the title page of the German play—Comœdia von Fortunato und Seinem Seckel und Wünschhütlein / Darinnen Erstlich Drey Verstorbenen Seelen als Geister / Darnach die Tugendt und Schande Eingeführet Werden (Comedy of Fortunatus and His Purse and Wishing-Hat, in Which First Three Dead Souls as Spirits Appear, and Afterwards Virtue and Shame)—advertises their role.

Even as Old Fortunatus and the 1620 text share deviations from the Volksbuch, so also do they differ from one another. In Old Fortunatus, Fortunatus’s deliberations on which of Fortune’s gifts to choose—Wisdom, Riches, Strength, Health, Beauty, or Long Life—are lengthy; in the 1620 text, they are brief. (In the Volksbuch and Sachs, Fortunatus immediately chooses Riches.) There are fewer courtiers in the 1620 text, and the King’s daughter, Agripyna, has fewer suitors. But Andelocia’s disguise as a jeweler, devised to gain entrance into Agripyna’s chamber, occupies a full scene in act 4 of the 1620 text, while the situation is embedded in a choral narration in Old Fortunatus. In both plays, Andelocia and Ampedo die as a consequence of the actions of the murderous lords, but in the 1620 text concern for his brother’s fate causes Ampedo’s death. Similarly, in both, the offending lords are condemned by the King, but in Old Fortunatus Vice commutes their sentence.

The most telling distinctions are in the resolutions of the plays’ respective supernatural subplots. In the 1620 text, where that subplot is nascent, the King and his daughter kneel before Fortune, asking blessing from the goddess who, like her counterpart in the Volksbuch, reigns supreme. In Old Fortunatus, Fortune, speaking metatheatrically, calls on the assembled court of moral judges to decide the otherworldly competition, and a triumphant Virtue addresses Queen Elizabeth: “Vertue alone lives still, and lives in you, / I am a counterfeit, you are the true” (v.ii). While the final scene of Old Fortunatus, as Herford remarks, “corresponds, not only to nothing in the Volksbuch, but to nothing in the rest of the play,”18 the final scene of the 1620 text brings closure to a leaner Virtue/Vice subplot—the plot, in short, that Dekker created before he was commissioned to alter the play.

Interestingly, both Harms and Cyrus Hoy (who supplied the commentary to Fredson Bowers’s edition of Dekker’s plays) provide technical explanations for the differences between Old Fortunatus and the 1620 text. Harms expresses doubt that the author of the German version had the printed text of the “English original” in front of him. He even proposes that the several insertions of Pickelherring appearances in the 1620 play occur at points when the German author, who, he assumes, was reconstructing a performance by the English actors, could not recall what happens next.19 Similarly, Hoy, observing that “The first two-and-a-half acts of the German Comœdia are
clearly a redaction of Dekker’s play,” proposes that “as the reporter found his memory failing as he proceeded in his attempt to reconstruct the stage action, he was forced to turn to other sources [i.e., the Volksbuch] for help.” Unequivocally, he states that the German Fortunatus is a “reported” text, i.e., a memorial reconstruction. But both Harms and Hoy assume that the 1620 play derives from Dekker’s Old Fortunatus rather than The Whole History of Fortunatus. When one posits instead that the 1620 text, with its borrowings from the Volksbuch, was, in its original form, the source of Old Fortunatus, it becomes clear that the “author” of the German version did have the text in front of him. But the text was not Old Fortunatus; it was The Whole History of Fortunatus.

However corrupt that text became by 1620, in its restored position on the genealogy tree it provides insights into Dekker’s revisions for the court. Scholars have long agreed that the playwright’s embellishments included the Prologue and Epilogue, which are explicit in their identification with the court and their praise of Gloriana; the allegory of Virtue and Vice; and, taking their cue from Henslowe’s Diary, the ending. With the 1620 play representing The Whole History, we can not only confirm these assumptions but also employ a more considered perspective on Dekker’s “altrenges.”

