




The
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Letters to the Editor

It certainly appears that C. Richard Desper is correct in stating that the “clownish nonsense” in IV.ii.15-19 of *Twelfth Night* is also and actually an allusion to “Edmund Campion and his 1580-81 mission to England.” (“Allusions to Edmund Campion in *Twelfth Night*,” *Elizabethan Review*, 3:1)

However, I think Desper is wrong (42) when he says that, “The allusions referred to here should not be thought of as topical” because “the first production of *Twelfth Night*” was in 1602 at the Middle Temple and that the author of the play “sees the opportunity for inserting something he has been suppressing for decades” because “sympathetic allusions to Campion... would have been quite risky during the 1580s....”

First, risk did not daunt the author, who was something of a Feste, the clown in this same play. Speaking of Feste, Olivia says, “There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail” (I.v.). Certainly the author of the plays had often been allowed to rail.

Second, just because there was a performance of *Twelfth Night* at the Middle Temple in 1602 doesn’t mean this was the *first* performance.

Third, the play had to have been written before the death of Philip Sidney in October 1586. No matter how aggravating Sidney could be, the author would not have been so insensitive as to caricature him as the dolt Sir Andrew Aguecheek after Sir Philip died as the result of battle wounds. And there is ample evidence that Aguecheek *is* a caricature of Sidney, starting with his name. (Sidney was born on the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle,

November 30, 1554, and, according to Ben Jonson, “Sir Philip was no pleasant man in countenance, his face being spoiled with pimples.” See James Osborn’s *Young Philip Sidney*, 1972, p. 518. Quoting from *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*.)

Therefore, the play in essentially its present form was most likely written after the events in the life of Edmund Campion in 1581, alluded to in Act IV, scene ii, and before the death of Philip Sidney in 1586. A good guess for the date of authorship would be early 1583. Sidney had finally been knighted in January of 1583, more for convenience than for reasons of service or valor. (See Katherine Duncan-Jones’s *Sir Philip Sidney*, 1989, p.xvi.) In the play, Aguecheek is said to be a “knight, dubbed with unhatched rapier and on carpet consideration” (III.iv.). He is addressed as “knight” and “sir” far too many times for it not to have been a very topical allusion.

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The Lame Storyteller, Poor and Despised

Peter R. Moore

This article discusses several items discovered by Professor Alan H. Nelson of the University of California, Berkeley in his ongoing examination and transcription of all documents written by or directly about Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford. I gratefully acknowledge Professor Nelson's permission to use this material.

The article starts by demonstrating that a description of Oxford made in 1581 precisely matches Ben Jonson's well-known description of Shakespeare's runaway wit. It will then be shown that Oxford was lame during the latter part of his life, matching Shakespeare's lameness as mentioned in Sonnets 37 and 89. We will see that orthodox scholars reject a literal meaning of "lame" for a very valid reason, namely, that Shakespeare calls himself "poor, lame, and despised," attributes which do not fit what we know about Shakspere of Stratford. All three qualities, however, fit Oxford.

I: Runaway Wit

The first item of interest is an extract from a libel made against Oxford by Charles Arundel in late January 1581 or soon after, which begins: "A trew declaracion of the Earell of oxfordes detestabl[e] vicees, and vnpure life." Arundel, who went on to become the principal author of the most notorious libel of the Elizabethan Age, *Leicester's Commonwealth*, had been placed under arrest for treasonable activities in December 1580 and was trying to destroy the credibility of his accuser, Oxford. His "Declaration" accuses Oxford of five categories of evil: "impudent, and sencelesse lies," of being "a most notorious drunkerd," "a bowgerer of a boye that is his coke," "detestable practices of hireid murderers," and

ffittlie to shewe, that the worell [i.e., world] never browght forthe suche a villonous Monster, and for a partinge blow to geve him his full payment, I will prove against him, his most horrible and detestable blasphemy in denial of the devinitie of Christ... (all quotations from Charles Arundel provided by Professor Nelson, who cites Public Record Office, SP12/151[45] ff.100-2)

Peter Moore is completing a study on the life of the Earl of Surrey.

As Arundel tells it, Oxford's impudent and senseless lies were tall tales concerning his travels in Flanders, France and Italy. Arundel's previous libel cited such untruths as that Oxford maintained that St. Mark's Cathedral at Venice was paved with diamonds and rubies, while the cobblers' wives at Milan were more richly dressed every working day than was Queen Elizabeth at Christmas. But in the libel under consideration, Arundel limits himself to Oxford's Munchausen-like war stories, "as heretofore they have made much sporte to the hereers." Arundel claimed that Oxford said that he so impressed the famous Duke of Alva in Flanders that Alva (who had departed the year before Oxford's visit) placed him in command of all the King of Spain's forces in the Low Countries, where he accomplished such mighty feats that his fame spread to Italy. So, when Oxford traveled to Italy, the Pope gave him an army of 30,000 men to intervene in a civil war in Genoa. Having related these matters, Arundel seems, unconsciously, to drop his guard in wonder, continuing [my emphasis]:

this lie is veye rife w[i]t[h] him and in it he glories greatlie, diverslie hathe he told it, and when he enters into it, he can hardlie owte, which hathe made suche sporte as often have I bin driven to rise from his table laugheinge so hath my L[ord] Charles howard [of Effingham], and the rest, whome I namid before and for the profe of this I take them all as wittnises [the witnesses included Lords Windsor, Compton, Henry Howard, and Thomas Howard, as well as Walter Raleigh.]

Arundel is telling us that Oxford was a marvelously imaginative storyteller, who could tell the same tale over and over to the same audience, convulsing them with laughter every time. But in the passage, "and when he enters into it, he can hardly out," Arundel describes a personal characteristic emphasized by Ben Jonson in his description of Shakespeare. Having remarked that the actors praised Shakespeare as having never blotted a line, Jonson said that Shakespeare should have blotted out a thousand, meaning that he let himself get carried away with his wit, not knowing when to stop. Jonson elaborated:

Hee was (indeed) honest, and of an open, and free nature: had an excellent Phantasie; brave notions, and gentle expressions; wherein hee flow'd with that facility, that sometime it was necessary he should be stop'd: Sufflaminandus erat; [i.e., he needed a brake] as Augustus said of Haterius. His wit was in his owne power; would the rule of it had benee so too. Many times hee fell into those things, could not escape laughter: (Herford & Simpson, 8, 583-4)

So Jonson describes a characteristic of Shakespeare that is identical to what Arundel said of Oxford—that once he turned his wit on, he was unable to turn it off. But we should also note the emphatic nature of Arundel's and Jonson's

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comments, as indicating that the personal quality in question was a most salient feature of the man being described. Arundel is putting forth a carefully organized blast of slander, driven by a desire for revenge, as well as to discredit Oxford's accusations against him. But then, weakening the force of his own slander, he depicts Oxford's storytelling ability as if he is simply unable to get over that aspect of Oxford. Jonson, ironically, commits the same fault he criticizes in Shakespeare, being unable to let go of his idea until he has said it four different ways: "wherein he flowed... Sufflaminandus erat... His wit was in his owne power... Many times hee fell..."

II: Lame

In turning to Professor Nelson's transcriptions of Oxford's letters from 1590 to 1603, we find that Oxford states that he is unable to get about for reasons of bad health or infirmity, in his letters of September 1590 (Fowler, 378), March 1595 (Salisbury, 5, 158), August 1595 (Fowler, 496), September 1597 (Fowler, 524), October 1601 (Fowler, 593), and April 1603 (Fowler, 739). However, he does not specify the nature of his ailment(s). But in a letter to his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, dated 25 March 1595, Oxford writes: "I will attend yowre Lordship as well as a lame man may at yowre house" (extract in Salisbury, 5, 154; this quote from Professor Nelson). On 27 November 1601, Oxford wrote to his brother-in-law, Sir Robert Cecil, closing with, "thus desyring yow to beare w[i]th the weaknes of my lame hand, I take my leaue" (Fowler, 607; this quote from Professor Nelson). In January 1602, he wrote again to Cecil, noting, "thus wythe a lame hand, to wright I take my leue" (Fowler, 653).

Shakespeare's Sonnet 37 contains these lines:

So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite, (3)

.....

So then I am not poor, lame, nor despised, (9)

Sonnet 89 returns to this theme: "Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt" (3).

Recent editors of the Sonnets insist that the obvious conclusion that the poet might literally have been lame cannot possibly be true, but they cannot be bothered to give the modern reader good arguments to support their ideology. W.G. Ingram and Theodore Redpath's 1964 edition begins its notes on Sonnet 37 by sneering at the idea that the lame poet is someone other than the actor from Stratford, and then goes on to explain that the word "lame" can be taken metaphorically. Ingram and Redpath imply that the existence of a figurative meaning excludes the possibility of a literal reading. John Kerrigan's 1986 edition makes the same argument.

Stephen Booth's 1978 edition of the Sonnets is notable for exceeding all others in finding an absurdly large number of mutilple meanings in Shakespeare's

words. As Kerrigan puts it, Booth works on the “principle that any extractable meaning is significant” (65). But when he comes to Sonnets 37 and 89, Booth will allow “lame” to have only one meaning—the poet is apologizing for his poor meter. Booth offers five examples of poets using “lame,” “limping,” or “halting” to indicate bad meter, examples which utterly disprove Booth’s interpretation of Shakespeare’s words. To add a sixth example, John Donne begins the poem “To Mr. T.W.:

“Haste thee harsh verse as fast as thy lame measure/
Will give thee leave.”

As with Donne, all five of Booth’s examples apply the modifier “lame/limping/halting” to the poet’s verse, not to the poet himself. In no case does a poet write, “I am lame,” expecting readers to understand the words as an apology for bad meter.

Now, it is true that words can have both literal and figurative meanings as well as special meanings within the conventions of poetry. But Ingram and Redpath, Booth and Kerrigan all fail to give us a valid reason for not taking Shakespeare’s words literally.

Older editors of the Sonnets showed more respect for their readers’ intelligence. Hyder Rollins’ 1944 *New Variorum* edition offers in its notes to Sonnet 37 this quotation from Edmond Malone’s edition of 1790:

If the words are to be understood literally, we must then suppose that... [Shakespeare] was also poor and despised, for neither of which suppositions there is the smallest ground.

Rollins also makes this argument concerning line 9 of Sonnet 37:

Literalists might note that, even if he was lame, Sh. could not have been poore, for he had jewels which ([Sonnet] 48.1-5), during his absences from London, he put in a sort of safe-deposit vault.

Now here is good sense. Malone and Rollins are telling us that the author of Sonnets 37 and 89 does not match what we know of William Shaksper of Stratford, who became quite well-to-do from a modest beginning, and who could hardly be said to be poor if he owned jewels of value, as indicated in Sonnet 48. But the author of these Sonnets certainly matches what is known of the Earl of Oxford, who was never in real poverty, but who was disgracefully poor for an earl.

III: Poor and Despised

Owing to extravagant habits and unlucky financial speculation, Oxford was forced to sell most of his inherited lands by 1585 (Ward, 353). In 1586, the Queen granted him an annual pension of 1,000 pounds, to continue “until such time as he shall be by Us otherwise provided for to be in some manner relieved” (Ward, 257). After Oxford’s death in 1604, his widow and son received a much smaller pension from King James. She petitioned that the annuity be raised to 500 pounds a year, noting:

The pension of 1,000 pounds was not given by the late Queen to my Lord

for his life and then to determine [i.e., cease], but to continue until the Queen might raise his decay by some better provision. (Salisbury, 16, 258)

Elsewhere in the letter, she referred to her “ruined estate... desolate estate... greate distresse... miserable estate” (copy of original letter from Matus, 261).

About the same time, James was having to fend off a debt-ridden baron who felt that a grant of 1,000 pounds a year was too small. The King commented, “Great Oxford when his [e]state was whole ruined got no more of the late Queen” (Salisbury, 16, 397). Some time after Oxford’s death, Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels, made a note on Oxford’s magnificence, learning and religion, adding that in the promise of his youth, Oxford seemed “much more like to raise... a new earldom, than to decay... waste & lose an old earldom” (Miller, 394).

So, we know that Oxford was poor as well as lame, and we also know that he was despised accordingly. When Queen Elizabeth was dying, the Earl of Lincoln tried to enlist Oxford in some scheme of opposition to King James. Sir John Peyton, Lieutenant of the Tower of London, found out about Lincoln’s activities, but failed to report them. Peyton excused himself for this dereliction by saying that he took the matter seriously until he found out that Lincoln’s alleged accomplice was Oxford, on whom Peyton passed this verdict (my emphasis):

I knewe him to be so weake in boddy, in friends, in habyltye, and all other means to rayse any combustyon in the state, as I never feered any danger to proseyd from so feeble a fowndation. (O’Conor, 107)

Peyton’s words merit a close inspection. He calls Oxford weak in body, a reference to that infirmity cited in Oxford’s letters that led him to describe himself as “lame.” Peyton next notes that Oxford lacked friends, which is a way of saying that he was despised or looked down on (OED). Peyton then says that Oxford lacked “ability... to raise... combustion in the state,” which in the context of potential for raising insurrection, means (OED definition 4 of “ability”): “Pecuniary power; wealth, estate, means.” Or, in other words, Peyton is saying that Oxford was poor.

Shakespeare also frequently laments that he is old in the Sonnets, which would be appropriate coming from Oxford. Shakespeare says that his career has brought him shame and disgrace by virtue of his association with the public stage in Sonnets 110 and 111, and by his literary career in Sonnet 72. Such matters would hardly have brought disgrace to Shakspeare of Stratford. Shakespeare alludes to life at Court in several sonnets, especially 125. He repeatedly castigates the highborn friend to whom the first 126 sonnets are addressed, something not done by poets of humble origins to their patrons back then. Moreover, when the Sonnets appeared in print in 1609, the

publisher's dedication referred to the author as "OVR.EVER.LIVING.POET"—unambiguously meaning that he was dead (see endnote). Oxford died in 1604; Shakspeare in 1616.

In conclusion, when we match Ben Jonson's description of Shakespeare's runaway wit to what we know of the phantom of Stratford-on-Avon, we find nothing to work with. But when we match that description to what Charles Arundel said about the Earl of Oxford, we get a perfect fit. When we match Shakespeare's words in Sonnets 37 and 89 to what we know of the affluent burgher of Stratford, we find such a mismatch that orthodox scholars must take one of two courses: either they twist Shakespeare's meaning into something no sensible reader can accept, or else, as with Malone and Rollins, they tell us that Shakespeare's autobiographical words cannot apply to Shakspeare of Stratford. This latter explanation we can very well accept, especially when we discover that the Earl of Oxford was "poor, lame, and despised." Moreover, the author of the Sonnets indicates that he is old, shamed by his literary and theatrical career, and a courtier of high enough station to sharply criticize his aristocratic friend, while his publisher said that he was dead by 1609.

Both Oxford and the author Shakespeare were superb tellers of imaginative stories, possessed of an extraordinary wit, and they were poor, lame and despised. Further, Oxford matches the author of Shakespeare's Sonnets on a number of other points where the Stratford man does not fit. The odds against such similarity resulting from sheer coincidence are formidably long.

Endnote

In 1926, Colonel B.R. Ward published a list of 23 examples of use of the term "ever-living," compiled from concordances and major dictionaries (Miller, 211-14). All the examples refer to deities, abstractions and dead people. I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on Colonel Ward's work.

No scholar of the Stratfordian persuasion has found a single example of "ever-living" being applied to a living person, though at least one tried. Professor Donald Foster writes:

In a fairly extensive search, I have not found any instance of ever-living used in a Renaissance text to describe a living mortal, including, even, panegyrics on Queen Elizabeth, where one should most expect to find it—though it does appear sometimes in eulogies for the dead. ("Master W.H., R.I.P.," *PMLA* [Jan. 1987] 102, 1:46)

Miller's version of Ward's list contains an error. The example printed as:

In that he is man, he received life from the Father as the foundation of that everliving Deity. (Hooker, 1593)

Should read:

In that he is man, he received life from the Father as from the fountain

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of that ever living Deity, which is the Person of the Word. (Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, V, lvi, 4, 1593)

In the meantime, I have encountered a few more examples. Henry Brinklow's 1542 *Complaynt of Roderyck Mors* and *The Lamentacyon of a Christen agaynst the Cytye of London* (Early English Text Society, Extra Series, 1874, no. 22) use the term "everlyving God" six times (53, 56, 76, 93, 94, 98). The statute 1 Mary I, St. 2, c. 1 has the phrase, "wee beseeche Thalmightye and ever lyving God" (*The Statutes of the Realm*, IV, 200). The anonymous 1591 *Troublesome Raigne of King John* includes:

Thus hath K. Richards Sonne performde his vowes.

And offered Austrias bloud for sacrifice

Unto his fathers everliving soule. (VI, 1044-46)

Gabriel Harvey's 1592 Sonnet XIII in *Fourre Letters and Certaine Sonnets* provides a variant usage of particular interest as showing clearly that "live ever" meant "dead" if applied to a human being. The sonnet appeals to Fame on behalf of ten recently deceased knights (the Bacon in question being Sir Nicholas), beginning:

Live ever valorous renowned Knightes;

Live ever Smith, and Bacon, Peerles men:

Live ever Walsingham, and Hatton wise:

Live ever Mildmayes honorable name.

Ah, that Sir Humphry Gilbert should be dead:

Ah, that Sir Philip Sidney should be dead:

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What are Shakespeare's *Sonnets*?

Warren Hope

When Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium* first appeared and began to attract attention, his wife reportedly said that she was shocked that Wallace would publish such private poems. Critics and scholars who have not only noted but repeated this statement have, no doubt wisely, ignored it.¹ After all, their interest was not in Wallace Stevens the attorney, much less Mrs. Stevens's husband. They were interested in Wallace Stevens the exotic human sponge, who had absorbed streams of philosophy and rivers of verse, mostly French, and had acquired the knack of squeezing himself every now and then, secreting new blends of these liquids on a page. Still, it is possible to sympathize with Mrs. Stevens's concern about what the eyes of strangers might make of lines like these:

And thus it is that what I feel,
Here in this room, desiring you,

Thinking of your blue-shadowed silk,
Is music.²

It is all very well for Wallace Stevens and his critics to attribute this sentiment to Peter Quince, a fictional character from one of Shakespeare's plays. Mrs. Stevens knew better.

