

SUMMARY: Excerpt from *Discours de la vie abominable, ruses, trahisons, meurtres, impostures . . . desquelles a vsé & vse iournellement le my Lorde de Lecestre machiauelliste . . . Traduit d'anglois en françois, etc.*, a French translation of *The Copy of a Letter Written by a Master of Art of Cambridge* (popularly referred to as *Leicester's Commonwealth*) with additions by the translator. The *Discours de la vie abominable* was published in 1585 without imprint, purportedly on the continent. The British Library has two copies (10806.a.10 and G.14759). The excerpt below is from Exeter College, Oxford MS 166, which appears to be the original English version of the translator's additions to *The Copy of a Letter* in *Discours de la vie abominable*. The manuscript has been transcribed by D.C. Peck in his 1985 edition of *A Copy of a Letter* (see <http://home.iprolink.ch/dpeck/write/leic-comm3b.htm>). In the excerpt from the additions reprinted below, the translator alludes to Leicester's attempt to 'nourish discord' between Oxford and his wife, Anne, which he attributes to Leicester's 'old grudge' against Anne's father, Lord Burghley.

Having therefore sufficiently declared his honesty by these particularities, or rather deductions, I approach now to the end of my discourse, omitting very many exploits achieved by this brave Earl, the which in their own nature are odious and would be esteemed in other men monstrous, though in his Lordship they can be counted but peccadilia, little faults, in regard of other more wicked villainies with which he is replenished. Wherefore I will pass over to speak at large of his endeavour that he hath ever used to sow and nourish debate and contention between the great lords of England and their wives, in which he always showed himself a good practiser and very diligent, knowing that according to the Italian proverb, *Nel mare turbato guadagna il pescatore*, In a troubled water the fisher gains most. Although to say true, his Lordship hath not always gained much at this play, but hath oftentime so fished that instead of a fish he hath taken a frog, and at sometime lost both hook and line and pain and honour and all. And of his such practices I could bring you many examples, as that of the Earl of Arundel and his lady, between whom he sought all means to nourish discord, hoping by that means to subvert the greatest and most honourable family of England. The same he attempted between the Earl of Oxford and his lady, daughter of the Lord Treasurer of England, and all for an old grudge he bare to her father, the said Lord Treasurer. The like he sought to do between the Earl of Southampton and the Countess, thinking by so doing to satisfy his appetite and fond lust, although he was frustrated of his intent therein. But among all his other practices that which he brought to pass between the Earl of Shrewsbury and his pretended wife is worthy to be noted, whom he so bravely brought about (playing his own part then of the very Earl of Leicester in person) that he induced the good dame to accuse her husband of high treason, thinking by this means to take out of his hands his most honourable prisoner the Queen of Scots, and to give her in keeping to one of his creatures, to be able thereby to command the life of the said afflicted princess at his pleasure. Of all which examples alleged I could (I say) make you a discourse in particular, if I did not think them to be fit to pass over as matter of little weight in respect of others before mentioned.