Clearly, Dekker’s revisionary efforts were heavily invested in the supernatural subplot, a minor but precipitating structure in his source. In the earlier play, Three Spirits, condemned to wander in chains until the end of the world, appear as Fortunatus deliberates on his choices. Each had encountered Fortune, and each, for a time, had known power, the first as King of Spain, the second as a mighty Kaiser. (The third merely complains, anonymously, of his misery.) To Fortune, they are fools, whom she promptly dismisses before turning to Fortunatus for his decision. In Old Fortunatus, the Spirits, still in chains, now represent four kings, each with a broken crown. Here Fortune’s contempt takes physical form: the proud goddess treads on the supine kings as she ceremoniously ascends to her throne, boasting of her power to destroy. This is the goddess who has made and broken the German and French Emperors of the Holy Roman Empire—Henry V [sic—IV], Frederick Barbarossa, Lewis the Meek—and Bajazet, the Ottoman Sultan. And this is the Accursèd Queen of Chance who set an idiot’s cap on Virtue’s head.

Dekker’s revised play includes several scenes in which supernatural characters play a prominent role. Before act one of Old Fortunatus ends, the playwright takes us to a Cyprian wood, where he introduces the Triumvirate, each in costume: Vice and her retinue with a tree of gold with apples on it; Virtue and her nymphs carrying a tree with green and withered leaves and little fruit; Fortune with her nymphs, one carrying her wheel, the other her globe. The occasion is a tree planting: Virtue searches for the rare plot of soil that will nourish her tree; Vice is ready to plant hers and to watch it flourish. The
apples of the 1620 text, which have the power to grow horns and remove them—and do so in the mortal world—are now also part of Dekker’s otherworldly scheme. Fortune may be impartial—she destroys the good and the wicked alike—but by the end of act one, the competition between Virtue and Vice and within the Triumvirate of goddesses is in place.

Dekker brings Fortune on stage again in act 2, along with the Three Destinies, to tell Fortunatus that his life is ending; shortly, she enters with a company of Satyrs to carry off his body (in the 1620 text, the sons carry Fortunatus off). Unique to Old Fortunatus, the two moments add to the spectacle that will unfold before the Queen. When the Triumvirate returns in act 4, each of the goddesses comments on what has just occurred: Andelocia has eaten an apple from the tree of Vice and grown two forkèd horns. Speeches and song advance not only the play’s moral lessons but also the supernatural competition.

Finally, Dekker earns the 40 shillings he was paid “for the eande of fortew-natus for the corte.” In the text published in 1620, Virtue and Vice do not plant their trees until act 4, and though Andelocia, led by Fortune, eats fruit from Virtue’s tree to rid himself of his horns, the goddesses themselves do not reappear. Even Fortune, after instructing Andelocia to return to London with apples from both trees, does not materialize again until the final passages of the play. Then she retrieves the magic purse from the King and, upon identifying herself, presides over the monarch and his daughter, who, kneeling before her, pray for their kingdom. Although Virtue and Vice, through the fruit of their respective trees, each tries to control Fortunatus, there is no power play within the supernatural world. In this play, the reign of Fortune, more benign than her counterpart in Old Fortunatus, remains unchallenged.

But in Old Fortunatus, Dekker needed to return to the Triumvirate to resolve their conflict. Midway into act 5, he assembles a large cast of characters—Virtue, Vice, and Fortune included—and orchestrates the play’s grand finale. By now, Andelocia and Ampedo are dead, and their murderers, whose horns were removed by Virtue, have discovered that the purse no longer yields coins. As in the earlier play, Fortune enters to reclaim her purse and to pardon the King and Agripyne. But in the play for the court, there is much talk of punishment for Longavile and Montrosse: at one point, Vice has jurisdiction, at another Fortune, at yet another the King. And though the King would have one lord tortured on the wheel, the other drawn and quartered, Vice intervenes to reverse the sentence, setting them free but assuring them they will be tormented by conscience. In the competition between Virtue and Vice, Vice concedes, leaving in misery, even as Fortune yields her supremacy to Virtue and the Queen: “Kneele not to me, to her transfer your eyes, / There sits the Queene of Chance, I bend my knees, / Lower then yours”:
dread goddesse, tis most meete,
That Fortune fall downe at thy conqu'ring feete.
Thou sacred Empresse that commandst the Fates,
Forgive what I have to thy handmaid don,
And at thy Chariot wheeles Fortune shall run,
And be thy captive and to thee resigne.
All powers which heav'ns large Patent have made mine.