We can all agree that Shakespeare did not have Wallace Stevens's poems in mind when he wrote his sonnets. My point is merely that the fact of publication, while fixing the wording of poems, alters their context and meaning. Publication in fact severs poems from the contexts in which they originally arose and gives them the chance to live in any number of new contexts—contexts that may not have even been foreseen by their author. But this severing of poems from their original context does not represent a clean break. Something of that original context lingers with them as they take on a life of their own, separate from their author and the circumstances that compelled him to write.

If Shakespeare could have known nothing of Wallace Stevens's doings and writings, he no doubt did have that miracle of preservation, the Psalms of the

Dr. Hope is writing a life and study on the British poet Norman Cameron. This essay was adapted from a presentation made at the 1994 annual conference of the Shakespeare Association of America.

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Hebrew Bible, in his mind's eye when he wrote his sonnets. Psalm, after all, is just another name for sonnet—a little song. Beside that, Shakespeare's *Sonnets* constitute a roughly equivalent number of little songs as that contained in the Book of Psalms. Finally, Shakespeare clearly echoes phrases and sentiments found in English versions of the Psalms. The religious character of the Psalms does not at all disqualify them from membership in the tradition that includes both Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and Wallace Stevens's *Harmonium*. On the contrary, when the psalmist—or one of a number of psalmists—in Psalm 48 refers to an event from the reign of Jehosophat, the destruction of ships bound for Tarshish, he does so in the conviction that he will be understood by his readers or listeners. That conviction carries the words into the future so that they continue to be understood by those who are unaware of the event—but understood in a way that is different from that of the poem's original audience, just as you or I understand "Peter Quince at the Clavier" in a way that is different from the way that Mrs. Stevens understood it.

Shakespeare's sonnets, then, are primarily little songs, short lyric poems, that have a life of their own, separate from their author and the original circumstances that moved him to write. As poems, Shakespeare's sonnets do not cause a great deal of uncertainty at all. For lovers and readers of poems, they are simply a handful of powerful but unforgettable poems along with several more handfuls of memorable lines and phrases. Certainty is a matter of faith. Readers are convinced that some of Shakespeare's sonnets are poems by the effect they experience when reading them. This faith need not cause them to read the sonnets in their entirety, or wonder if there is a relationship between the various sonnets, or ask when they were written, or concern themselves with why they were written or to whom they were originally addressed. Just as a college student may be overwhelmed by "Sunday Morning" or "The Snow Man" without inquiring into their position in *Harmonium*, much less Wallace Stevens's relationship with his wife; just as a child in Sunday school may learn the 23rd Psalm by heart and carry it with him to his death without asking about its relationship to Psalms 22 and 24, or worrying about which reign of the Kings of Judah it dates from; so readers of Shakespeare's sonnets may be repeatedly moved by "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" or "When to the sessions of sweet silent thought," or "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," or "That time of year thou may'st in me behold," without even being aware that there are more than a hundred other sonnets by Shakespeare. Uncertainty, doubt, enters only for those of us who are moved by the love of these poems to know more about them, when we are willing to treat them as something less than poems, when we want to use them as documents that shed light on their author, the circumstances in which he wrote, or the historical period in which he flourished.

This point is no doubt obvious but it is worth making. Some of Shakespeare's sonnets live as poems no matter what any of us may or may not try to do with the rest of them, with the group of sonnets published in 1609. Furthermore, trying to do something with the sonnets as a group is necessarily a secondary activity to reading those members of the group that live as poems. Criticism and scholarship are certainly legitimate activities, but they are secondary to reading poems for pleasure.

The question, "What are Shakespeare's Sonnets?" then becomes, "What are those sonnets by Shakespeare that do not live as poems?" It is this latter question that scholars and critics have tried to answer with appeals to internal and external evidence. By and large, there have been three answers to this question: (1) they are documents written to please or acquire a patron; (2) they are literary exercises produced by an ambitious poet who wanted to demonstrate his ability in a popular form; and (3) they are autobiographical documents that sprang directly from their author's life.³ None of these answers has either achieved a final and widespread consensus or is fully satisfactory. The limitation of these answers is clear. None of them accounts for all of the sonnets. The search for a patron cannot explain those sonnets that insult the potential patron much less the poems addressed to "the dark lady." Sonnets 153 and 154 may be explained as literary exercises, but can we think of the self-accusatory "Sin of self love possesseth all mine eye" coming into being in this way? Finally, if the sonnets are autobiographical, why has hundreds of years of scholarship failed to make a coherent story of them that clearly reflects the life as we know it?

To my mind, the best answer to the question was offered in the last century by that quirky writer, Samuel Butler. We need not accept Butler's dating of the sonnets, nor his sense of who the young man addressed in many of them was, nor his rearrangement of them, to find his description of them as "unguarded letters in verse" both helpful and valuable.⁴ This description allows for the audiences that Shakespeare says that he has in mind—the recipients or addressees of the sonnets and posterity. This description also accounts for our sense of a lived life in and behind the poems, or at least most of them, but also our sense of confusion, our inability to make a coherent story of them. As Butler pointed out, our sense that the sonnets are autobiographical is right unless we mean by that that they constitute a memoir, an attempt by the author to tell his life story. Instead, we are put in the position of being readers of letters to unknown recipients. Something of the sense and circumstances can be deduced, but clarity and complete coherence are not to be hoped for.

What all of this means for me, at least, is that some of the sonnets can and should be read and reread as poems, for the sheer pleasure that reading poems gives. If we want to go beyond that, our speculations on when the sonnets were

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written, to whom they were written, and the circumstances under which they were written, will be most profitable if we think of the sonnets as “unguarded letters in verse.” Most importantly, perhaps, this description accounts for the disparity between what the poet says and the fact of the publication of the sonnets. If the author wished to please or acquire a patron, he could have seen the poems through the press and prefaced them with a dedication. If he wished to demonstrate his skill with “the Elizabethan sonnet sequence,” he could have sold the manuscript to a printer and won shillings as well as praise. But the author of “unguarded letters in verse” could express shame at their contents while wishing them to be preserved. The poet’s lack of connection with the publication of the sonnets becomes explicable with Butler’s sense of what Shakespeare’s sonnets are.

Notes

1. See the exemplary and pioneering *Wallace Stevens and the Making of Harmonium*, by Robert Buttel, in which Mrs. Stevens’s opinion is quarantined in a footnote.
2. *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1990), 90.
3. For a survey of these speculations, see Hyder Rollins, *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets* (1944).
4. For a more complete discussion of Butler on the sonnets, see my *The Shakespeare Controversy* (1992), 70-76.

A Further Reconsideration of Heywood's Allusion to Shakespeare

David Chandler

In 1612 William Jaggard published a third edition of *The Passionate Pilgrime*, with a title page boasting that the motley collection was “By W. Shakespeare.” To the existing mix of Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean material (the second edition had appeared in 1599), Jaggard added nine poems from Thomas Heywood’s *Troia Britanica: Or, Great Britaines Troy* (London, 1609). The standard view of what happened next is summarized by F.T. Prince:

Heywood was indignant at this misuse of his poems, and also at the badness of the printing in *Troia Britanica* [published by Jaggard]; and he added to his *Apologie for Actors* (1612) an epistle to his new printer [Nicholas Okes], in which he spoke of his own irritation and also of Shakespeare’s resentment at what Jaggard had done. It seems likely that Shakespeare’s displeasure caused Jaggard to cancel the original title-page... and substitute one without Shakespeare’s name.¹

In the second issue of *The Elizabethan Review* (1:2), Gerald Downs presented a new and provocative reading of Heywood’s epistle (“A Reconsideration of Heywood’s Allusion to Shakespeare”). He maintained that the address could be read as evidence that the actor “Shakspeare” and the unidentified writer using the pseudonym “Shakespeare” were distinct persons, the former exploiting the unexpected celebrity conferred on his name and gulling Jaggard into publication of *The Passionate Pilgrime*. Downs’ reading of the epistle is, however, heavily biased toward the conclusion he expects to reach, as I shall seek to show here. Downs is strongly critical of “orthodox accounts” (22) of the address (“anti-Stratfordians” can give as good as they get in terms of ill-considered criticism), but even if “little effort has been expended by academics” (19), the orthodox version can be shown to be fundamentally correct, I believe. Before offering the reader a second discursive journey through the confusing address, it seems appropriate to reprint it, followed by Downs’s paraphrase (33) of the problematic sentence:

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THE infinite faults escaped in my booke of *Britaines Troy*, by the negligence of the Printer [William Jaggard], as the misquotations, mistaking of sillables, misplacing halfe lines, coining of strāge and neuer heard of words. These being without number, when I would haue taken a particular account of the Errata, the Printer answered me, hee would not publish his owne disworkemanship, but rather let his owne fault lye vpon the necke of the Author: and being fearfull that others of his quality, had beene of the same nature, and condition, and finding you on the contrary, so carefull, and industrious, so serious and laborious to doe the Author all the rights of the presse, I could not choose but gratulate your honest indeavours with this short remembrance. Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of *Paris to Helen*, and *Helen to Paris*, and printing them in a lesse volume, vnder the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage, vnder whom he hath publisht them, so the Author I know much offended with M. *Jaggard* (that altogether vnknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name. These, and the like dishonesties I know you to bee cleere of; and I could wish but to bee the happy Author of so worthy a worke as I could willingly commit to your care and workmanship.

[Downs] Here I am compelled to report an open disservice done me respecting *Britaine's Troy*. Someone whom I shall not name took two of my poems from that book and printed them in a small volume that shall also remain unidentified. This unauthorized use of my poems may make people think I sold them to another after having previously sold them to Mr. Jaggard, who has since republished them in his own name to reassert his ownership. Further, I have something to say about the book in which Jaggard chose to reprint my poems. First, my lines do not deserve to be published in association with the name of William Shakespeare. Next, I find it offensive that the originator of this corrupt volume, William Shakspeare, took credit for the contents as if he were really the poet Shakespeare. Mr. Jaggard did not know better thirteen years ago, and it seems he still has not learned.

As Downs's analysis tends to veer increasingly away from scholarly objectivity, it is reasonable to start with his controversial reading of the statement, "the author I know much offended with M. *Jaggard* (that altogether vnknowne to him) presumed to make so bold with his name." Downs begins his account of this section with the pointless (not to say wrong) remark that this can be read as Heywood's saying, "I know the 'Author'" (30). As he suggests, William

Shakespeare (or Shakspeare) of Stratford-on-Avon may well have been known to Heywood, but Heywood was not making that point here. Isolating clauses in this way, we can equally well amuse ourselves by having Heywood boasting, "I might steal them," or Downs congratulating himself "I believe the analysis" (33). This digression, in any case, complicates Downs's argument unnecessarily, for his main point is that while scholars he stigmatizes as "orthodox" have deduced the meaning "Jaggard offended the 'Author,'" we should read "the 'Author' offended Jaggard." We are therefore asked to accept that Heywood was maintaining, "I know the author *and* I know he offended Jaggard." This is just the sort of creative reading that Downs condemns in the orthodox scholars.

Taken independently, the clause does, of course, create some ambiguity as to who was offended. The context, however, is illuminating. The epistle is an attack on Jaggard's editorial practice, and it would seem odd that within its limited confines Heywood wished to portray Jaggard both offending and offended. He was attempting to demonstrate how authors can suffer under publishers/printers, not the reverse, and while it is easy to imagine a publisher "making bold" with an author's name, it takes some ingenious thinking to imagine the reverse. Ordinary sense dictates, then, that Heywood is maintaining that the "Author" had been offended by Jaggard, who "made bold" with the "Author"'s name. This is reinforced in the final sentence, when Heywood speaks of "*These* and the like dishonesties..." (my emphasis). Following Downs, Jaggard's only "dishonesty" is to let textual errors be ascribed to the author rather than himself. But "These" must indicate a plural: presumably also referring to Jaggard's "making bold" with the name of the "Author." It can be noted, in passing, how the postscript follows a pattern: it can be divided in two, each half voicing a complaint about Jaggard, this being followed by a contrast with Okes.

But who is signified by "the Author"? Shakespeare, maintains "orthodoxy"; "Shakspeare," maintains Downs (following Alden Brookes [23]), both basing their judgments on the evidence of *The Passionate Pilgrime*. His evidence for this compiler being "Shakspeare" is flimsy: a "hypothesis" (31) by Alden Brooks which obviously has no value at all as primary evidence; a brief exchange in a play "possibly in part by Heywood" (32) which makes no mention at all of "Shakspeare"; two innocent lines of poetry which "may have no significance";² and the probably deliberate misunderstood idea that Heywood claimed to have been writing under "constraint."³ None of these will-o'-the-wisps of evidence has any authority; they are held together simply by Downs's prior assumption that "Shakspeare" and the writer commonly known as Shakespeare are distinct persons. It is on this assumption that Downs offers the creative paraphrase, "the author offended by having readers think Jaggard boldly used Shakespeare's

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name.” My objection to a reading that makes the “Author” the offending party has already been given, but other objections might here be raised. First, Nicholas Okes, Heywood’s addressee, is hardly likely to have made readers think that “Jaggard boldly used Shakespeare’s name,” so he is unlikely to have taken much satisfaction in being told that he was “cleere of” such faults. Secondly, the assumption is made, without any evidence, that William Jaggard was quite incredibly gullible.

It is, in fact, quite unproven that “Author” does mean “compiler,” or that it was this compiler that attached the name “W. Shakespeare” to his collection. The word “Author” can stretch to accommodate Downs’s sense, but it does not normally do so; it is simply Downs’s naive or politic reading that makes “the Author” equate to “the Author [of *The Passionate Pilgrim*].” *The Passionate Pilgrim* has no single “Author,” in the normal sense of that word, or course, but Heywood refers to “the Author,” not in terms of a particular work, rather as the possessor of the name Jaggard made “both with.” As I have suggested already, only prior assumptions about the identity of “Shakspere” can explain Downs’s detection of three protagonists—a writer using the pseudonym “Shakespeare,” the opportunist “Shakspere,” the gulled publisher Jaggard—in this odd drama.

Downs’s attempt to make the parenthetical “that” refer to “the author’s offence” is simply a sly reading, ignoring the fact that the demonstrative pronouns “this/that” are frequently used for the modern “who” in prose of this period. Earlier in the *Apology*, for example, Heywood writes:

Aristotle commends one *Theodoretus* to be the best Tragedian in his time. This in the presence of *Alexander* personated *Achilles*, which so delighted the Emperour, that hee bestowed on him a pension...

Downs’s interpretative logic would here make the “this” signify Aristotle’s commendation, which must be then interpreted as having “personated *Achilles*.” Such an obvious absurdity should make it clear that the demonstrative pronoun refers to Theodoretus; by extension it is apparent that the demonstrative pronoun in the passage under review can refer to Jaggard. This is, in fact, the more likely reading as Okes, as suggested above, is most unlikely to have committed “Shakspere”’s alleged “offense.”

With this last problem disposed of, there is in fact nothing wanting to confirm the orthodox interpretation, which effectively paraphrases the statement thus:

I know the author was much offended with Mr. Jaggard (who acted without his [i.e., the author’s] knowledge) having boldly presumed to use his [i.e., the author’s] name.

Downs’s comment about this statement being part of “the rhetorical figure *homoeosis*, signified by the form, ‘As..., so...’” (29), is certainly worth making;

less satisfactory is his application of it. (Downs, his interest taken up with the *homoeosis*, fails to realize the importance of the introductory “but,” although this is significant, as I shall try to show later.) The two elements of the *homoeosis* are logically connected by their being the reactions of two men to one event—namely the publication of the work of one under the name of the other. Downs’s contention that “the similitude must follow in logic and syntax” (29) is simply pedantic; his one example (“But as the watrie showres delay the raging wind,/So doeth good hope cleane put away dispaire out of my mind” [34]) does not support it, and his final paraphrase (34) produces two entirely distinct statements. In Euphuistic prose the device is used all the time, sometimes to introduce supporting imagery (as in Downs’s example), but often simply to balance ideas related in some way, including those in logical opposition (consider, for example, Robert Greene’s famous “as women are constant, so they are easy to beléeve [i.e., credulous]”), the one then tending to color the other. Heywood is stating, simply enough, that just as he must protest that his lines are “not worthy” of appearing “vnder” the name of the “author”—the context in which Jaggard had published them—so he knew the “author” had protested at his (the “author”’s) name being associated with these and other “not worthy” lines. Downs claims to have a problem with the phrase “worthy his patronage,” arguing that “the suggestion of a fellow-poet as a bestower of patronage seems strange” (29). Again, however, we catch him subtly altering Heywood’s sense. Heywood does not say that his “fellow actor-poet” was given to “bestowing patronage,” rather he implies that his own “lines” had been given the unwanted and unwarranted “patronage” of the “author”’s name: but not by the “author.” If any one is described as “a bestower of patronage,” it must be Jaggard.

As I have mentioned already, the “but” in this argument is important. To understand this we need to look again at the first part of the sentence:

Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest iniury done me in that worke, by taking the two Epistles of *Paris* to *Helen*, and *Helen* to *Paris*, and printing them in a lesse volume, vnder the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him; and hee to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name...

Downs correctly considers “that worke” to refer back reflexively to the “booke of *Britaines Troy*,” discussed in the previous sentence. He paraphrases “in that worke” as “with reference to the... work”; this is not unjust, though “in respect of that work” probably captures Heywood’s sense better. Downs’s principal contention with regard to the next section is that the “lesse volume” was not *The Passionate Pilgrim* but a lost work to which *The Passionate Pilgrim* was a response. His argument is based on what he calls “a pronominal confusion”:

...Shakespeare must be the nominal author, *under whom* the poetry was

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printed. One is forced to equate the *he* who “hath publisth” and the *hee* of the earlier line—who “hath since published them in his owne name”—with William Jaggard, the subject of the postscript. In turn, Jaggard is identified as the *him* from whom the poems might be considered stolen. (28)

As Jaggard cannot have stolen from himself, Downs argues, another publisher must have stolen from him. To a certain point his argument is fine; there is certainly a “pronominal confusion” in the passage, though I disagree with the view that Heywood was being “obscure by design” (32). However, Downs willfully ignores the extent to which English sentence structures are often read according to their perceived sense, rather than according to any strict logic, and the licenses this allows the writer. Consider my previous quotation from the *Apology* (the passage on Alexander and Theodoretos). Who is signified by the pronoun “hee”? Alexander, we assume, largely because he is the only protagonist who is likely to have been in the habit of bestowing pensions. But what if the sentence was written thus?

This [Theodoretos] in the presence of *Alexander* personated *Achilles*, which so delighted the Emperour, that hee was given a pension...

Without being unduly troubled by the construction, we would naturally now read the pronoun as signifying Theodoretos, the only protagonist likely to have received a pension.

In fact Heywood does, like most prose writers of his period and many since, cause some confusion with his pronominal substitutions at times.. Take the following passage, again from the *Apology*, as an example:

Likewise, a learned Gentleman [John Harrington] in his *Apology* for Poetry, speakes thus: Tragedies well handled be a most worthy kinde of Poesie. Comedies make men see and shame at their faults, and proceeding further amongst other Vniuersity-playes, he remembers the Tragedy of *Richard* the third [Legge’s *Ricardus Tertius*], acted in Saint *Johns* in *Cambridge*, so essentially, that had the tyrant *Phalaris* beheld his bloody proceedings, it had mollified his heart, and made him relent at sight of his inhumane massacres.

Note that Harrington is not named; is this, too, evidence of “constraint”? Here three genitive pronouns “his”, with one accusative “him,” encumber the sense, which has to be deduced on a basis of elimination. Does the first refer to Harrington, Richard III, Legge, or Phalaris? What is certain is they do not all refer to one person, which exposes the danger of Downs’s sequential reasoning. Turning almost anywhere in Heywood’s prose we can find similar confusing strings of pronouns. In his list of “the diuers opinions of men, what [the] supreme deity should be,” attached to the front of *Gunaikeion: or Nine Bookes of Various History Concerninge Women* (London, 1624), for example,

occurs the following:

Cleanthes Aßius [of Assos] would have his god of the Firmament, as diuerse other of the Stoicks. And as *Arnobius* witnesseth of him, sometimes he called him the Will: now the Minde: then that part of the ayer which is aboue the fire: and sometimes again the Reason. (2)

(It is worth noting the very un-modern use of punctuation; Downs's insistence on reading Heywood's punctuation as though it must conform to modern standards is just one of his many mistakes.) Here we have "him... he... him." Obviously they do not all signify the same person. Our initial impression that Arnobius is being introduced as another authority on the "supreme deity" (signified by the first accusative pronoun), has to be corrected when we realize that the second accusative pronoun must signify the deity. The sentence is, of course, meaningless in an independent context.

Such examples could be multiplied without end in Heywood's prose, and other prose of the period. Here, however, one further example must suffice, again from *Tunaikeion*:

Iuno hauing in suspition *Semele* the daughter of *Cadmus* and *Hermione* to haue beene often prostituted by *Iupiter*, shee changed her selfe into the shape of her nource [i.e., nurse] *Beroe*, persuading her that shee should beg of him, That he would grace her so much as to lie with her in the same state and maiestie, with which he bedded *Iuno*; that as his power and potence was great aboue all, so her embracings and wantonings might be remarkeable aboue others; which he vnwillingly granting, and shee as vnfortunately obtaining, was the occasion that she with her pallace were both consumed in his fires and thunders. (5)

It is worth reflecting on just how much intellectual equipment the reader is expected to bring to this sentence, not only in terms of knowledge of the classical myths, but also in terms of narrative paradigms. When Heywood writes "her nource *Beroe*", whose nurse—Semele's or Juno's—do we assume him to be referring to? When he writes "persuading her," do we take this to be Beroe or Semele? When "grace her," Beroe, Semele or Juno ("with which he bedded" may imply "as he used to")? When "her embracings"—whose? Must we read this as referring to the "shee" that was to beg, and/or the "her" Jupiter was to "lie with"? The sentence could be construed in all sorts of ways, but the reader is expected to have sufficient knowledge of the way such stories work to avoid confusion. He or she has, in effect, to *predict* what the sentence is going to say in order to keep a firm footing on its slippery grammar.

The last point applies again with the sentence alluding to Shakespeare; we need to rely on context and expectation. And as with the sentence, "And as *Arnobius...*", we can rely on the previous sentence to orientate us in the

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grammar. It is true, as Downs maintains, that Heywood does not say *who* did him the “manifest injury” of printing his “two Epistles” in a “lesse volume,” but we know he is complaining to Okes about Jaggard’s treatment of “my booke of *Britaines Troy*,” and, no other name being mentioned, the natural inference is that Jaggard printed the “lesse volume,” and it was this that Heywood construed as “a manifest injury” to *Troia Britanica*. Had Heywood written “a manifest injury he did me,” the subject “he [Jaggard]” for this part of the sentence would have been made quite clear, but even as it stands it is implied. As we know that Jaggard published Heywood’s “two Epistles” in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, “vnder the name of another [W. Shakespeare]”, we may suppose that to be the work referred to, unless it is proven that there is another, more likely, contender.⁴ This of course makes Shakespeare the “Author” referred to in the second half of the sentence. Heywood’s next statement, “which may put the world in opinion I might steale them from him,” can clearly be treated parenthetically. The sentence can be read without it, but the way in which Heywood felt himself injured is clarified. The crucial question is, naturally, who does “him” signify? Downs would have us believe that it was Jaggard. The principal problem with this is that, according to Downs, Jaggard has not yet been referred to in the sentence, while another subject has been introduced. Thus, he asks us to construe the sentence something like this:

I must mention an injury done *Britaines Troy* by a publisher who took poems from it and printed them in another volume, under somebody else’s name, thus making the world think I might have stolen them from him...

In this context it is remarkable that Downs, who makes much of “logic” when it suits him, should have found any logic in the accusative pronoun referring to neither the anonymous “publisher” nor the “somebody else.” This is not evidence for Heywood writing under “constraint” (indeed, why should he be unable to name the publisher?), simply of Downs’s politic reading. The accusative pronoun must signify one of these and, as I have shown, Jaggard must be the publisher. Downs himself correctly observes that, “it is impossible that a book published by Jaggard could be suspected of containing work stolen from himself” (28). The “him” thus attaches itself to “the name of another,” signifying, as it often does, the last person or name to be introduced in a discussion. As I have shown, this can be assumed to be Shakespeare as *The Passionate Pilgrim* fits all the facts. There is no need to create a myth of a lost publication by an unknwn publisher, as Downs does.

Heywood’s long sentence continues: “and hee to doe himself right, hath since published them in his owne name.” Who is signified by the “hee”? Obviously not the “him” whose “name” Heywood’s work had first been published “vnder,” but Jaggard, the principle subject of the entire “epistle”

the only other person referred to in the sentence. The “in his owne name” alludes to and counterpoises the “vnder the name of another.” Again Heywood’s claims are born out by what we know of *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Jaggard did indeed produce a second title-page that dropped the offensive “By W. Shakespeare” and simply featured his own name as publisher. In other words, Jaggard did rectify his fault, “but,” Heywood significantly continues, he and Shakespeare had still been annoyed at Jaggard’s original unethical practice. The “but” is thus central to the structure of the sentence, pointing out the limitations of Jaggard’s exculpatory conduct.

We can see now that Downs’s base position is the hypothesis that “Shakspere” collected the poems that form *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Arguing backward through Heywood’s sentence, he then has to create a second hypothesis, that of a lost book, to justify the first. Any argument thus framed between two mutually dependent hypotheses should naturally be treated with suspicion, especially when there is a counter-argument that is framed with tangible evidence. While it would be foolish to deny the strength of the case against the overall authorship claims advanced for Shakespeare/Shakspere of Stratford, leaving him to be otherwise accounted for, Downs’s article ought to show the dangers of making that an investigative assumption that actually distorts evidence. Indeed, his assumption does not stop there, but goes on to presume that the Stratford man was an opportunist and a charlatan. His is a theory that, adding little or nothing to the real cause of un-orthodox criticism, rather damages it by association.

Downs ended his account of the passage by offering a paraphrase of the difficult sentence. I here offer my own, leaving it to the impartial reader to decide which they think most accurately captures Heywood’s sense:

Here I must also mention another injury he [Jaggard] did me in respect of that work [*Britaines Troy*], by taking the epistles of *Paris to Helen* and *Helen to Paris* and publishing them in another volume [*The Passionate Pilgrime*], under somebody else’s name [“W. Shakespeare”], which may make readers think I had stolen them from him [Shakespeare]. He [Jaggard] has since attempted to redeem himself by publishing the volume containing my poems under his own name [“W. Iaggard”], nevertheless, just as I must protest that my poems are unworthy of appearing under a greater poet’s name, so that poet [Shakespeare] I know was angry with Mr. Jaggard (who acted without his [Shakespeare’s] knowledge) for having boldly published that unworthy volume [*The Passionate Pilgrim*] under his [Shakespeare’s] name.

Notes

1. *The Poems* (The Arden Shakespeare), 1960, xxii.
2. In the poem that Downs cites, Heywood applies the same formula to fourteen dramatists (e.g. "And famous *Jonson*, though his learned pen/Be dipt in Castaly, is still but *Ben*"); therefore, it is quite impossible to suppose that the lines on Shakespeare had any special "significance." If Heywood wanted to draw attention to the statement—to make a special point—he would hardly have buried it in this way.
3. Downs's evidence for Heywood's being "not always free to speak openly" (32) is the last words in *Troia Britanica*:

Onely thus much let me speake in my owne behalfe: With Ages past I haue been too little acquainted, and with this age present, I dare not be too bold. (466)

By quoting this out of context, Downs unscrupulously gives the statement a sinister implication (knowing, of course, that few of his readers will be able to check the context). The statement is not an independent sentence, but part of a long sentence discussing whether *Troia Britanica* had been comprehensive enough. "Bold," in context, simply means "ambitious." Heywood's reasoning is clear enough when we consider his introductory address "To the two-fold Readers: *the Courteous and the Criticke*":

I am not so vnexperienced in the enuy of this Age, but that I knowe I shall encounter most sharpe and seuerer Censurers, such as continually carpe at other mens labours, and superficially perusing them, with a kind of negligence and skorne, quote them by the way, Thus: This is an Error, that was too much streacht, this too slightly neglected, heere many things might haue been added.

Heywood thus meant that he could not be "too bold" when it meant exposing himself to such "Censurers;" there is no parallel at all with his alleged lack of freedom to talk openly about "Shakespeare."

4. Some critics have made heavy weather of the fact that Heywood does not mention his seven shorter poems included in *The Passionate Pilgrim*. As Downs correctly implies, however (27), they are irrelevant to Heywood's case. The "two Epistles" Heywood mentions include a total of over 1,100 lines of poetry; the seven shorter poems include a total of just over 300 lines. The "two Epistles" alone thus comprise nearly 80% of the Heywood additions, they were the only Heywood poems Jaggard advertised on his title-page, and therefore they were quite enough for Heywood to make his point.

The Divisions Among the English Catholics: 1580-1610

Francis Edwards, SJ

This article covers those years from the entry of the Jesuits and seminary priests into England until the death of the Jesuit Robert Persons—a crucial period which determined the main lines that recusant history would follow until the beginning of Catholic emancipation in England at the end of the 18th century.

An important background factor in recusant divisions, which recent historians have tended to ignore or play down but which had a considerable influence on recusant attitudes toward the State and toward one another, was the continuance of a rigorous persecution.¹ This was scarcely expected by the 1580 mission since it entered the country with every intention of recognizing the political and religious status quo as it had been established by the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity of 1559. So when Persons published his *opuscule* to dissuade Catholics from attending Protestant services, he addressed it to the “High and Mighty Princess Elizabeth.” But from the first, the regime refused any kind of negotiation. There could be no question of tolerating two religions in the same country. Burghley himself, in a celebrated memorandum, pointed out to the Queen that Spain was a great power precisely because it allowed only one religion,² and if she desired the same kind of greatness for her own country, she must do the same. It could be maintained that the Church by Law Established even in these early days had men of sufficient caliber³ to face Edmund Campion and his fellow Jesuits, men of indisputable learning, but the regime was taking no chances; and had no intention of encouraging disobedience. It reacted swiftly. This same year, 1580, proclamations were read out everywhere against those, including gentlemen and even noblemen, who had consorted with the Jesuits. They were summoned to London and committed to prison.⁴ The harsh acts of 1581 and 1583 were accompanied by savage acts of cruelty, especially against priests. Alexander Bryant, for instance, was stretched on the rack and had needles thrust under his fingernails.⁵ Somewhat

Francis Edwards, SJ, has just published a biography of Robert Persons.

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later, Richard Topcliffe was allowed to carry on torture in his own house.⁶ The degree of barbarity, indeed of intensity, of the persecution varied throughout the period, but it was always there at least in the background to inspire fear. It was this fear which seems to have driven some of the recusants at times to become almost hysterical in their denunciation of their co-religionists who came to disagree with them, and to indulge in expressions of positive loathing, while they used almost fawning language to persuade the civil government to tolerate themselves even if it could not like them.⁷ But the differences at first were never about doctrine, only about procedures and ways of relating to the Protestant regime. Loyalty to the Pope as the head of the Church was taken almost for granted, but one could appeal from a Pope badly informed to one better informed.

The undeniably savage reaction of the Queen's government to the first group of new martyrs executed at Tyburn on December 1, 1581, persuaded many who became exiles for their faith that the only solution to the English challenge was by way of force; that is, by way of invasion from the Continent, probably through Scotland, with the help of the French and Spanish. At the beginning, the morale of the Catholics in England, in spite of persecution, remained high, and they found sympathy even among some of the Protestants. But the resort to foreign arms on the part of some of the papists abroad, and more particularly the Jesuits, especially Robert Persons, however much it might be justified by expediency and even reason, represented a remedy which could only be justified by success. It failed early and went on failing until the end of the century. Its initial failure was evident by the summer of 1582; a failure sealed by the Ruthven raid of August 22, which made it impossible to arrange a diversion by way of Scotland, at any rate at that time.

The earliest, most obvious and fundamental division among the Catholics was between those who continued to favor the forceful solution and those who did not and perhaps never had. The basic assumption of the former was that the English regime was implacable in its hostility to their faith and would bow to no other argument. In fact they were right, but only the opening of archives in a future as yet unforeseeable could fully prove them so.

Meanwhile a body of opinion gathering strength throughout the period believed that the way of force would never succeed: that the only practicable way forward was to come to whatever terms the English government was prepared to offer. What was offered was never at any time a guarantee of toleration, but only a vague hope held out that was defined by those who accepted it rather than by those who were taken as offering it. Certainly, recusants must show their good faith toward Elizabeth's State by denouncing Jesuits and Hispanophiles even to the point of revealing them by name and the families in England that sheltered them. Those that rose to this bait thus

became virtual spies for William Cecil and his son Robert. Others, such as Sledd, simply abandoned their faith and became spies tout court. Others simply broke down under pressure, such as the Franciscan priest Edward Osborne, who very early on revealed houses and hosts.⁸ This established a precedent that divided the recusant laity into those who were not prepared to take further chances in sheltering priests who might not be trusted, and those who were so prepared. Most, and especially the Jesuits, proved trustworthy, but the most dangerous to the recusants of those who turned right round was Christopher Perkins, an ex-Jesuit who achieved a knighthood and apparently had much to do with devising the oath of allegiance of 1606 in such a way that more was involved than temporal allegiances. Thus, a conscientious Catholic could not take it.⁹ Thomas Wright was another ex-Jesuit who caused his former colleagues no little embarrassment after his departure from the Order.

But there were a number of secular priests who tried to face both ways at once, retain their priesthood and become informers for the government, not with any formal intention of betraying their own cause, but simply to show their willingness to cooperate to the fullest extent possible with the Anglican regime. Perhaps the most intelligent and effective of these was the priest John Cecil. He was ordained in Spain and had considerable experience of the embryo seminary in exile at Valladolid. Robert Persons trusted him completely, and indeed was happy to recruit his assistance in helping to establish the seminaries on a firm footing. Whether one condemns Mr. John Cecil for duplicity or commend him for political skill, certainly he was able to keep Persons in the dark for a number of years as to his true role. John Cecil returned to England in 1591 to hand over vital names and information to Lord Burghley, hoping in return that he and his like-minded friends would be rewarded with toleration and some kind of recognition.¹⁰ As we would expect, this Cecil was only welcome to the others as a source of division.

A further division fostered by Charles Paget, his brother Lord Paget, Thomas Morgan and William Gifford added to formal opposition to Persons and his Jesuit brethren the further notion that politics and statecraft were not proper subjects for priests and religious. Further, political activity should be confined not merely to laymen but to the aristocracy, whose natural gift, right and privilege it was to deal in such matters.¹¹ Such an idea was by no means absurd according to the ethical and social philosophy of the time. It is significant that it found support with the eminent Belgian Jesuit, Oliver Mannaerts. Mannaerts was quite prepared to side with Paget and his friends against his English brothers led by Persons, and even to denounce him to the Jesuit general, Claud Aquaviva.¹² In another context, Mannaerts was totally opposed to the idea of Persons becoming a cardinal. It is not unlikely that a

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certain element of jealousy entered into this attitude. Jesuits, too, were usually very human; and Mannaerts was the grand old man who had been suspected in his youth of ambition, a serious sin in Jesuit eyes.