(v.ii)

As Hoy points out, the end of *Old Fortunatus* "does not altogether accord with the moral scheme of the play as Dekker seems to have conceived it before alteration for court performance was decreed."21 With Herford, he finds it disconcerting that Fortune, who begins as "the supreme arbiter of the world, bringing the destinies in her train, and overthrowing greatness at her good pleasure, suddenly falls into the position of one of a Triumvirate."22 Nonetheless, Hoy's conclusion is apt: "the rules of courtly compliment required a tribute to the Queen, and the allegorical scheme which Dekker adopted for the management of this required a triumph of Virtue over Fortune."23 It may seem a muddled ending—certainly it is complicated—but Dekker's goal must surely have been to please the Queen; and, even at the cost of inconsistency, his embellished subplot succeeded in honoring the true Virtue that sat on England's throne. The differences between acts 4 and 5 of the 1620 text and acts 4 and 5 of *Old Fortunatus*, then, have little to do with a failure of memory and everything to do with Dekker's commitment to the supernatural subplot.

In revising *The Whole History*, Dekker also needed to be sure that his moral scheme encompassed the mortal characters. Hence Fortunatus deliberates at length on each of Fortune's gifts; Andelosia, having lost his purse and hat to Agripyna and acquired horns, laments his soul's deformity; Longavile and Montrosse suffer the torments of conscience; and moral *sententiae* caution against the folly of seeking gold ("O what treacherie / Cannot this Serpent gold intice us to?" [iv Chorus]).24 Perhaps the most interesting of Dekker's changes in the moral mortal world is his judgment of Ampedo. For although the *Volksbuch* preordained the death of Fortunatus's elder son, in the moral environment of *Old Fortunatus*, that death needed to be rationalized. Yet the playwright's efforts here left much to be desired. In all four versions of the story, Andelocia, the gad-about, repeatedly misbehaves, while Ampedo, the stay-at-home, is kind and forgiving. But in the final act of *Old Fortunatus*, Dekker not only allows the benign brother to suffer his cruel death; he also has Virtue offer a surprising assessment of "those that (like him) do muffle / Vertue in clouds" (v.ii). Of Ampedo, she complains, "He made no use of me, but like a miser, / Locked up his wealth in rustie barres of sloth: / His face was beautifull, but wore a maske, / And in the worlds eyes
seemed a Blackamore” (v.ii). Sounding more like the contemptuous Fortune than the glorious Virtue—and basing her judgment on nothing that is dramatized in the play—Virtue expresses disdain for Fortunatus’s elder son: “The Idiot’s cap I once wore on my head, / Did figure him . . .” (v.ii). Formally, the brothers now are part of Dekker’s moral scheme. As Hoy puts it, in Old Fortunatus (or at least in its final moments), each brother exemplifies an extreme: “Andelocia is the prodigal, squandering his gifts, and Ampedo is the niggard who makes no use of his.”25 For whatever reason—perhaps haste—Dekker made no adjustments to Ampedo’s character earlier in the play, but his rationalization of Ampedo’s death is surely a part of the “insistent morality”26 that distinguishes Old Fortunatus from its source.