Nor was division in the ranks of the Jesuits confined to Flanders. Some of the foreign Jesuits, Flemish and Spanish more particularly, who for obvious reasons felt the challenge more directly, could resent the presence among them of people who felt they needed to be so different that they had to have their own educational and training institutions. It was not always taken kindly that the English (and for that matter the Irish and Scots seminarists and ordinands) felt that what was offered them in continental seminaries was so unacceptable as to make it necessary to found their own. There was also the important consideration that such institutions needed to be funded, and the funding had to come at least in large part from the generosity of the host countries. This meant that alms which were never in plentiful supply, coming as they did for the most part from the Spanish authorities in Flanders as well as Spain, had to be shared with foreign emigres. In the circumstances, it would have been surprising if there was not a good deal of resentment at the prospect of people who were technically citizens of a nation at war with Spain until 1604, and in effect hostile for long after 1604, taking money which left indigenous institutions that much more impoverished.¹³

A further difficulty which made for friction between Jesuits and their foreign hosts was the fact that, under Claud Aquaviva, there was a considerable expansion of the Society of Jesus in order to find men to meet as many of the demands as possible made on the Society for works in education, the missions and elsewhere. The policy was successful in that more demands could be met by the burgeoning Society. The less fortunate result was that the elitist character of the Jesuit Order, which had guaranteed excellence, was now often lost. Many joined the Society, in the Catholic countries of course, in the spirit of men jumping on the bandwagon, ready to take advantage of the prestige and influence which the Order had hitherto enjoyed.¹⁴ This had its effect on the relations between the Spanish and English Jesuits in the Peninsula in the later years of the 16th century, after the foundations of the colleges in Valladolid and Seville. At first, the Spanish provincials appointed first-rate men to run the English institutions in exile—since it was always understood that the superiors of English institutions abroad would be of the nationality of the host country, whether Spanish in Spain or Flemish in Flanders. But as the extension of Spanish foundations proceeded the point was reached where men of the highest caliber could not be spared from native works so that only men of secondary capacity could be spared to supervise the foreigners. A Peralts might be succeeded by a del Rio.¹⁵

From the 1590s onward, a new area of contention arose between a faction

of the English secular priests and the Jesuits and the rest of the seculars, by far the majority, regarding the way in which the Catholic body in England should be organized and governed. The first attempt to provide local supervision was carried out by a group of priests who divided the country into north and south, each with its local supervisor.¹⁶ Rome, however, unaware of indigenous efforts, had been studying the problem and in 1597 set up an archpriest to supervise priests throughout the country, but having no direct jurisdiction over the laity or religious. The priests who had set up their own incipient organization were dissatisfied with this and wanted nothing less than the appointment of bishops. William Bishop and Richard Charnock conducted an appeal to Rome to protest against the setting up of the archpriest on the sole authority, as they claimed, of Cardinal Cajetan, the Protector of the English nation.¹⁷ They received short shrift and were sent back with the assurance that the present arrangement was not only according to the mind of Cardinal Cajetan but also according to that of the Holy See.

Only slightly daunted and altogether unabashed, they organized a second appeal. An important pretext for not accepting the Roman decision was provided by the fiction that almost the only reason for the failure of the first appeal, and for the continuing refusal to grant bishops to the English Catholic community, lay in the baneful and obstinate opposition of Robert Persons, the Jesuit. His influence almost alone was taken to be mainly responsible for the previous failure. In fact, at no time did Persons oppose the appointment of bishops; rather, the contrary.¹⁸ However, as a good Jesuit he felt bound at all times to uphold and defend the decisions of the Holy See, and if the Holy See decided against, and there were good reasons for this, then he was bound to vindicate this decision.

Before the Appellants set out on their second appeal, which arrived in Rome in 1602, they were careful to prepare the ground much more carefully than for the first appeal. They obtained the tacit approval of the English State, which saw in it a procedure to be encouraged as tending to promote division and disunity. The Appellants also successfully sought the support of France through the French ambassador in Rome, Philippe de Bethume. This was an extremely clever and effective move, and while it owed something possibly to Robert Cecil, it bore the unmistakable handiwork of John Cecil.¹⁹ Certainly, the results were much more favorable for the Appellants than on the previous occasion. The papal brief of October 5, 1602, introduced important modifications in the system as it had operated hitherto. George Blackwell, the archpriest, although confirmed in his office, was virtually censured—not altogether unjustly—for being less than fatherly in his approach to his subjects. Most important, he was forbidden, or thought he was, to take any advice from the Jesuits not only in the administration of his office but even in other matters,

such as doctrinal. Not a man of notable intellect or ability, Blackwell came very much under the influence of the Appellants so that, by 1606, when a new oath of allegiance was devised after the Gunpowder Plot, he and a number of his priestly colleagues agreed to take it. Thus, a new source of division was successfully engineered and exploited by James I's government. Not even when the oath was condemned by Rome as demanding more than temporal allegiance did Blackwell see fit to submit. He was never formally censured by the Pope since he felt that any kind of pursuit or persecution of the recusants, even the disobedient, came more properly from the English State than from himself, although he could not do less than depose the former archpriest.²⁰

It was made clear to his successor, another archpriest, George Birkhead, that it was only in matters of his government of the secular priests that he was not allowed to approach the Jesuits for advice or information.²¹ Nevertheless, by this time the anti-Jesuit tradition among many of the secular priests, especially the more politically influential, was so strong that the man who went to Rome in 1609, officially as a pilgrim, but unofficially to solicit the creation of bishops, was Richard Smith. Smith went as Birkhead's clergy agent. He was intended to replace Thomas Fitzherbert, a man who worked in the closest co-operation with Robert Persons, and later became a Jesuit. From the first, Smith did his best to avoid all but superficial social contacts with Persons and resolutely refused to take his advice or that of Fitzherbert on the most effective ways of proceeding according to Roman protocol.

The irony was that Persons himself had suggested how Smith might come to Rome without violating the papal prohibition of any further deputations or appeals from the benighted land to the north.²² Smith insisted on doing things his own way, and showed no discretion in some of his opinions, such as his poor opinion of the religious in general. The Pope, who was genuinely anxious for peace among the recusants, and loath to do anything that would promote discord, could only conclude that the creation of bishops would, in fact, do precisely this. Smith behaved in Rome as his worst enemy. But he could not bring himself, or for that matter, Birkhead, to believe otherwise than that Persons and Fitzherbert had opposed him throughout and were the villains responsible for the failure of his mission. Persons wrote a double series of letters to Birkhead, the first intended for general dissemination and leaving out indications of disagreement and friction. The second, intended for Birkhead's eyes alone, informed him frankly of Smith's gaucheries and tactlessness, urging him to bring his agent to heel. Birkhead, however, resenting Persons's efforts to keep him informed as to the true situation, chose to regard it as an attempt to come between him and his chosen mouthpiece. Indeed, Persons was asked to write no more letters of the kind.²³ Birkhead's loyalty to his agent could be commended but hardly his wisdom in appointing him in the first place.

Certainly, Smith came away from Rome with nothing that he went for, and used his failure not to question his own behavior but merely to confirm Birkhead in his suspicion that Persons was the sole obstacle to progress.

A later antagonism we may consider was a certain rivalry which sprang up for a time between the Order of St. Benedict and the Jesuits. As in the case of differences between the Jesuits and certain seculars, there can be little doubt that the Earl of Salisbury did his best to exacerbate if he did not initiate the dissension. Potentialities for rivalry were there when the Benedictine mission began in England in 1603. The English Benedictines experienced a reflowering and growth after the relative torpor following the setbacks of the Reformation and the loss of their English houses. English members of the Spanish and Cassinese Congregations both came to England and began to work successfully with all the happiness of a country without past history.²⁴ Witnessing at first hand the troubles in the English colleges run by the Jesuits in Rome and Spain, and much influenced by the anti-Jesuit stance of the Paget party and later of the Appelants, some of the students decided to try their vocation with the Order of St. Benedict. Nineteen joined from the English College, Rome, and by 1607 the mission was well established in England.²⁵ This same year there was student trouble at Douai; and on May 12 a Benedictine house was set up in the city which however lofty its purpose, could only rival other enterprises in the city for alms and public support. As one would expect, the authorities at the head of both Orders and the Vatican could only deprecate these seethings among the lower echelons. Peace was sufficiently restored by a papal decree issued on December 12, 1608.²⁶

The astonishing thing is that the recusant cause continued to survive and even make progress in the midst of external persecution and inner dissension. One could conclude, perhaps, that the divisions were not so serious as they seemed. Certainly, beneath them all was a unity of purpose in keeping the Catholic faith alive, and at no time was there notable dissent as to basic doctrine. However, some aspects of the papal prerogative came up for questioning, especially after the new oath of allegiance was applied after 1606. The oath had been devised not merely to ensure Catholic civil obedience, but to force important concessions touching the spiritual authority of the papacy. It was not done without subtlety, as we might expect from the contribution of an ex-Jesuit to its formulation. If it did not bring about a split, it certainly succeeded in producing a significant and vociferous minority among whom were some of the Appelants. These considered it was time to abandon not only the practice but the theory that the Pope had no right to excommunicate and depose princes. The Pope made it clear that he had no intention of excommunicating James I or any monarch at that time but he stood firmly by his authority in general terms to discipline even kings if the situation seemed to call for it.

Richard Smith, who went to Rome as George Birkhead's new Roman agent in the spring of 1609, defended Catholic doctrine against the published works of Thomas Bell, a priest who had apostatized in 1593, in his book, *An Answer to Thomas Bell's Challenge....* It was noted that Smith made no reference to Bell's attack on the papal deposing power. The archpriest, George Blackwell, took the oath on July 7, 1607, for which he was deposed on February 1, 1608. Roger Widdrington, O.S.B., alias Thomas Preston, between 1611 and 1619 published nine works in which he vindicated taking the oath, an issue closely bound up with the other.²⁷ Much of the noise of excursions and alarums may well have been produced to convince the English government not only that the recusant cause could be broken by division artificially induced from outside, but that its efforts to disrupt and dismay was enjoying no little success.

Meanwhile, the recusants themselves, behind their noisy denunciations of one another, understood the true situation and continued their clamor to stave off persecution by persuading the government that they were best left to themselves to destroy themselves. But they continued at quieter levels the real task of maintaining the faith. In a word, they disliked or even hated one another much less than appeared on the surface and as it came through their words alone. Their aim thus was not, one may suppose, the conscious result of any special leadership or policy but rather the innate instinct of a community doing its best to save itself. Certainly, in spite of all the odds against, the recusants survived. Moreover, their basic conviction as to the truth of their faith was sufficient to produce martyrs for as long as governments saw fit to impose the ultimate penalty: which was until the end of the Oats Plot era. Perhaps a real decline in recusancy began when persecution was removed.

Notes

1. Francis Edwards, S.J. *The Elizabethan Jesuits*. London, 1981. 4, 50, 62-3, 94, 142, 157-8, 160, 276.
2. "An antidote against Jesuitism written by the Lord Treasurer Burleigh: concerning a pretended peace with Spain." Inner Temple, Petyt MSS, series 538, vol. 43. ff. 304 & seq; cf. *ibid.*, vol. 37, f. 171 & seq.
3. John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion*. 4 vols. London, 1709-31. Vol. II, 159.
4. Catholic Record Society. Vol. II. Miscellanea II, 1906. 177.
5. Godfrey Anstruther, *The Seminary Priests*, 4 vols., 1968-77, vol. 1, Catholic Record Society, vol. 39, London, 1942, p. 81, n. 31, p. 88.
6. Christobel M. Hood, *The Book of Robert Southwell*, Oxford, 1926, pp. 47-51.
7. William Watson, *A Decchordon of Ten Quodlibeticall Questions concerning*

Religion and State... London, 1602. Perhaps this was the most extreme of the Appellant effusions.

8. Catholic Record Society, vol. 39, p. 141, n. 2.

9. George Conn's dispatches: transcript in British Province S.J. Archives. 46/23/8, p. 50. Charles I admits Perkins's part in devising the oath.

10. Public Record Office, SP12, vol. 238, Nos. 160, 180, 181, vol. 239, No. 46.

11. R. Persons, S.J., to Charles Paget; Stonyhurst MSS, Christopher Grenc, Collectanea P. f. 452. Partly printed in T.F. Knox, *The Letters and Memorials of William Cardinal Allen 1553-94*, London, 1882, p. 391.

12. Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu, Germania 177, f. 192 r/v, and f.79 r/v.

13. R. Persons to Aquaviva, 12.vi.1595; abid, Hispania 138, f.299.

14. Thomas H. Clancy, S.J., *An Introduction to Jesuit Life*, St. Louis 1976, pp. 121, 138-42.

15. R. Persons to Gonzalez del Rio, 12.v.1595; Archives of the English College, Valladolid, Serie II, Legajo 1.

16. R. Persons to Juan de Idiaquez, 12.vii.1597; Biblioteca del Vaticano, Vat. Lat. 6227, f.165.

17. The most learned defense of the Appellant viewpoint was probably John Colleton's, *A Just Defence of the Slandered Priests...* London, 1602.

18. R. Persons to de Pena, n.d. (vii.1597?); Biblioteca del Vaticano, Vat. Lat. 6227, f.183. *Letters of Thomas Fitzherbert 1608-10*, Catholic Record Society, vol. 41 (1948), No. 14, n.4.

19. J. Bossy, "Henry IV, the Appellants and the Jesuits," *Recusant History*, vol. 8, pp. 80-122.

20. George Birkhead to Richard Smith, 8.i.1610 (O.S.?), Archives of the Archbishop of Westminster, Old Series, vol. 9, no. 2.

21. R. Persons to Chamberlayne vere Birkhead, 18.v.1608, Berkshire Record Office, Milton House Collection (on microfiche), No. 4; M.A. Tierney, *Dodd's Church History of England*, vol. v, pp. xxvii and vol. iv, note on pp. 76-79. Tierney/Dodd often omits important passages without indication.

22. R. Persons to Birkhead, 12.x.1608, Milton House Collection, no. 15.

23. Birkhead to Persons, 19.x.1609, Tierney/Dodd, *Church History...* vol. v, p. lxxxii.

24. For an overall account of the Benedictine mission at this time, see David Lunn, *The English Benectines 1540-1688*, London, 1980.

25. Ibid. See also, Frederic Fabre, "The Settling of the English Benedictines at Douai... 1607-11," *Downside Review*, vol. 52 (1934), pp. 1-64: unpublished documents on pp. 3, 54-64.

26. Peter Guilday, *The English Catholic Refugees on the Continent 1559-1795*,

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London, 1914, p. 224.

27. For Preston/Widdrington, see W.K.L. Webb, S.J., *Recusant History (Biographical Studies)*, vol. 2, pp. 216-68 and Anne M.C. Forster, *ibid.*, vol. 11, pp. 196-205.

Edward de Vere and the Psychology of Feudalism

Charles Vere, Earl of Burford

One of the questions to occur most persistently in my mind during my lecture tour in the United States has been the following: “What were the social, political, and cultural forces which gave birth to the phenomenon we know as Shakespeare?” Whenever I pondered this question, the concept of feudalism raised its somewhat amorphous head. I began to realize that it was a key concept in understanding the psyche of the man behind the pseudonym Shakespeare and what had motivated the composition of his plays and poems. I have therefore chosen my title carefully: not “Edward de Vere and Feudalism,” but “Edward de Vere and the Psychology of Feudalism.” This exonerates me from attempting an historically precise definition of a concept which is notorious for evading just such a definition.

Simply, feudalism was a system of land tenure which directed the whole social, economic and political structure of Europe between the 9th and 15th centuries. It was based on the hierarchical relationship between vassal, lord and monarch. Vassals held land from their seigneur or feudal lord in return for labor services and dues. The lord, in turn, held land from his King in return for homage and military service, thus creating a balance of rights and duties as shared by the King and the various holders of land. The economic unit was the manor.

In its finest manifestation, feudalism involved a strong sense of social responsibility on the part of the feudal lord toward his vassals, which, in turn, inspired a strong sense of community among the members of a particular fiefdom. Such an ethos was generated by the Christian ideals of the strong helping the weak, and the rich helping the poor, and went a long way toward ensuring that men and women did not drop out of society to the extent that they did, for instance, in Elizabeth I’s time, when a whole new class of tramps and vagabonds came into being—as happened again in the 1980s in Great Britain during Mrs. Thatcher’s administration. The lunatic and the lost sheep were treasured within the estate walls as being important in preserving the integrity of the community as a mirror image of the human soul. It could be

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its own little kingdom, undisrupted by the pressures and divisions of the modern capitalist state.

For Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, the old feudal world of his ancestors bestowed upon him a sense of identity and honor, as well as acting as the foundation for his imaginative world. Alberic de Ver, grandfather of the 1st Earl of Oxford, had distinguished himself during the First Crusade in 1098, and was granted the manor of Hedingham in Essex by William the Conqueror. His eldest son, Alberic II, built the vast castle of Hedingham, whose high, imposing keep still stands today. There his descendants, beginning with his son Aubrey de Vere, 1st Earl of Oxford, lived in feudal splendor for centuries, acquiring a local reputation as generous and chivalric lords.

The new meritocratic world being ushered in by Elizabeth and her bureaucratic and administrative nobility was a literalist world in comparison, in which the old chivalric principles of life were giving way to wholly economic considerations. (Indeed, capitalism was transforming all of life's processes—not just economics and politics, but sex and entertainment as well.) Having said this, however, it would be foolish to assert that Oxford actively encouraged a return to the political life of the previous century, since his feudalism was more a matter of sentiment, nostalgia and imagination than of literal politics; a state of mind rather than a political creed. In exploring the theme of Oxford's dynamic relationship with the quickly-changing society of his time, and hence the whole question of what motivated him to write the plays and what the plays themselves actually represent, I shall pay particular attention to those two remarkable social dramas—*Timon of Athens* and *King Lear*.

I

The essentially anti-feudal politics of Kings Henry VII and VIII, spear-headed by their creation of a new government machinery to dismantle the power bases of the old medieval aristocracy, laid the foundations of the society into which Oxford was born in 1550. Henry VII and VIII were themselves, by patrilinear descent, new men: certainly both had felt threatened by the power of the old feudal nobility. Henry VII's fining of the 13th Earl of Oxford to the tune of 15,000 marks in the 1490s for maintaining too many men in the de Vere livery, and Henry VIII's 1547 execution of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (a poet and Oxford's uncle by marriage), for quartering the arms of King Edward the Confessor on his armorial shield, were examples of Tudor wrath whose lessons would not have been lost on Edward de Vere himself. As for Elizabeth's 1572 execution of Oxford's first cousin, Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, suffice it to say that his loathing of the modern politics of expediency became utter.

At any rate, Oxford, by dint of his ancestry and cast of mind, arrived into the world fully dressed to play the role of feudal lord; but there were precious few stage props in the new world of Elizabeth to sustain such a role, and precious

few supporting actors. It was left to his dramatic art to supply these. For I believe that Oxford came to terms with his loss of feudal power by transforming himself from pragmatic ruler into artist (or spiritual teacher), and it is this transition that the Shakespearean plays explore and dramatize, a transition whose catalyst can best be described by the term "identity crisis."

There had been no middle class to speak of in feudal times, nor would one have been in evidence at the Hedingham Castle of Oxford's childhood. When the young Edward was not with his parents and members of the local nobility, he would have been in the company of servants, stable boys, peasants and clowns, and would have taken great delight in the pith and variety of estate life. What is important to understand about the psychology of the man who was Shakespeare is that were he not to see himself as a lord or prince, he would see himself as a peasant, tramp or beggar. Lear himself is, after all, the ultimate down-and-out.

When John de Vere, the 16th Earl, died in 1562, Edward embarked unconsciously upon the role of feudal seigneur when he rode into London from Hedingham accompanied by eighty of his men in livery of Reading tawny and with seven score horses all in black. Perhaps the gesture was deliberate, and the young Earl was seeking to put on record his own sense of kinship with the philosophy of another age. Whatever the case, his sense of himself was soon to be disturbed by his entry into the household of the Machiavellian Sir William Cecil, Elizabeth's Principal Secretary of State, who was determined to ensure that Oxford's powers and instincts were confined within the compass of the modern state. Oxford himself was soon to understand that literature, and the drama in particular, under the aegis of Allegory, were to be his most potent weapons in his struggle to preserve his own political power and integrity.

Apart from books, one of Oxford's passions in his teens was fine clothes, and he spent lavishly on them. Clearly he was extravagant by nature, but his spending, which begins in earnest during the early years of his wardship at Cecil House, seems to be as much a reaction against the bourgeois principles of his guardian as an expression of the aristocratic notion that expenditure was the badge of rank. The list of fantastic clothes he ordered, together with rapiers and daggers, in the late 1560s, reads like a catalogue of stage props.

The concept of wardship was medieval, indeed feudal, in origin, and had been revived by the Tudors after its lapse in the late Middle Ages as a means, pure and simple, of making money. Henry VII resurrected his feudal rights through the searching out of "concealed" wardships, whereby wealthy noblemen who were also minors became the property of the Crown via the Master of the Wards. The wards could not even marry without the express authority of the monarch or, if the wardship had been sold, of their guardian. The master during Oxford's minority was William Cecil, whose manipulation and extor-

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tion of his young wards would have been perceived by Oxford as a grotesque parody of the proper ideals of feudalism.

Lord Oxford had no legal choice but to marry the daughter of his arch antagonist, the man who, by seeming to see the things he did not, triggered Oxford's own obsession with the truth, an obsession given extra significance by his own name and the family motto of "Vero Nihil Verius," or "Nothing Truer Than Truth." As an anonymous observer in *Timon of Athens* remarks: "...I perceive/Men must learn now with pity to dispense,/For policy sits above conscience" (III.ii.87-9). Ironically enough, so artificial and so full of shadows could Court life be, that it became the fiction in Oxford's mind while the theater was the vehicle of truth. The Court suddenly caught sight of itself in the mirror of Oxford's art, a mirror he held obstinately and courageously to its face for over a quarter of a century as the dramatist William Shakespeare.

The early 1570s perhaps mark the zenith of Oxford's position of grace and favor at Elizabeth's Court. She was his lord and he her vassal. At least, that was the ideal he registered in such poems as *Love Thy Choice*. The reality both then and throughout the remainder of his life, however, was probably very different, for there were many forces at work corroding Oxford's sense of his proper feudal relationship to his monarch, not least among which would have been Elizabeth's own personal breaches of faith and trust. Her corruption imposed heavy strains upon his sense of duty and the proper homage he owed his sovereign, for to see corruption in the Queen was to see corruption everywhere, as Sonnet 127 makes clear. (Nor could the Queen herself be exempt from the charge of royal parvenue.) Furthermore, in the feudal system, a man owed his highest allegiance to God, and Oxford would have suffered an acute conflict between, on the one hand, his duty to his fallen Queen (which was to be William Shakespeare) and, on the other, his duty to his God (which was to be himself). It was a conflict between opportunism and truth: an abiding conflict in his artistic life.

II

In this context, it is interesting to look at the opening scene of *King Lear*. Here, where Lear demands of his subject-daughters the homage that is his due as their feudal overlord, we have a grotesque parody of the true feudal rendering of homage. Oxford is mocking new Elizabethan social and political ethics by drawing attention to the literalism of a society in which even love can be computed. Lear implicitly rejects this new world by renouncing his kingship of it, while explicitly embracing it through his rejection of Cordelia's true feudal bond and his acceptance of the phoney ones of Goneril and Regan. Cordelia seems to be playing the role for Lear that Oxford played for his sovereign as her court dramatist, and so, in this scene, can represent truth or Oxford's art. Indeed, Oxford often uses the word "nothing" in the Shakespeare plays to indicate his artistic persona as truth-teller or his position outside society,

beyond rank and office; and in a philosophic sense to indicate spiritual wisdom. It is interesting that this is the word Cordelia uses twice in three lines to register her rejection of the charade that Lear is staging, and to answer his specific question, "...what can you say to draw/A third more opulent than your sisters?"

Goneril and Regan, on the other hand, can represent the forces of authority, which are the forces that make art tongue-tied. Moreover, it is significant that Goneril speaks of her love for Lear as "a love that makes breath poor and speech unable." The whole opening scene is highly theatrical, a grand set piece in which Lear forgets that he is the director and inadvertently becomes one of the actors, getting caught up in the drama of his own anger and self-pity. Lines such as "Peace, Kent! Come not between the Dragon and his wrath" are marvelously extravagant. Indeed, there is something unnervingly synonymous here between life and art, if one remembers the words of John Davies of Hereford to Shakespeare in his 1610 epigram: "Hadst thou not played some Kingly parts in sport,/Thou hadst been a companion for a King..." ("The Scourge of Folly," no. 159, E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, vol. II, p. 214)

Although kingship is something instinctive to Lear, the reader is always made aware that Lear understands that he is essentially playing a role. Behind the portentous decisions of state and the grand ceremonies of regal pomp, Lear clearly sees the ragged and motley apparatus of the theater, where the king is not innately superior to the beggar—he simply plays a different role. Thus, a philosophy begins to emerge from the play, one which says that in human life one must acknowledge the theatricality of existence, otherwise class and the concept of "degree" become divisive. But if one can see class as a fluid concept that works in cycles rather than strata, whereby a man may play a series of different roles over the course of his life without being defined by any one of them, then, with the aid of learning, social strife may be avoided and the power of the individual conscience stimulated. *King Lear*, then, like Shakespeare's other plays, has a strong didactic purpose. By means of the theater, Oxford was teaching society (first his fellow courtiers, and then the populace at large) to look critically at itself and to value spiritual growth over self-advancement.

But how did Oxford come to cast himself in the role of King Lear? In a sense, Lear is the blazing forth of Oxford's repressed feudal instincts. For it seems that many of the old feudal nobility in Elizabeth's time, who like the Earl of Essex and, from the 1580s, Oxford himself, had lost their estates and were thus deprived of the opportunity to play king in their own fiefdom, nevertheless preserved within themselves the strong instinctive desire to play this very role. Moreover, as in the case of Essex, the repression of such a desire, if insupportable, could lead to its sudden violent eruption in rebellion against the monarchy. As John Turner points out in his *Shakespeare: Out of Court*:

The Essex rebellion was the last in a long line of aristocratic rebellions

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that were justified by appeal to the aristocratic code of honor, and its failure, right at the end of Elizabeth's reign, symbolized the final passing of an age. Indeed, Essex's career and downfall might stand as an emblem, as it was maybe an inspiration, of a story that Shakespeare told again and again and that perfectly expresses his paradoxical reading of historical progress.

Lear's instinctive attachment to the old feudal world is manifested not only through his deeply felt social concerns on the heath, but also by means of his one hundred knights, who are his vassal retinue, and who, in their degeneracy and disorderliness may well stand for Lord Oxford's players. They are a symbol of potential political anarchy, but also are indispensable to Lear's sense of his own role and identity in society. Once they are removed from him, his sanity gives way. William Cecil, Lord Burghley's 1572 edict against unlicensed players, which comes under his Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds, betrays his fear of players as essentially lawless and beyond the scope of society. Lear's flight onto the heath is highly symbolic and is itself an act of anarchy by which the King destroys "degree" and associates himself with the insulted and the injured, the trampled and persecuted, just as Timon does, albeit less spectacularly, when he digs for roots outside the city walls of Athens. No longer a ruler, Lear's language becomes that of a creator, and he commands the elements:

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!

You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout

Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks! (III.ii.1-3)

III

To return to Oxford's life, the early 1570s were also important as the time when he came of age as a literary patron, and began to gather about him the literary and theatrical characters who would come to represent his own true feudal retinue. It was also a time in which he fully realized the power of art to alter society, and to open up new worlds of perception and self-awareness to the people of England. Two literary events over which he presided at this juncture are of particular significance.

The first occurred in 1571, when Oxford took it upon himself to introduce Bartholomew Clerke's translation from Italian into Latin of Baldassare Castiglione's book, *Il Cortegiano*, or *The Courtier*, which had first been published in Venice in 1528. Clerke had been one of Oxford's tutors at Cambridge, and it's likely that Oxford defrayed the costs of publication. At any rate, he contributed a remarkable Latin preface to the work, a preface described by the Cambridge don, Gabriel Harvey, as "more polished even than the writings of Castiglione himself..."

In his book, Castiglione set out to explore the question of what constitutes the ideal courtier by means of what purport to be actual conversations between the courtiers and ladies of the Court of Duke Guidobaldo of Urbino. By

combining an appreciation of the medieval principles of chivalry with a new awareness of the value of role-playing in society, Castiglione managed to evoke some of the sociological tensions within the Renaissance Court, which Shakespeare was to exploit so forcefully in his works half a century later. Moreover, there can be little doubt that Castiglione's philosophy of "civilization" greatly influenced Shakespeare: nowhere moreso than in his portrayal of Hamlet.

The notion of the Court as theater underpins a great deal of the text of *The Courtier*, and is of course a strong idea in Shakespeare. In his fascinating work, *Courtly Performances: Masking and Festivity in Castiglione's Book of the Courtier*, Wayne Rebhorn argues that Castiglione believed that the aspiring courtier ought to become aware of what masking involves, of the different roles required by different social situations; and should develop an ideal flexibility, a protean quality which enables him to shift from role to role with the lightning speed of a quick-change artist. Through this understanding of role-playing and his mastery of the myriad forms assumed by human activities, Castiglione's ideally flexible courtier can not only achieve social success, but the truest sort of freedom as well.

Thus, in Castiglione's philosophy, we see the seeds of what in Shakespeare's hands becomes a whole new system of society, built upon the ruins of the feudal world, where the idea of class is rendered irrelevant by the individual's ability to play a whole range of roles within society in an attempt to discover his "ideal self." The true Renaissance aristocrat was indeed a protean creature.

The second event took place in 1573, when Thomas Bedingfield's translation into English of Girolamo Cardano's book, *De Consolatione* (or *Cardanus' Comforte*), was published "by commandment of the right honourable the Earl of Oxford." The work had first appeared in its original Latin in Venice in 1542, and had as its central motif the philosophy of human sympathy. Cardano had written it to help himself and others better bear the disappointments and sufferings of their lives, and in it he contends against the vain passions and false persuasions of mankind. Its ideas animate much of Hamlet's philosophy, and it has many important points of contact with *The Courtier*, not least as it treats of the perfectibility of the individual. The book's ethical foundations are feudal in spirit.

Oxford contributed a prefatory letter to the publication—in effect, a declaration of his dedication to artistic pursuits. (This was not a move calculated to endear him to his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, who viewed art as a loose cannon in his carefully constructed political world.) In it, Oxford declares that the reading of Cardano's book "shall comfort the afflicted, confirm the doubtful, encourage the coward, and lift up the base-minded man to achieve to any true sum or grade of virtue, whereto ought only the noble thoughts of

men to be inclined.” In addition to the preface, which he signs off, “From my new country Muses of Wivenhoe,” Oxford contributed a dedicatory poem, in which he is already voicing some of those social concerns that will eventually find their resolution in *King Lear*. Here are the first three stanzas:

The labouring man that tills the fertile soil,
And reaps the harvest fruit, hath not indeed
The gain, but pain; but if for all his toil
He gets the straw, the lord will have the seed.

The manchet fine falls not unto his share;
On coarsest cheat his hungry stomach feeds.
The landlord doth possess the finest fare;
He pulls the flowers, the other plucks but weeds.

The mason poor that builds the lordly halls,
Dwells not in them; they are for high degree;
His cottage is compact in paper walls,
And not with brick or stone as others be. (*The Poems of Edward de Vere*, Ed. J. Thomas Looney, London, 1921, p. 14)

In 1575, Oxford embarked on his tour of the Continent (in particular, Italy), and on his return the following year, brought back ideas for the creation of the English theater, which he forthwith implemented at Court. Soon, Cynthia’s Revels (to borrow a phrase from Jonson) were in full swing, with the prolific Oxford inspired by his desire to entertain and instruct the Queen, to whom alone was due, to quote from his preface to *The Courtier*, “all the praise of all the Muses and all the glory of literature.” Indeed, Oxford’s theatrical service to the Queen was itself a parody of more traditional forms of feudal homage. Since the opportunity for both political and military service was denied him, he had to fight his battles at Court. Such a denial constituted a severe blow to his sense of status and self-esteem, and his sense of frustration was every bit as strong as is Bertram’s (a self-portrait) in *All’s Well That Ends Well*. He, too, is kept at Court:

I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn
But one to dance with. By heaven, I’ll steal away! (II.i.30-3)

The old military aristocracy had violence bred in the bone, and were accustomed both to serving their monarch in wars overseas, and to feuding at home during “peacetime.” Walt Whitman referred to the “dragon-rancours of the [medieval] barons.” It was not an instinct that Tudor government could simply wish away. The unfailingly perceptive John Turner in his *Shakespeare*:

Out of Court writes:

...the competition of courtly life [in Shakespeare] is experienced as a sublimation at once exhilarating and melancholy of lost, more vital military energies. Melancholy here, as so often in later periods, is a measure both of the degree of a civilization and of its discontents; the civil war of courtly wits belongs to a safe but shrunken world, where manners have been attained at the price of manliness. Nor was this struggle simply a matter of history to Shakespeare.(5)

Oxford himself, of course, could never remain content with “the civil war of courtly wits,” but instead relied on his dramatic art to compensate for the disappointments of his military and political life. It is no coincidence that he chose a military pen name, for it was his way of letting his contemporaries know that he could serve his Queen as well with the pen as with the sword. And with his pen he charted the development of the feudal mind, from the Henry VI plays via Prince Hal and Richard II, right through to King Lear, from the unselfconscious honor of violence bound by high, unshakeable “degree” to the self-questioning theater of kingship with its collapsed and abandoned rights. In his *November Boughs*, Walt Whitman wrote of Shakespeare’s history plays:

Conceiv’d out of the fullest heat and pulse of European feudalism—personifying in unparallel’d ways the mediaeval aristocracy, its towering spirit of ruthless and gigantic caste, its own peculiar air and arrogance (no mere imitation)—only one of the ‘wolfish earls’ so plenteous in the plays themselves, or some born descendant or knower, might seem to be the true author of those amazing works... (404)

But Oxford’s turning toward his art compounded his identity crisis, since he now had to confront the tension in his soul between feudal aristocrat and bohemian. In other words, he had to confront his “nothingness:” he is nothing because the artist is outside hierarchy or “degree” in society, and he is nothing because of his enforced anonymity. How apposite then are Yeats’s words in his *Essays and Introductions*:

Shakespeare’s myth, it may be, describes a noble man who was blind from very nobility, and an empty man who thrust him from his place, and saw all that could be seen from very emptiness.(107)

These words wonderfully encapsulate the journey of the feudal soul which Shakespeare describes in his works, as well as being an apt description of the young Oxford versus the old Oxford. For, to my mind, the Shakespearean dramas represent the final stage in the development of the old feudal aristocracy, as epitomized by Edward de Vere. After all, in what direction were they, the old aristocracy, to go if they were not to regress socially, and if they were to hold on to a semblance of power? Into states of classlessness, of course: into fooldom and the world of art; clowning, subversion, anarchy even. In other words, psychologically, they solved the problem of their disintegration of

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power by transforming themselves from rulers into creators. The theater for them was a last great act of both self-affirmation and self-denial. There were many examples of this transformation in the fields of art and science: witness the Earl of Surrey; the Stanley brothers, Earls of Derby; and Henry Percy, the “wizard Earl” of Northumberland, to name but a few.

Seated before the stage at the performance of one of Oxford’s plays, Elizabeth would have perceived the theater as demonstrating and celebrating the power of the monarch and the Court to direct and recreate life. The actors were like puppets, and they, the courtiers, pulled the strings. In this context, Oxford’s participation in the theater not only as writer and patron, but as actor and director as well, would have been seen as anarchical and subversive. As indeed it was: hence the Shakespeare authorship “problem.” But he was subversive in a very healthy way, since his court satires were clearly a curb upon the tyranny of Elizabeth’s government. By holding up the mirror to the hypocrites and hypocrisies of modern political life, Oxford was acting as the conscience of his nation and introducing democratic principles into the politics of the time.