I would also propose that the second Prologue and the Choral narratives preceding acts 2 and 4 were Dekker’s revisions. In two cases, the playwright uses these narratives to economize, i.e., to keep to a reasonable length a play already extended by additions. The first instance (act 2) is a digest of Fortunatus’s travels as they appear in the Volksbuch; the second (act 4) is the episode in which Andelocia, disguised as a jeweler, recovers his purse and hat and carries Agripyna away. In general, though, the playwright employs the Chorus to summarize, to anticipate, and to state the developing “argument” of the play. One could contend that this would have been appropriate to The Whole History as well, but the 1620 text shows no residue of a Chorus. Moreover, in two places, the Chorus references events peculiar to Old Fortunatus. The first, in the second Prologue, occurs when the Muse sings “Of Loves sweete war,” anticipating Dekker’s elaborate, though unfinished plotting of Agripyna’s suitors—Orleans, the Prince of Cyprus, and Andelocia—a love contest he apparently planned to feature in order to win favor at court. The second occurs when the fourth act Chorus speaks of Andelocia’s theft of the wishing hat from his brother and his (broken) pledge to seek misery and die: in the 1620 text, Ampedo willingly gives the hat to his brother, not so he can seek misery but so he can try to recover the purse. Finally, these three Homeric narratives are formally of a piece, each entreatIng the audience to extend the actors’ art through their thoughts: imagine the many miles Fortunatus, then Andelocia traverses; imagine the Asian shores, Tartar’s palace, the courts of the barbarian kings; and, when Andelocia and Agripyna are transported to a wilderness in England, “Imagine this the place.” Clearly, Dekker had the court performance in mind when he added the Chorus, and clearly he was intent on building a relationship not only between players and audience but, more practically, between the Admiral’s Men and the Queen.

Other changes to The Whole History of Fortunatus must have been made for aesthetic or practical reasons—the cameo role for Insultado, the Spanish dancer, for example—but it is difficult to say with certainty what these were. For not all the differences between the 1620 text and Old Fortunatus can be attributed to the playwright. If the text published in 1620 follows the pattern
of other plays performed by the englische Komödianten in Germany, we would expect that the exigencies of performance would result in a legion of changes. Moreover, changes that are the consequence of performance are ongoing. If we had scripts of every continental performance of a particular English play—Hamlet and Der Bestrafte Brudermord, for example, or Nobody and Somebody, or even the three known performances of Fortunatus—we could track the adjustments the actors themselves made, for reasons associated with the composition of the troupe, the venue, lessons learned from previous performances, or personal preferences. Surely the several insertions of Pickelherring in the 1620 text occurred after the play reached Germany, quite possibly as a substitute for the brothers’ comic companion. Shadow’s absence from the 1620 text may imply that Dekker added this comic character to Old Fortunatus to amuse the court. Or it may be that Shadow was in both The Whole History of Fortunatus and Old Fortunatus but met his demise in Germany, for what troupe of savvy English actors would not have played to the German audience’s love of Pickelherring, their legendary clown?

Translation, too, is responsible for changes, particularly because the verse of English plays was typically rendered in German prose. Because that prose was simple and “ungermanic,” some have speculated that it was the actors themselves—or one of them with some knowledge of German—who did the translations. William J. Thoms, in Three Notelets on Shakespeare, implies this was the case when he observes that the plays in the 1620 volume are translated into the very commonest German prose, printed very incorrectly, and in a language which seems to have been written down from the recitation of unskilful actors, being filled with uncouth phrases and words misapplied—the construction of the sentences any thing but German, and the whole abounding with coarse equivoces and obscene allusions.27

Yet he concludes that, even in this “wretched translation,” Nobody and Somebody, one of the plays in the volume, is “the same piece which was printed in London in 1603.”28 Although Thoms is undoubtedly correct, continental records have not yet yielded information that would allow us to identify the translators of English plays. That at least one of the English actors was bilingual, however, is confirmed by a November 26, 1599 record from a performance, in English, in Münster:

Sie hetten bei sich einen schalkes naren, so in duescher sprache vielle bötze und geckerie machede under den ageren, wann sie einen neuen actum wollten anfangen und sich umbkledden, darmidt ehr das volck lachent machede . . .

They were accompanied by a clown, who, when a new act had to commence and when they had to change their costume, made many antics and pranks in German during the performance, by which he amused the audience. . . .29
Albert Cohn, whose work on the English actors in Germany is seminal, thought it “probable that all these English players soon acquired a familiarity with the German language.”

Translation and performance, then, are key to understanding the differences between continental plays and their English counterparts. But in the case of the plays in the 1620 collection, additional consideration must be given to the editor, who undoubtedly also made changes. It was almost certainly the editor who styled the title page of *Fortunatus*, presenting the play as one of six “Comœdia” in the volume and singling out the features that were most likely to please: the purse and wishing hat, the Three Spirits, and Virtue and Shame. To express his esteem for the englische Komödianten, by then in Germany for three decades, and to give the volume further appeal, he included a foreword that places the English actors in a line of descent from orators and writers of ancient Greece (Æsop) and Rome (Cicero, Livy, Publilius Syrus, Macrobius). Most important, he presented the plays in a form that would enable them to be easily acted, which meant he provided stage directions, compulsively. When Fortunatus first meets Fortune, for example, a stage direction notes that he falls on his knees and speaks. But it comes just before Fortunatus begs forgiveness and Fortune tells him to stand up (133), dialogue plainly indicating how the actor should behave. Similarly, in act 2, Fortunatus, wearing the Sultan’s wishing hat, wishes himself to his ship and vanishes, even as the Sultan cries “O weh”; nonetheless, a stage direction explains that Fortunatus flies away (141). In act 4, Fortune tells Andelocia to eat the fruit of the tree of Virtue, after which Andelocia exclaims that his horns have disappeared; yet there is a stage direction stating that he eats the apple and the horns fall away (173). Later, Andelocia wishes himself to the cloister in Hibernia where Agripyne is sequestered, then announces that he is there; still, a stage direction makes doubly sure we know he has arrived (195). In the final act, when Ampedo declares his intent to bum the wishing hat, then comments on it as it is burning, the stage direction notes that he tosses it in the fire (201). This pattern of redundancy persists throughout the 1620 text of *Fortunatus* and, for that matter, every play in the volume. In *Titus Andronicus*, for example, we have these instances of dialogue and stage direction, along with many others: “Now let me throw off these old rags” / “He takes off the old mantle” (21); “I now place the crown upon your head” / “Sets the crown on her head” (22); “But what an astonishing thing do I see now—the Empress all alone and hurrying toward us!” / “Empress approaches them” (26). Such editorial additions may have been intended to help actors perform the plays, but, as William B. Long points out in his essay on the eighteen surviving playbooks from the Elizabethan / Jacobean / Caroline theaters, only an amateur would think that “the way to aid the players was to tell them how to do their jobs.” Belaboring the obvious, Menius,
well-meaning but misguided, clearly contributed his share to the evolving text of *Fortunatus*.

If the German Fortunatus play, then, is *The Whole History of Fortunatus* as transformed on the Continent by actors, translator, and editor, we need to ask whether it is reasonable to believe that this English play found its way to Germany within a few years of its composition in 1599. In fact, its migration to the Continent should not be surprising, for dozens of English plays from the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, some considered lost, are extant, in title or in text, in German prose translations. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, there were no fewer than 112 English actors on the Continent,36 assembled in troupes intent on capitalizing on the thriving theatrical market abroad. Continental records document the many performances by these troupes, the stipends they were awarded, the geographical range of their activity, and their warm reception. Fynes Moryson may have scoffed at the “pieces and Patches” of plays the English actors performed at the Frankfurt Fair in 1592,37 but at least one late sixteenth-century report suggests that his countrymen “returned home rewarded, and loaded with gold and silver.”38 Just what arrangements enabled plays that were typically the property of London companies or, in some cases, individual actors—*Fortunatus, Nobody and Somebody, Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta, Titus Andronicus*, for example—to travel from England’s stages to Germany’s is yet an unanswered question.