Lear excoriates both the political and legal systems of his day, and, ultimately, his insistence is upon common justice and respect for the conscience of the individual. As he says, “A dog’s obey’d in office;” a horrifying notion perhaps in real life, but a therapeutic one within the framework of the theater when one considers that festivity (the germ of our modern theater in the Middle Ages and Renaissance) involved, in the words of Professor Rebhorn, “the transformation of society into community; in other words, a temporary suspension of the rules governing ordinary social intercourse: status relationships are altered, or even reversed; social and religious institutions temporarily lose their authority; the political order is travestied...” (16-17) The instrument of Oxford’s travesty was the court satire.

The other thing that Oxford brought back from the Continent was new and extravagant clothes, again a peculiarly subversive act if one looks at the mores of the time. In 1533, Henry VIII enacted a broad range of sumptuary legislation: that is, regulations governing the type of clothes and the amount of food which could lawfully be worn and consumed by different classes of people, and Elizabeth herself issued no less than ten proclamations during her reign enjoining the enforcement of the 1533 Act. By bringing back new fashions to the Court from Italy and ostentatiously wearing them, Oxford was, in effect, declaring himself to be a class unto himself. His Italianate dress was a form of fool’s motley, which transported him beyond class. Gabriel Harvey was certainly employed by forces at Court (I suspect the Earl of Leicester) to ridicule Oxford’s behavior in *The Mirror of Tuscanism*, where he writes of him:

A little Apish flat couched fast to the pate like an oyster,

French Camarick ruffs, deep with a whiteness starched to the purpose.
Every one A per se A, his terms and braveries in print,
Delicate in speech, quaint in array: conceited in all points,
In courtly guiles a passing singular odd man,
For Gallants a brave Mirror, a Primrose of Honour,
A Diamond for nonce, a fellow peerless in England. (Ward, 198)

The whole poem is long, and beneath Harvey's ridicule, it is difficult not to detect someone else's consternation. Anyway, once again, we have Oxford playing a subversive role in society, not only because he has no fixed role within it to anchor him, but also because he is exploring Castiglione's concept of self-knowledge through role-playing.

From 1576 through 1581, freed from the bonds of family life, Oxford set about creating a literary theater of operations for himself in London, bringing new writers within his compass through example, encouragement and patronage—men such as Nashe, Lyly, Greene, Watson, Day, Munday, Churchyard, Brooke, and Hester. This life of his, with his theatrical companies and his dramatist and actor friends, parodied that of the feudal lord with his retinue. Oxford nurtured and protected his men as if they were vassals. This was the final ironic expression of the power and responsibility of the feudal lord, who has forsaken the role of ruler for that of creator. Oxford would have held court at Vere House or the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap or the Blackfriars, always pitting new worlds against the status quo, like some permanent Lord of Misrule.

Then, around 1584 (though it may well have been earlier), Oxford made his most deliberate quasi-feudal statement by purchasing Fisher's Folly, a huge mansion which occupied what is now Devonshire Square in London. It possessed pleasure gardens and bowling alleys and had been so grandly and sumptuously built by the ruined and indebted Jasper Fisher that it had received its name in awestruck mockery. Charles Wisner Barrell, writing in *The Shakespeare Fellowship Quarterly*, asserts that Oxford (himself in the same financial straits as Fisher had been when he built it) acquired the mansion "as headquarters for the school of poets and dramatists who openly acknowledged his patronage and leadership." (vol. 1, no. 2, April 1945, 25b) The interesting point here is that Oxford chose to commit the same act of folly as Fisher. Both were pursuing medieval aristocratic ideals, where the insistence was upon liberality, and where wealth was subservient to status and reputation. As Iago says to Othello in Act II, scene iii, of that play:

Good name in man and woman's dear, my lord;
Is the immediate jewel of our souls:
Who steals my purse steals trash, 'tis something, nothing,
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave of thousands;

But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed.

As Lawrence Stone points out in his book, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, expenditure was the acid test of rank, and many families during Elizabeth's reign overreached themselves in their efforts to maintain their status. Falling heavily into debt, they eventually sold their patrimony and disappeared. It was a failure to come to terms with the new ethos of Elizabethan society, in which the acquisition rather than the disposal of money now contributed largely to the whole notion of status, and prosperity was perceived as evidence of Divine favor.

IV

As for Oxford himself, his financial recklessness was both an expression of his feudal heritage and a protest against the modern importance attached to the saving of money, a concept as alien to him as it is, indeed, to one of his grimmest self-portraits, *Timon*. Oxford had begun selling his estates while traveling in Italy in order to prolong his stay, but it was on his return from the Continent in 1576 that he began disposing of them in earnest, in order to build and maintain his reputation as the Maecenas of his age. The less "spacious" he became "in the possession of dirt," the more rootedly feudalism pitched its tents in his head and heart. *Timon's* steward confides despairingly to the audience: "His promises fly so beyond his state/That what he speaks is all in debt..." (I.ii.195-6), while *Timon* himself declares: "Let all my land be sold." (II.ii.149)

With reference to *Timon of Athens*, Hardin Craig comments that "Timon's spending was set down as a mark of his nobility in the ancient world and was so understood in the Renaissance. Let us not intrude any bourgeois parsimony into the tale of *Timon of Athens*. It was noble to spend, and Timon was a spender." Referring to the same play in his *The Man Shakespeare and his Tragic Life Story*, Frank Harris, someone who believes that *Timon* is a self-portrait of the author, writes: "Shakespeare probably exaggerated his generosity out of aristocratic pose; but that he was careless of money and freehanded to a fault is, I think, certain from his writings..." (340) My final quotation on this play comes from H.J. Oliver in his preface to the Arden edition of the play. Oliver, because he is looking at the work through traditional spectacles, will not allow himself to accept the simplest and most direct explanation of what the play means. In challenging the notion that in *Timon* Shakespeare depicts the social chaos consequent upon the economic ruin of the nobility, he writes:

The argument is that usury was in Elizabethan eyes a sin; and that in the story of *Timon*, Shakespeare is dramatizing the fall of the feudal nobility who, borrowing to keep up their state, put themselves in the hands of

usurers. Lending without interest, it is alleged, was the very symbol of the older feudal morality, the passing of which Shakespeare was lamenting. I think it should be suggested that the economic history on which such views are based is itself none too sound: Wilson's *Discourse on Usury*, from which so much is quoted, was published in 1572 and deplored an already changing situation, so that Shakespeare's supposed lament of, say, 1608 would hardly have been topical.(xiv-xlv)

Oxfordian scholars, however, date the first recorded performance of what was later to be entitled, *Timon of Athens*, to February 1576-7, when *The History of the Solitary Knight* was shown before the Court at Whitehall, enacted by the Lord Howard's Servants, who were in reality the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Howard was simply acting as deputy at the time. To contend that *Timon* was written after a play like *Hamlet* is surely to suggest that the author diminished in maturity as he grew in years.

Timon's fall is not caused simply by his belief that everyone else shares his own utter disdain for money, but also by a strong element of fatalism in his character, whereby he seems interested in the possibility (dramatic possibility even) of his own despair and ruin. It's almost as if he senses that he is the final and ultimate embodiment of a dying feudalism. There is a desire in him to confront the nothingness that is so powerful a force in *King Lear* and *Richard II*. Indeed, if one reads the verbal and psychological duel between Timon and Apemantus for the high ground of cynicism in Act IV, scene iii, a scene which takes place on wasteland outside the walls of Athens, one soon realizes that Apemantus is accusing Timon of playing a role, of acting out his own despair, a despair whose psychological pendulum moves between the poles of prince and beggar:

"The middle of humanity thou never knewest," he rails, "but the extremity of both ends. When thou wast in thy gilt and thy perfume, they mocked thee for too much curiosity [i.e., delicacy, fastidiousness]; in thy rags thou know'st none, but art despis'd for the contrary." (IV.iii.301-5)

Apemantus does not believe that Timon can truly divorce himself from society, as he, Apemantus, has done. It is the artist in Timon that chooses the role of forsaken man, and there is no doubt that, whatever his great qualities are, there is a strong strain of self-pity in Shakespeare. It is interesting too that Timon, for his part, because of his essential gentleness and humanity, cannot understand the motivation for Apemantus' cynicism and misanthropy. At all events, Timon, like Lear, turns out to be a man with strong histrionic instincts, and he too, having abandoned his role in society, that of wealthy patron, adopts the language of the creator, for instance in Act IV, when he addresses Mother Earth thus:

Ensear thy fertile and conceptious womb;

Let it no more bring out ingrateful man.
Go great with tigers, dragons, wolves and bears;
Teem with new monsters, whom thy upward face
Hath to the marbled mansion all above
Never presented. (IV.iii.189-94)

As Apemantus says, Timon (like Lear) must be either prince or beggar: there is no in between. This is a key psychological crux in Oxford's spirit, and we are put in mind of his challenge verse from the 1570s, which was circulated at Court:

Were I a king I could command content;
Were I obscure unknown would be my cares,
And were I dead no thought should me torment,
Nor words, nor wrongs, nor loves, nor hopes, nor fears;
 A doubtful choice of these things which to crave,
 A kingdom or a cottage or a grave. (*Poems*, 38)

Richard II is another case in point. As Shakespeare portrays him, here is a king who possesses a strong romantic attachment to old notions of chivalric behavior, who loves the theater and spectacle of politics. As is the case with Oxford, feudalism is more an idea than a reality for Richard, and it is John of Gaunt, and not Richard, who in the play is presented as the upholder and defender of feudal England. The historical Richard is reputed to have said that the laws of the realm were in his head, and indeed Shakespeare's Richard behaves in a most highhanded manner toward government. He treats England as his own private estate, which he feels entitled to manage in whatever way he pleases. So while Gaunt can be seen as the responsible face of feudalism, Richard may usefully be perceived as feudalism gone berserk, since he takes it to the extreme limits of its meaning, whereby, because the lords of the realm hold their land in fee from him, he is thus the literal owner of all the land in the realm, free to dispose of it as he thinks fit. It's all part of the drama of playing king; of exploring the limits of one's role.

Because Richard cannot conceive a world in which his vassals do not pay him proper homage as their overlord, he can see only chaos beyond the status quo, where order and "degree" are usurped, and nothingness prevails:

"...Sometimes am I a king,
Then treasons make me wish myself a beggar,
And so I am. Then crushing penury
Persuades me I was better when a king;
Then am I king'd again, and by and by
Think that I am unking'd by Bolingbroke,
And straight am nothing. But whate'er I be,
Nor I, nor any man that but man is,

Vere

With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eas'd

With being nothing. (V.v.32-41)

He is king, beggar, or nothing and, like Timon, Richard has within him a strong vein of fatalism, at times almost welcoming the opportunity to play different roles as a means of self-exploration. When he is finally landless and in prison, and is, like the Fisher King, emasculated and, somehow, nothing, we remember his words of yesterday, and think his condition almost willed:

Ay, no; no, ay; for I must nothing be... (IV.i.201)

To return to *Timon*, the loyalty of Timon's servants toward him when his fortunes change is feudal in nature because it does not recognize wealth alone as power and status, but responds to a quality of authority beyond mere riches. Timon is their lord, whether rich or poor. As one of his servants remarks in Act IV:

Yet do our hearts wear Timon's livery.

That see I by our faces; we are fellows still,

Serving alike in sorrow... (IV.ii.17-19)

In conjunction with comments from Timon's other servants, this constitutes an appeal for the preservation of "degree." Without degree, or a recognition of the hierarchical nature of society, chaos ensues and human life is turned on its head. The concept of hierarchy (as outlined by Ulysses in Act I, scene iii of *Troilus and Cressida*) was essential to the 16th century nobleman's understanding of aristocracy and its function. Shakespeare's concept of nothing represents a world without order or degree, where only the fool, the lunatic, or the artist can thrive. Timon, like Lear, plumbs this world of nothing, and gains spiritual vision as a result. Very near the end of the play, Timon remarks to his ever-faithful steward:

...My long sickness

Of health and living now begins to mend,

And nothing brings me all things. (IV.i.185-7)

Timon finally achieves a God-like detachment from his own life—a state of nirvana in fact. He even writes his own epitaph, in which he makes what to a Stratfordian are, presumably, two contradictory statements appearing in consecutive lines: "Seek not my name" and "Here lie I, Timon." (V.iv.71-72) Writing his own epitaph was for Oxford (unsurprisingly) something of an obsession.

V

To return to the 1580s, we come across the feud carried on in the streets of London between Oxford's men and those of Thomas Knyvet, also a courtier, following a sword fight between their two masters. The feud began in 1582 and continued on well into the following year. Such prolonged and clannish

altercations between houses, in which men from both sides lost their lives, were rare in Elizabethan times. They belong to an older age, when feudal loyalty counted for more than obedience to public authority, and honor was satisfied by the sword rather than the judiciary. Oxford himself seems to have a reputation among many historians for exceptional violence, and this is a charge that, though impossible to refute utterly, must at least be qualified.

Oxford, like so many of the protagonists of his Shakespeare plays—Hamlet, Lear, Othello, Macbeth, Leontes—was a curious mixture of gentleness and violence. For while he was a highly sensitive book-loving aesthete, he would nevertheless stop at nothing to protect his name and honor, seeking vengeance against those that attempted to blacken his reputation, even if his vengeance would, for the most part, end up being literary rather than actual. He was a “wolfish earl” more in spirit than matter, and his inordinate pride could be balanced by a disarming sense of self-doubt. Perhaps at times Oxford let his self-dramatizing instinct run away with him, and he would become the incarnation of his literary personae. Hamlet, who shares Oxford’s dramatic instincts and is his most realistic self-portrait, says to Ophelia:

I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. (III.i.124-7)

Oxford, like Hamlet, favored unpacking his heart with words, and so usually managed to dissipate any impulses toward violence through his writing. The final stanza of his early poem, “Fain would I sing but fury makes me fret,” nicely conveys this “dissipation” of strong feeling:

My heart shall fail, and hand shall lose his force,
But some device shall pay despite his due;
And fury shall consume my careful course,
Or raze the ground whereon my sorrow grew.
Lo, thus in rage of ruthless mind refus’d,
I rest reveng’d of whom I am abus’d. (*Poems*, 24)

The word “device” was often used to mean a theatrical device or play, and it was through the drama that Oxford, like Hamlet, sought revenge or restitution.

During much of the early 1580s, Oxford had found himself banished from the Court on charges of both adultery and treason, the last of which he vigorously denied. In 1583, his father-in-law, Lord Burghley, reported that the Earl was “ruined and in adversity,” and that his household had been reduced to four servants, one of them being “a kind of tumbling boy.” Once reinstated in the Queen’s favor in June of that year, however, Oxford lost no time in securing the lease to the Blackfriars Theater, which he then passed on to John Lyly, his secretary and the actor-manager of his company, Oxford’s Boys. It was

here that they rehearsed for performance at Court. In assessing the extent of Oxford's household or retinue, Burghley of course failed to mention Oxford's great theatrical retinue, a number of whom worked as the Earl's personal servants, Lyly being a good example.

Burghley gravely disapproved of Oxford's "lewd" followers, as he termed them, yet didn't scruple in his attempts to suborn them for his own purposes. It was on one such occasion in October 1584 that Oxford puts pen to paper to register his objection to such practices in the strongest possible terms. Burghley's lifelong habit of setting spies on friends and enemies alike and suborning other people's servants (a habit he shared with his theatrical double, Polonius), constituted one more violation of Oxford's feudal code of honor. The language of Oxford's resentment in his October 1584 letter is feudal to the core. He will not be a pawn of the new capitalist state. To force his point home, he uses the language of God himself, who addresses Moses in the Book of Exodus with the words, "I am that I am." Here is Oxford's chilling rebuke:

But I pray, my Lord, leave that course, for I mean not to be your ward nor your child. I serve her majesty, and I am that I am, and by alliance near to your lordship, but free, and scorn to be offered that injury to think I am so weak of government as to be ruled by servants, or not able to govern myself. (Fowler, 332)

Oxford's service to "her majesty" was his creation of the English theater, to accomplish which he had, in the popular phrase, squandered his patrimony. No doubt it was to help him continue his work in this field, as well as to ensure that he didn't become destitute, that the Crown granted Oxford a one thousand pound annuity in 1586, which continued for 18 years, the rest of his life. (An important part of his work would have involved preparing his Court dramas for performance in the public theaters.)

However welcome in purely financial terms, the grant would have been a severe slight to Oxford's proud and independent feudal spirit, and his sense of shame is perhaps registered in Sonnet 111, where he writes:

O for my sake do you with fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means which public manners breeds. (1-4)

To be the Queen's feudal vassal was one thing, but to be her hired servant was quite another.

The final indignity comes, however, in December 1591, when Oxford is forced to make over Hedingham Castle, the heart of his feudal world, to Lord Burghley in trust for his three daughters. An indignity, nevertheless, with rich consequences for literature, for it was this dark, dismantling deed that ushered in Oxford's period of deepest anonymity and nothingness, and hence his period

of deepest self-exploration. It buried the feudal lord deep within him, and paved the way for his complete transition to the figure of artist and spiritual teacher. It is perhaps unsurprising that a man who had, in effect, spent his whole life as a ward of Court (in a sort of social limbo) should ally himself in the end with those forces of classlessness, the fool and the artist. Both are jokers in the pack of society, who can communicate effectively with all classes of people, and act as a bridge between them. Both are truth-tellers. Ironically, proven fools, like minors of noble birth (especially if they were wealthy), became the property of the Crown in Elizabeth's England, and could be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

In the final analysis, Oxford coped with the death of feudalism by allowing his life as an artist and patron to mimic that of the feudal lord, and by ensuring that his works gave hope of a new society built on the ideals of feudalism and invigorated not by the power of monarchy, but by the power of conscience.

It is interesting to speculate what course the history of England might have taken had not Oxford appeared, under the banner of Shakespeare, to act as the blazing bridge of consciousness between the medieval and modern worlds.

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Who Was Joseph Hall's Labeo?