To conclude this discussion of Dekker’s *Fortunati*, I offer the following summary: (1) In late 1599, Dekker revised his recently completed *The Whole of Fortunatus*, turning it into *The Pleasant Comedy of Old Fortunatus* for presentation at court; (2) within a few years, *The Whole History of Fortunatus* was in Germany, where someone (possibly an English actor) translated it into German; (3) the “corrupt” text of *The Whole History of Fortunatus* published in the 1620 German collection is the product of translation, editing, and performance, each entailing simplifying, pruning, adding, and adapting; and (4) although the text of *The Whole History of Fortunatus* is lost, the German version provides good indications of how Dekker changed his play for performance at court. Side-by-side, then—if one considers the German text, *in its English original*, to be the earlier—the two extant plays tell the story recorded in *Henslowe’s Diary* in the final weeks of 1599: upon additional payments for altering *The Whole History of Fortunatus*, including the ending, Dekker delivered *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus* for performance before the Queen.

I end this essay with a postscript concerning a little-known manuscript of yet another Fortunatus play. The manuscript, in German, is in the Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel, Germany (8° Ms. theatr. 4), among numerous documents associated with the Landgrave Moritz, who hosted English actors at his Kassel court from the early to mid-
1590s to at least 1613. It is bound with a manuscript of Ariodante und Gin
evra, also in German, and in the same hand. (Richard Mulcaster’s Merchant
Taylors School boys performed Ariodante and Genevora at court on February
12, 1583.) Harms, who studied the several texts of Fortunatus in 1892 and
supposed that the Kassel manuscript dates from between 1610 and 1620, con-
cluded that this version, which begins with the father of Fortunatus, derives
not from Dekker’s play but from Hans Sachs’s. Given the ready availability
of Hans Sachs’s play, though, it is curious that such a manuscript, with line-
by-line parallels with the earlier play but not identical to it, would exist at all.
More importantly, given the sustained association of the Kassel court with
the englische Komödianten, it would be surprising if this manuscript were not
related in some way to the English players. Kassel was, after all, the site of
the 1606/1607 performance of the Fortunatus published in 1620, and the
troupes that presented that play in Graz in 1608 and in Dresden in 1626 were
led by a member, or former member, of the Landgrave’s players. John Green,
who had traveled in France in 1603–5 with actor/manager Robert Browne,
the Landgrave Moritz’s sometime agent, had played at the Frankfurt Fair in
1606 and 1607, and he was identified then as a member of the Fürstliche
Hessische Comoedianten, i.e., the actors in the service of the Landgrave Mo-
ritz. However intriguing another early seventeenth-century manuscript of
Fortunatus may be, the origin and purpose of the Kassel manuscript remains
a mystery.

Finally, no discussion of Dekker’s Fortunati would be complete without
mention of the seventeenth-century German Puppenspiel, for the text of the
Fortunatus puppet play clearly derives from Dekker. As Carl Engel points out
in his 12-volume anthology, Deutsche Puppenkomödien, in Germany during
the Thirty Years’ War and in England during the parliamentary closing of the
theaters, puppet plays, performed at fairs or in the privacy of homes, helped
satisfy the public taste for theatre. In Germany, these productions enabled
the repertory of the englische Komödianten to continue, even as fewer En-
glish actors sought employment in the war-torn cities and courts of northern
Europe. Engel’s anthology presents some two dozen puppet plays, including
Geneveva, four versions of Doctor Faust, and four of the plays published in
the 1620 collection: Haman and Esther, The Prodigal Son, A King’s Son of
England and a King’s Daughter of Scotland, and Fortunatus (Glückssäckel
und Wünschhut). Each of the puppet plays that derives from the 1620 collec-
tion closely follows its source, though the puppet play of Fortunatus surprises
with a revised, happy ending. Interestingly, one of the players who presented
the Puppenkömodien may have been Robert Browne who, following an early
career with the Worcester’s Men (1583–85), was the most prominent actor/
manager on the Continent. The last we hear of him is in 1620, when he com-
pleted a two-year tour that included performances in Prague before the Win-
ter King. His wife’s remarriage in 1622 suggests Browne’s demise, but it
may be that he and Cecilie divorced, for the name Robert Browne appears in a 1638 Coventry record concerning a “motion” (or puppet play) and in a 1639 Norwich petition to “shewe an Italian Motion.” This was surely not Browne’s son, who died in 1625, and not the Browne of the Boar’s Head, who died in 1603. The possibility that it was the Robert Browne who toured the Continent is strengthened by the names of those who were with him: Richard Jones and George Hall in Coventry and Hall in Norwich—both players who had been with Browne in Germany. Might “old Browne,” who by the 1630s would have been in his seventies, have turned to puppetry, offering his motions in the provinces he had known as a member of the Worcester Men? And, in the 1620s and earlier 1630s, when there are no known records of him, might he have been in Germany restaging familiar English plays as “motions”? Whoever the puppet master, the Fortunatus *Puppenspiel* testifies to the still evolving afterlife of Dekker’s lost *Fortunatus*.

**Notes**

1. The title page reads: *The Pleasant Comedie of Old Fortunatus. As it was plaied before the Queenes Maiestie this Christmas, by the Right Honourable the Earl of Nottingham, Lord high Admirall of England his Servants. London, Printed by S.S. for William Aspley, dwelling in Paules Church-yard at the signe of the Tygers head. 1600.*


Towns, Never before Printed, but Now Published To Please All Lovers of Comedies and Tragedies, and Others, and in a Form That Would Enable Them To Be Easily Acted for the Delight and Recreation of the Mind. Published in the year 1620). The volume is available in the Folger Shakespeare Library (PR 1246 G5 E59 Cage); for a modern reprint, see Spieltexte der Wanderbühne, ed. Manfred Brauneck, 4 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970), vol. 1: Engelische Comedien und Tragedien.


5. The list reflects Murad’s translation of the Archduchess’s letter, pages 6–7. Murad, who makes the point that the Archduchess’s letter provides descriptions rather than titles, identifies plays that may fit Magdalena’s descriptions.


10. For Andelocia’s / Andolosia’s and Agripyne’s / Agrippina’s names, I have used the spelling in Old Fortunatus.

11. For a modern edition of the Volksbuch, see Fortunatus: Studienausgabe nach der Editio Princeps von 1509, ed. Hans-Gert Roloff (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1981). The seventeenth century saw English translations of the Volksbuch that do not concern us here. Thomas Churchyard’s [or Thomas Coombe’s] The Right, Pleasant and Variable Tragical History of Fortunatus, issued in 1676 and again in 1682, indicates that the text was “First Penned in the Dutch Tongue” (although “Dutch” may mean “Deutsch”). The History of the Birth, Travels, Strange Adventures, and Death of Fortunatus, by an anonymous author, was published in 1682. This, too, is a translation, with “several new Additions which was not in the Original Copy from whence it was Translated.” Finally, The Comical and Tragical History of Fortunatus of 1700, extant in the seventh edition, also by an anonymous author, abridges the text “for the benefit of young men and women, whose impatience will not allow them to read the larger volume.” All are prose narratives, their source the Volksbuch Fortunatus. The British Library holds a manuscript of The History of Fortunatus. Translated from the Dutch (Cat. No. 12410. Bb. 8), tentatively dated c. 1650.


18. The quotation continues: “with the exception of two other scenes of the same stamp. In these three scenes, which bear the evident character not only of an after-thought, but of an after-thought conceived in just such circumstances as have been described, the two figures of *Vertue* and *Vice* appear as the rivals of Fortune in her originally unaided work.” Charles H. Herford, *Studies in the Literary Relations of England and Germany*, 211–12.


21. Ibid., 86.


26. Ibid., 85.


28. Ibid., 10.


30. Albert Cohn, *Shakespeare in Germany*, CXXXV.

31. Six of the plays are called comedies, two tragedies. While the term “*Comœdia*” was used to specify genre, it was also used more generally to indicate that the piece was a play. Hence the English “*Komödianten*,” or players of plays.
32. Page references are to the German text in *Spieltexte der Wanderbühne*, ed. Manfred Brauneck.