Fred W. Manzo

In 1597 a remarkable man wrote an even more remarkable poem. Although the man in question, Joseph Hall (1574-1656), is no longer considered terribly significant, he did make his mark in literature, church politics and theology. He is now credited with creating various minor prose genres, the satire *Mundus alter et idem*, and, quite possibly, the *Parnassus* plays. In 1598, Francis Meres thought enough of him to list Hall among the best satirists in English. In 1608, he was appointed one of Prince Henry's chaplains, and he subsequently became a friend of James I. By 1640, Hall found himself exchanging broadsides with a young John Milton and, during the turmoil leading up to the English Civil War, the House of Commons declared Hall guilty of high treason over a religious controversy.

His masterpiece, however, was the poem *Virgidemiae*, which has been called (perhaps inappropriately) the first English satire. It was a remarkable poem not because of Hall's timing but because it was a Juvenalian satire: it ridiculed the private lives of real people.

Unfortunately for modern historians, Hall found it necessary to obscure the identities of his victims behind a cloud of references to antiquity (Hall XXV). Though "obscure" may be too mild a word, since there is disagreement not only about the identities of those he attacked but, in some cases, even of the identities of those he used as camouflage.

For instance, in the following lines Hall said something important about someone named Labeo. But who was Labeo?

For shame write better Labeo, or write none,

Or better write, or Labeo write alone.

Nay, call the Cynic but a witty fool,

Thence to abjure his handsome drinking bowl: (abjure = to recant)

Because the thirsty swaine with hollow hand, (swaine = poet)

Conveyed the stream to wet his dry weasand. (weasand = throat)

Write they that can, tho they that cannot d

But who knows that, but they that do not know?¹

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Various attempts have been made to identify Hall's Labeo: as Thomas Nashe, Samuel Daniel or Michael Drayton (Hall LII-LIX) on the one hand, and as the (Ancient) Romans Attius Labeo or Titidius Labeo on the other. Though why Joseph Hall would choose to associate any of the Elizabethans with a third-rate Latin translator of Homer or a shadowy painter of small panel pieces remains unclear.

I would therefore like to advance a new solution to the Labeo question, namely, that Hall's attack on Labeo was in reality an attack on the Elizabethan poet-courtier Edward de Vere, the 17th Earl of Oxford (1550-1604), and that Hall then sought to conceal his attack behind references to the great Roman jurist, Marcus Antistius Labeo (c. 50 BC - AD 18).

Consider the following parallels between the two men.

1. Like M. Antistius Labeo, the Earl of Oxford had been a student of the law, having attended Gray's Inn for several years. More important, Oxford was one of forty-two commissioners at the treason trial of Mary, Queen of Scots (Ogburn 698) and the senior nobleman on the tribunal of the Earls of Essex and Southampton in 1601 (Ward 336). Finally, he himself was a judge (Clark 98).

2. Both Marcus Antistius Labeo and the Earl of Oxford were born into wealthy, eminent and ancient families. Both received superb educations from well-known scholars; both were involved in national politics at the highest levels; and, at some point, both were out of favor with their monarchs. Both were interested in classical literature and the meaning and origin of words. Both were excellent writers, although the bulk of their works are thought to be lost. Both lost their fathers at an early age. Both found it hard to get along with the newly powerful. Finally, after difficult careers, both withdrew from political life.

3. Both men were aristocrats. In addition to being England's ranking earl, Oxford was the hereditary Lord Great Chamberlain of England. Although Labeo's family was plebian by origin, by the Age of Augustus it had firmly been placed within the aristocracy (Ferrero 169).

4. Both men were prominent, as were their fathers. When Labeo was six years old, his father, the jurist Pacuvius Antistius Labeo, took a leading part in the assassination of Julius Caesar and then committed suicide at Philippi along with Brutus in 42 BC.

The prominence of Labeo himself was second only to that of the Emperor and his family. Considering Gibbon's standard, that "arms, eloquence and the study of the civil law promoted a citizen to the honors of the Roman State," we note that Labeo not only served as a Senator and nominated candidates to the Senate, but also served the state as a jurist and wrote more than 400 books (Gibbon 277-78).

Like his father, the 16th Earl, Oxford was England's Lord Great Chamberlain and a shaping force of Tudor theater. While the 16th Earl of Oxford was the principal patron of dramatist John Bale as well as a troupe of actors, the 17th Earl was the patron of two acting companies, a poet and playwright himself, and a patron of other poets, novelists and composers throughout Elizabeth's reign.

5. Both Labeo and Oxford were viewed by their enemies as eccentric. The poet Horace denounced Labeo, calling him insane, probably due to Labeo's flair for embarrassing his monarch and patron, a flair that Oxford also enjoyed. Indeed, according to the *DNB*, "Oxford's eccentricities and irregularities of temper grew with his years."

6. Each declined a largely symbolic public position. Augustus offered Labeo the essentially honorary post of Suffect Consul and was refused (Horsfall 282). When England was threatened by the Spanish Armada in 1588, Elizabeth, through the Earl of Leicester, offered Oxford the largely honorary command of Harwich and was likewise refused (Rowse 102).

7. Labeo and Oxford headed intellectual factions. Labeo has been credited with founding the Proculians, a school of lawyers, while Oxford has been credited with leading the Euphuists, a school of writers (Ward 174).

8. Both of their chief intellectual opponents led factions. Oxford's rival, Philip Sidney, headed the Romanticists and Labeo's opponent, C. Ateius Capito, has been credited with founding the Sabinians (Kunkel 113).

9. Both men had similar stories circulate about their willfulness. It was said of Labeo that "when tribunes sent a messenger to summon him to them he told [the messenger] to tell his masters that they could seize him, but not summon him" (Buckland 822n).

Similarly, it was reported by the Spanish Ambassador, Bernardino de Mendoza, that "the Queen sent twice to tell the Earl of Oxford... to dance before the Ambassadors; whereupon he replied that he hoped Her Majesty would not order him to do so, as he did not wish to entertain Frenchmen. When the Lord Steward took him the message the second time he replied that he would not give pleasure to Frenchmen, nor listen to such a message, and with that he left the room" (Ward 161).

10. Both were and are held in high esteem for their work. M. Antistius Labeo, for instance, is the only Labeo listed in the index to *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and the only Labeo with his own entry in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s 11th and 15th Editions, the *Illustrated Encyclopaedia of the Classical World*, and *Who Was Who in the Roman World*.

Labeo has been described as one of the most innovative thinkers in the history of jurisprudence. He introduced reasoning by analogy and the use of codicilli (but not in its English sense) into Roman law. His opinions on legal matters were quoted in law digests for centuries, and his *Libri Posteriores* was

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the only posthumous publication in the history of Roman Law.

As for Oxford's achievements, the *DNB* notes he "wrote verse of much lyric beauty"—a verdict likely based on the contemporary statements of Gabriel Harvey, Henry Peacham, and others. For instance, William Webbes stated in *A Discourse of English Poetry* that, "I may not omit the deserved commendations of many honorable and noble Lords and Gentlemen in Her Majesty's Court, which, in the rare devices of poetry, have been and yet are most skilfull; among whom the Right Honourable Earl of Oxford may challenge to himself the title of the most excellent among the rest" (Ward 199). In 1598, Francis Meres would list in *Palladis Tamia* "The best for comedy amongst us," and begin with "Edward Earle of Oxford" (Ogburn 195).

11. Since attacks on "Labeo" were connected with attacks on someone called the "Cynic" or the "Athenian," it's probable that one person assumed all three titles. Thus, any claimant for the title of "Labeo" should also have been considered a claimant for the other two titles.

Traditionally, the term Athenian was applied to alumni of Cambridge University, but the Earl's claim to the title rests upon more than his educational background. For instance, the original Cynics were ancient Athenians known for criticizing their rich fellow citizens (Swain 490). Since the wealthy Lord Burghley headed a faction at court initially known as the Athenians (Guy 224, 253), Oxford's inability to get along with Burghley, father-in-law, under whose roof he once lived, would have made him the perfect Cynic.

Of course, the most famous Cynic was Diogenes of Sinope who, according to Bertrand Russell, "decided to live like a dog, and was therefore called a 'cynic,' which means 'canine.' He rejected all conventions—whether of religion, of manners, of dress, of housing, of food, or of decency.... He lived... by begging. He proclaimed his brotherhood, not only with the whole human race, but also with animals.... He had an ardent passion for 'virtue,' in comparison with which he held worldly goods of no account" (Russell 231).

Diogenes and Oxford were considered by contemporaries unorthodox in religion and dress. Both men were bankrupts and were considered by contemporaries to be without decency. In 1581, Oxford was publicly accused of "all kinds of vice and shameful treacheries, without one care of God, of honour, or of nature" (Ogburn 342). Finally, Oxford and Diogenes led intellectual factions (Euphuism and Cynicism).

12. As if publicly confirming the Roman allusions in Joseph Hall's satire, George Chapman would later link the Earl of Oxford to the grandees of Rome in his play, *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois*, published in 1613:

I overtook, coming from Italy,

In Germany, a great and famous Earl

Of England; the most goodly fashion'd man

I ever saw: from head to foot in form
Rare and most absolute; he had a face
Like one of the most ancient honour'd Romans
From whence his noblest family was deriv'd;
He was beside of spirit passing great
Valiant and learn'd, and liberal as the sun,
Spoke and writ sweetly, or of learned subjects,
Or of the discipline of public weals:
And 'twas the Earl of Oxford. (Ogburn 401)

13. It seems reasonable to suppose that the sobriquet "Labeo" described someone known in Elizabethan England as an Italianate Englishman, as was satirized in Gabriel Harvey's 1580 poem, "Speculum Tuscanismi" (Mirror of Tuscanism), which many think was directed at the Earl of Oxford (Ogburn 630).

14. The name Joseph Hall used to camouflage his satire had the rare Latin ending of -eo, which corresponds to the Earl of Oxford's habit of referring to himself publicly and privately with those initials. In addition to signing his letters Edward Oxenford (rather than Edward de Vere), in 1576 he signed his first seven poems, published in the anthology, *The Paradise of Dainty Devices*, with the initials "E.O."

Joseph Hall's target, Labeo, had some interesting characteristics of his own. According to Hall, the 16th century Labeo wrote sonnets "clad in English weed," was of the "wrong faith" (not to Hall's liking as a Protestant), wasted his time with alchemy and was a famous man.

When writing a sonnet Oxford used the Shakespearean, as opposed to the Italian or Petrarchan, style (Looney 386-88), was a "sometimes" Catholic, and had achieved a high degree of fame.

In addition, the Elizabethan Labeo's writings supposedly caused shame, he used a pseudonym when he wrote, and "Phoebus filled him with intelligence" (that is, with news or information).

Interestingly enough, Oxford wrote comedies (which was considered shameful in itself), he generally wrote under a pseudonym (according to the author of *The Arte of English Poesie*), and Phoebus, which was Apollo's title and means "The Bright One" or "Shining," was one of his nicknames at court (Ogburn and Ogburn 4). To quote Gabriel Harvey's words to Oxford himself: "For a long time past Phoebus Apollo has cultivated thy mind in the arts" (Ogburn 597).

An equally powerful clue is that Hall states Labeo "names the spirit of Astrophel."

This probably refers to an internationally infamous episode that took place at court between Oxford and the author of *Astrophel and Stella*, Sir Philip

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Sydney. Fulke Greville, a close friend of Sidney's, wrote that Oxford had twice called "Sir Philip by the name of 'puppy'" during their tennis court quarrel, which led to Royal intervention and an apology by Sidney (Ogburn 620).

Finally, the theory that Joseph Hall attacked Oxford also psychologically fits. After all, Hall took credit for reviving not just any literary form, but a literary form that required its author to hold the rich and famous accountable for their misdeeds. And for someone raised as a Protestant, Oxford's life would seem an endless parade of misdeeds: he not only inherited his vast wealth but was a spendthrift; he not only left his wife but had an illegitimate son; he not only was involved in the theater but wrote comedies. Nor did it help matters that Oxford was accused of killing a man and evading justice through the influence of his father-in-law, or that he liked rich foreign clothes and consorted with "lewd" friends, or that he ended his life as a Royal pensioner.

So it seems that Joseph Hall—the future Bishop of Exeter and Norwich—had a perfect target for his satire in the 17th Earl of Oxford.

Notes

1. Hall originally italicized the part underlined. His spelling has been updated and modern definitions are provided in parenthesis.

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Reviews

Biblical References in Shakespeare's Comedies

by Naseeb Shaheen (U. of Delaware Press, 1993)

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The third in Naseeb Shaheen's series on Biblical references in Shakespeare not only supplies a complement to previous studies of the Tragedies (1987) and the Histories (1989), but also marks an advance in the sophisticated treatment of complex interpretative problems that were neglected in the two previous books. Here one detects a heightened awareness of the need to balance strictness in distinguishing influential sources from illusory ones, combined with a guiding vision which seeks to explicate the "spirit in which all the relevant passages are used" (28). Shaheen's appreciation of the complex associative processes of Shakespeare's "extremely retentive and associative mind" (Hankins *infra*) emerges more here than in his previous books. For the first time, for example, we find reference to "composite readings" evidently based on more than one translation of key texts, such as Genesis 25:25 (57). Such advances are the fruit of many years patient labor in the vineyards of bibliographical source studies by someone who has done more this century than any other scholar to advance an awareness of the many salient details of Shakespeare's Biblical knowledge.

The empirical method of charting Biblical references as they occur in sequence through act, scene and line of each play, first applied by Shaheen in his study of Biblical references in the *Faerie Queene* (1976) and used in his two previous books on Shakespeare, is both the great strength and, potentially, a weakness of his approach. Although he develops a more comprehensive and detailed treatment than any previous scholar, Shaheen's methodology originates with Carter's 1905 attempt to establish the priority of the Geneva Bible (f.p. 1560) as Shakespeare's primary English Bible. Carter was the first to systematically tabulate Shakespeare's references against the lexical variation in different translations of the English Bible. Carter concluded that the Geneva Bible, prepared by William Whittingham and other Calvinist exiles from the reign of Mary Tudor (1553-1558) and first published in Geneva in 1560, was Shakespeare's preferred translation. In his landmark 1935 study, *Shakespeare's*

Biblical Knowledge, Richmond Noble refined Carter's methodology and modified his conclusions regarding Shakespeare's sole reliance on the Geneva translation. In that study, Noble showed that although Carter was probably correct in asserting the priority of the Geneva translation in Shakespeare's Biblical imagination, he was also familiar with other translations, especially the 1568 Bishop's Bible. The key to this method lies in distinguishing among influences which can be demonstrated at the lexical level: coordinate ideas, image-clusters, rhythmic or other figurative influences can play little role in distinguishing among variant sources.

Shaheen prefaces each of his books with a chapter on variant Bibles ("Which Version Shakespeare Used?") which summarizes and evaluates the evidence for Shakespeare's knowledge of each of the major English Translations. In order of roughly declining influence, these include The Geneva (f.p. 1560), The Bishop's (f.p. 1568), Thomson's New Testament (f.p. 1576), The Great Bible (f.p. 1539), The Coverdale (f.p. 1529, 1535), The Matthew—largely a reprint of Tyndale and Coverdale (f.p. 1537), Taverner's (f.p. 1539), and Tyndale's (f.p. 1526, 1530) New Testament. In his previous books, Shaheen found a clear preference for readings from the Geneva translation: 10 Geneva readings in the Histories and 14 in the Tragedies, with only 11 from all other translations combined in both genres. In the Comedies, the Geneva is, perhaps, not quite so preponderant: Shaheen finds four readings from the Geneva, four from the Bishop's—three of them to Romans 13:10—and five from other translations combined. The Geneva still seems to predominate, particularly if all three references to the Bishop's Romans 13:10 are treated, as they well might be for comparative purposes, as a single reference. More significantly, Shaheen omits—as I shall demonstrate—one vital Geneva reading which decisively tips the balance in favor of the predominance of that translation for the Comedies as well as the Tragedies and Histories.

In this book, Shaheen devotes a chapter to each of the Comedies, and each chapters begins with an analysis of alternative sources which addresses the all-important question of "false positives." A false positive would be an apparent Biblical reference which could be traced to an acknowledged secular source of the play. Shaheen's survey establishes an extremely significant negative foundation for future research. "Shakespeare seldom borrows Biblical references from his [secular] sources, even when those sources contain many [Biblical] references" (40). The low number of religious references carried over from secular sources is strong evidence for the original character of the author's religious thought. His Biblical references seem clearly to result from his own religious study and to manifest a distinctive theological vision. They are not a reflex of some hypothetical generic Elizabethan or Renaissance "Biblical culture." Although Shaheen finds some passages inspired by Cramer's Book of

Common Prayer (f.p. 1545) or the Homilies—these references constitute only a small portion of the total religious references found in Shakespeare. These findings supply some teeth to Roland Mushat Frye’s 1963 conclusion that Shakespeare shows almost no influence of contemporary theological texts, either English or Continental, and that his theological usage “seems to have been familiarly and almost instinctively drawn from intimate awareness” (13) cultivated through reading the Bible, particularly the Geneva translation:

I...have found no demonstrable influences of Shakespeare’s indebtedness, even to Augustine or Aquinas...on the basis of [extensive study of all major and many minor theological tracts influential during the 16th c.]¹ *I must report my inability to establish Shakespeare’s theological affinities or to discover even a single unquestionable instance of indebtedness of the kind which can so frequently be found in the history plays or of the kind which so unequivocally demonstrates Shakespeare’s extensive use of the Geneva Bible....* (Frye 1963, 11-12, my emphasis)

More than any other single study, Shaheen’s trilogy supplies the evidence to confirm Peter Milward’s conclusion that the “deepest inspiration in Shakespeare’s plays is both religious and Christian” (1973, 274). Shakespeare texts—though secular in orientation (see Frye 19-42)²—are “charged with religious overtones, largely in virtue of their frequent, though unobtrusive, Biblical references” (Milward 87). Notice of such “frequent though unobtrusive” allusions to scriptural sources goes back to Walter Whiter’s seminal 1794 study of Shakespearean compositional dynamics,³ which found that

Our Poet frequently alludes to the narratives of scripture, and often employs its language in a remote and peculiar language. (254)

Moreover, states Whiter:

Traces of so subtle an influence will often be invisible to the hasty glance of a superficial observer, though they will be apparent to a more careful view in distinct and unequivocal characters. (76)

Shaheen has done more than any other scholar to track down and list for future reference all, or at any rate, most, of this *frequent* though often *remote and peculiar* scriptural influence in Shakespeare. The staggering dimension of this influence may be evaluated by considering some raw numbers from Shaheen’s trilogy. In his three books, Shaheen finds more than 1,300 Biblical references—an average of almost 40 per play. In the 12 Comedies, Shaheen finds 371 Biblical or liturgical references. These references are established by locating key phrases or idioms of a distinctively Biblical origin. Because such phrases often recur in more than one Biblical verse, the references yield a total of 1,202 potential source listings in Shaheen’s appendices.

On average, then, there are more than three possible Biblical “origins” for each reference. Although we may be reasonably certain that a given Shakespeare

phrase reflects a Biblical influence, the precise local origin of the influence frequently remains indeterminate. Although the 1:3 ratio found in the Comedies holds reasonably constant in plays studied by Shaheen, this average conceals considerable variance in the degree of certainty with which individual references can be tagged to specific Biblical verses. Although many references list six or more possible sites of Biblical origin in Shaheen's appendices, other can be identified as originating in the language of a specific Biblical verse, sometimes even from a specific translation of the Bible. These examples become litmus-markers for the specific verse and perhaps even the edition preserved in Shakespeare's mind during the compositional process: with them we can pinpoint the Biblical or liturgical source of Shakespeare's language. One striking example of such a Biblical reference occurs in Portia's stirring moral from *The Merchant of Venice*:

How far that little candle throws his beam!

So shines a good deed in a naughty world. (V.ii.61-2)

This passage marks one of the few instances in which it can positively be stated that Richmond Noble, in his landmark 1935 study, *Shakespeare's Biblical Knowledge*, misidentified the Biblical origin of a Shakespearean phrase. Noble mistakenly attributed Portia's words as a reference to Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good workes, and glorify your father which is in heaven." The actual reference, however, is to a parallel but lexically distinctive verse, Philippians 2:15:

That ye may be blameless, and pure, & the sonnes of God without rebuke in the middes of a *naughtie* and crooked nation, among whome ye shine as lights in the *worlde*. (1570 Genevan, italics supplied)

In *Biblical References in Shakespeare's Comedies* (1993, 130-1), Shaheen corrects Noble's misattribution. This correction, based on the conjunction of the Biblical commonplace of virtue shining like a candle with the idiosyncratic phrase *naughty world*, echoing the *naughty nation...world* of Philippians 2:15, demonstrates the reliability of Noble and Shaheen's methodology, when practiced with the most scrupulous regard for investigative method, for self-correction. When a particular collocation of words occurs in both the Bible and Shakespeare, preferably in conjunction with a shared moral or image, as in this case, it becomes possible to pinpoint the local origin of Shakespeare's language in a specific Biblical verse.

Fortunately, Shaheen's bibliographical conservatism saves him from falling prey to a trendy preoccupation with the supposed instability of the Shakespeare corpus. When John Cox faults Shaheen's 1989 study of the Histories for unwarranted assumption of "textual stability," and urges that "the various 'Shakespeares' ought to be included in a reference work like this just as much as various translations of the Bible" (1992, 487-9), one can only applaud

Shaheen's conservatism in preserving the reasonable assumption—easily susceptible of proof, if necessary—that textual variation in the Shakespeare canon has practically nil consequences for a study such as his.

Indeed, the limitations of Shaheen's methodology, if such they are, lie in a contrasting direction. Shaheen's painstaking attention to lexical detail obscures the significance of structural identity or permutation. Appreciation of transformational grammar, even of an intuitive sort—which finds genetic relationships between two *texta* which preserve a common "deep structure" underneath lexical variation in surface structure—is nowhere in evidence in Shaheen's books. Hog-tied to the lexical level, he overlooks a number of unmistakable Biblical influences which show themselves beneath lexical variation, which mirrors, in some cases clearly by authorial intent, the deep structure of the Biblical original. In *Biblical References in the Tragedies* (1989), for example, Shaheen fails to note that the Biblical source of Hamlet's apologia to Laertes (V.ii.226-239) is Romans 7:20—a verse also of great though subtle influence in *Measure for Measure* and other texts. Milward (1987, 57), for his part, catches Hamlet's sly reference to the Pauline doctrine of sin as an alien force.

By using lexical identity as the only criterion for textual relationship, Shaheen misses numerous instances of such *second order patterning* between source and primary text and consequently slights the powerful unity which pervades the Shakespeare canon. When, for example, Horatio recalls the awful era of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts...

...and in the upshot, *purposes mistook,*
Fall'n on th'inventor's heads

the italicized phrase clearly belongs by association to Shaheen's well-acknowledged series of references of I Kings 2:32 (or related passages) which declares that "the Lorde shal bring his blood upon his owne head." Shaheen, however, omits this reference in his 1987 book on the Tragedies—presumably because of the absence of a direct lexical link tying the passage to the Biblical verses expressing the same idea.

Other missing references, some of surprising prominence, can be detected in the present study of the Comedies. For instance, Speed and Proteus' lengthy comical interlude (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I.i.73-100) about the sheep which "follows the shepherd for food" is based within Ezekiel 34. In this case, even the lexical echoes are distinct and unequivocal.

In one light, stressing such *addenda* to a work of this magnificent scope and crafted detail might seem like counting the number of angels on the head of pin, or even be compared to the Scottish vice of skepticism. I include them in the present review only to counter the mistakes of previous reviewers. John Cox incorrectly claims that Shaheen's study of the Histories (1989) "quotes every Shakespearean passage that has a Biblical origin." This is simply not true. Nor

is it true of Shaheen's present study of the Comedies. What is true—and it certainly deserves recognition—is that Shaheen has assembled the most comprehensive and accurate collection, destined to remain a standard reference work for many decades, of the numerous Biblical references in three quarters of the Shakespeare plays. For the first time, students of Shakespeare's Biblical references and influences have the equivalent of a mental map charting the major coordinates of these influences.

A more serious objection to Shaheen's approach is that his particulate and empiricist methodology tends to preclude any serious consideration of the theological motives of the author. Like the post-WWII "documentary" biographical tradition espoused by Professor Samuel Schoenbaum, in opposition to the phenomenological biographies of Frank Harris or Oxfordians such as Looney (1920), Shaheen's method leads resolutely *away from* psychology and literary criticism, which make use of concepts such as analogy, motive, allegory, irony and theme, and *towards* the mechanical accumulation of information for information's sake. For instance, there is no consideration in Shaheen's work of whether the author ever cites scripture with the intention of creating specific literary effects or of reinforcing his own ethical or theological principles. If, as Antonio declares, even "*the devil* can cite scripture for his purpose" (*Merchant of Venice*, I.iii.98), then surely Shakespeare's characters can cite it for their, or their author's, rhetorical purposes.

Just as it would be unjust to lay too much emphasis on such sins of omission or possible alternative methodologies, it would also be a mistake to think that Shaheen has written the last word on Shakespeare and the Bible. The empiricism which is so bothersome at times is also what makes Shaheen's series destined to remain an important reference tool for many decades to come. Now that Shaheen has assembled a reasonably comprehensive catalogue of Shakespeare's Biblical references, other students are free to make use of his data to explore the phenomenological implications. One thinks especially of Hankins's 1953 study of Shakespeare's use of images and ideas derived from Palingenius's *Zodiacke Vitae*, a study which begins not with a bibliographical survey designed to impress the reader with his comprehensive knowledge of bibliographical variation, but with a thoughtful phenomenology of Shakespeare's "extremely retentive and associative mind" (10). It organizes its conclusions around a series of predominating metaphors—Dusty Death, Brief Candle, Mental Sickness, The Painted Walls, The Golden World, etc.—by which Shakespeare organized his reading and the symbolic cosmos created through the fusion of life with his literary materials.

In constructing a phenomenology of Shakespeare's compositional practice, Hankins turned to John Livingston Howe's classic study of Coleridge, *The Road to Xanadu*, which demonstrated, making use of Coleridge's own original

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notes, that “Coleridge possessed this retentive and associative power to an imminent degree and demonstrated how varied images coalesced and fused in the ‘deep well’ of his subconscious mind” (10). This model of such a retentive and associative mental process, argued Hankins, has implications for understanding Shakespeare’s use of sources. It may consequently, he wrote

be inaccurate to speak of *the* source of a Shakespeare image when there were several possible sources. *More than likely all of them were recalled together*, and it is our task *to separate the primary sources from the secondary ones*. The multiplicity of sources does not alter the fact that Shakespeare has adapted the image and not invented it. (10; emphasis added)

Hankins’s distinction between *primary* and *secondary* sources and his emphasis on the dynamic psychology of composition—the recollection, fusion or recombination of derived imagery—allows for a more supple and phenomenological reading of the source-text question than Shaheen’s empiricist categories of *reference*, *parallel*, and *see also*. Thus, while Shaheen’s empiricism is perhaps fitted to the task of mapping the progression of Biblical references within each play, it would be a mistake to regard his work as the final word on Biblical references in Shakespeare. Shaheen’s own data exhibit some powerful structural implications which are not—nor should they necessarily be—addressed in his analysis. Hankins, for example, finds that the image of the “brief candle” from Macbeth’s memorable speech “is traceable to the Scriptures; but, through its association with other sources in Shakespeare’s mind it comes to have a significance far beyond that of mere verbal reminiscence” (43). Tracing the symbolism of the candle through two chapters of commentary Hankins discovers that

the “light of life”... is the bond between man and God. It refers to that “godlike reason” which makes us capable of desiring union with God. But that reason may be misdirected by an error of the will and may be turned against God. In such case, the reason is a candle or torch which no longer shines and cannot until man’s will is once more in harmony with God’s...the awakening of conscience is symbolised by the desire for light. (61-2)

Shaheen, like Hankins, writes in a tradition in which light is shed on the events of the present by considering the inheritance of the past. In assessing the relative contribution of these previous scholars to the sum impression of *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Comedies*, one begins to feel slightly uneasy that Shaheen’s empirical strictness does not extend to the historical dimension of his study. Because Shaheen does not cite Carter or Noble, except for the purposes of refutation, it is not easy to know when the postulated sources have been identified by Shaheen himself, and when he has taken a tip from prior

scholars or students. It is scarcely a discredit to Shaheen that many of the references he cites were first identified by prior workers in the vineyard, but it does detract from the force of his conclusions when readers are not made aware that different scholars have independently arrived at conclusions in some cases identical to, or substantiative of, his own.

In concluding this review it may then be pertinent, without seeming to appear ungracious for the enormous labors which contributed to this third volume in Professor Shaheen's important study, to remark on one further lacuna which somewhat perplexes the present reviewer. Although Professor Shaheen, as noted above, has correctly identified the primary source of Portia's "little candle" (*MVV*.i.91) as Philippians 2:15, he failed to include Philippians 2:15 in his preliminary discussion titled, "Which Version Shakespeare Used" (22-27). As in his other books, one presumes that Professor Shaheen prefers to delineate such generic bibliographical matters before proceeding to discuss specifics. In this case, however, the correction of Noble's error may have been an afterthought: the Shakespeare phrase, *naughty world*, can be derived only from the Geneva edition—not from the Bishop's or, so far as I am aware, any other translation. However, although the citation *belongs* in Professor Shaheen's list of strong evidence for the Geneva translation, it fails to appear there.

This lacuna, one is obliged to remark, may prove of some interest to future historians of Shakespeare scholarship.

Notes

1. For the details of Frye's thorough survey of all the conceivably relevant literature, see Frye, 10-16.
2. Frye rightly warns, in my estimation, against reducing the plays to conventional religious allegories "because the plays are themselves primarily concerned with the secular realm" (7). Nevertheless, Shaheen's data demonstrate a pervasive undercurrent of theological concepts and language in the plays which cannot be lightly dismissed. Although Shakespeare is surely a secular thinker in Frye's terms, he often explores theological conundrums within the context of the secular drama. Above all he is interested, in my judgment, in promoting a dialogue between theological or christological philosophical concepts and those proper to the pagan or secular domain. Thus, it is not coincidental that Hamlet cites Romans 7:20—a Biblical verse which seems to flatly contradict the Aristotelian notion of tragic action as a consequence of the hero's *hamartia*, in Shakespeare's most autobiographical, and in some ways most political, drama.
3. The forerunner, according to Whiter's modern editors, Over and Bell, of all 20th century studies of Shakespeare's imagination, among them Spurgeon

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(1935), Armstrong (1946), Clemen (1951) and Hankins (1958).

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The Man Who Was Shakespeare by Charlton Ogburn, Jr. 1995

Reviewed by Gary Goldstein.

This is a serious though not scholarly publication that attempts to synopsise Mr. Ogburn's much larger, 892-page book, also recently published by EPM Publications in McLean, Virginia. While the present 94-page pamphlet lays out the essence of Mr. Ogburn's argument, it contains many of the same drawbacks as the book from which it is derived.

To start, Ogburn has not included full references for his sources. His attributions sometimes include an author, at other times only the title of a book or article (without distinguishing between the two) and rarely a publisher or year. Nor does he differentiate between private manuscripts or published works. In fact, Ogburn often dispenses with evidence altogether and advances mere assertions as arguments. For example:

The play *Edward the Second* was, it seems clear, derived from a draft by

Edward de Vere turned over to be completed by Christopher Marlowe, who would seem to have been a protege of his and to whom the play is generally attributed, though it is quite out of line with his other works. Stratfordians have it that the play's similarity to Shakespeare's early historical dramas shows how the greater writer was indebted to the lesser. (29n).

The double assertion of Marlowe being de Vere's protege and of de Vere being the initial author of the play, *Edward II*, is never backed up with more than what is set out above.

Yet another assertion that Ogburn advances concerns de Vere being the true author of a long poem usually attributed to one Arthur Brooke.

...I am emboldened to embrace the proposition that *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet*, a "childish" poem as Marchette Chute terms it, one derived from an Italian romance and clearly the basis of Shakespeare's play, was the work of the 12-year-old Edward, composed in the aftermath of [Queen] Elizabeth's visit. The poem was published, in 1562, as by Arthur Brooke, it is true, but Brooke seems to be known for little else than drowning the next year; and George Turberville, who recorded the event, described the author of *The Tragical History* as a "dainty Babe" who on "Pallas' dug...did chew." (30)

It seems that Ogburn did not read or has not remembered some pertinent biographical information about Arthur Brooke published by Sir E.K. Chambers. Pat Dooley and Diana Price have. Writing on the Internet on 27 July 1995 (on the Oxfordian bulletin board, evermore@shakespeare.oxford.lm.com), they effectively refute this contention by pointing to an Arthur Brooke that, in 1562, was recognized by his peers for being a writer of "plays and shows."

Oxfordians have gone along with Ogburn's thesis that Arthur Brooke was one of Oxford's early pseudonyms. However, according to E.K. Chambers, in 1562, an Arthur Brooke was "admitted to the Inner Temple without fee 'in consideration of certain plays and shows at Christmas last set forth by him' (Inderwick, Inner Temple records, i, 219)."

It's important to note here that other Oxfordians do not go along with this position, and many others, that Ogburn has chosen to propagate, most prominent of which is the Royal Heir theory, which states that Henry Wriothely, Earl of Southampton, was the issue of the 17th Earl of Oxford and Queen Elizabeth, and, therefore, heir to Elizabethan's crown.

A more serious matter, however, is Ogburn's contention that literature itself can be used as factual or historical evidence.

The testimony of *Willobie [His Avis]* comports with other evidence that [Queen] Elizabeth and Oxford were lovers. This includes certain of Shakespeare's Sonnets, the innuendos of *Venus & Adonis*, and the

only interpretation, I believe, to be drawn from the love between Sylvia and Valentine in *Two Gentlemen From Verona* (which may well be seen as meaning two gentlemen of one Vere). (41)

While Mr. Ogburn has been busy transforming literature into news, he seems to have lost sight of recent research being conducted in the field. A case in point arises when Ogburn examines the musical authorship of pieces bearing the Earl of Oxford's title:

There is an *Earl of Oxford's March*, said to be by William Byrd (1543-1623), and an *Earl of Oxford's Galliard*, now lost and of unknown authorship, possibly of Oxford's own. (72)

The lost *Galliard* to which Ogburn refers was discovered several years ago by Professor Ross Duffin of Case Western Reserve University, whose findings were presented at the Shakespeare-Oxford Society annual meeting in 1992. Professor Duffin found the *Galliard* in a John Dowland lute manuscript at the Folger Shakespeare Library (V.b.280, "A commonplace book of songs and dances for the lute, ca. 1600"), maintaining that the Earl of Oxford was not the composer but the patron who requested and paid for its composition.

A larger issue, of course, is the whole question of determining authorship, for which one must have at least a single composition as a standard against which to measure and evaluate unattributed compositions (musical or literary). Since the Earl of Oxford has never been credited with writing a single musical composition, there simply is no way to attribute anonymous or pseudonymous scores to Oxford.

Finally, weakening his overall argument substantially, Ogburn has chosen to imitate the bad habit of orthodox academicians by continually employing qualifying phrases to bridge gaps in his evidence. The range is impressive and includes: "undoubtedly," "we may imagine," "we may suppose," "can scarcely be doubted," "presumably," "must have been," "we may be altogether certain," "I should guess," "it cannot have been long before," "it may be a fair guess," "I think we may be permitted to surmise," "it is hard not to believe," "rumor has it," "it leaves scant doubt," and so on.

All this may indicate that Ogburn's restatement of the Oxfordian case, originally made by J. Thomas Looney in *"Shakespeare" Identified in Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford* (1920), itself needs major revision and rethinking.

I must end, however, by acknowledging a general indebtedness to Charlton Ogburn, first for popularizing the Oxfordian hypothesis and, second, for so ably debating Stratfordians when no one else was dealing with the Shakespeare Authorship Issue in either the academic or popular culture.

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