

THE MERMAID SERIES OF ELIZABETHAN  
AND JACOBEOAN DRAMATISTS (1887-1909):  
A LITERARY AND CRITICAL HISTORY

by



Cynthia Ann Park, B.A.

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Memorial University of Newfoundland

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ABSTRACT: The Mermaid Series of Elizabethan and Jacobean Dramatists  
(1887-1909): A Literary and Critical History

The Mermaid Series (1887-1909) edited by Havelock Ellis was a major watershed in appreciation of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Before it appeared plays were available to general readers in scattered anthologies, large expensive collected editions or in expurgated selections which included only the more lyrical speeches and memorable scenes. Criticism of the drama followed suit; the majority of critics concentrated on the sections which appealed to the romantic and sentimental tastes of nineteenth-century readers. The two men who conceived the Mermaid Series, John Addington Symonds and Havelock Ellis, approached the drama differently from their contemporaries; Symonds studied a play as a whole work of art and Ellis concentrated on its view of life. Both were unsatisfied with the "select beauties", fragmented approach and wanted readers to have the best plays in their entirety easily available in handy, inexpensive editions. Symonds's awareness of the drama as theatre was combined with a historical perspective allowing him to judge the drama in relation to its own time. He made a lasting but hitherto underestimated contribution to study of Beaumont and Fletcher, Dekker, Marlowe, and Ford. Ellis's work on the drama is overshadowed today by his studies of sex but his concentration on ideas and appreciation of unconventional behaviour enabled him to formulate new views on Ford, Middleton and Chapman. The two other major editors to work on the series, A. C. Swinburne and Arthur Symonds had more conventional nineteenth-century approaches. Both were impressionistic critics who were most attracted to the language of the drama. Swinburne, however, occasionally transcended his fragmented approach and offered significant interpretations of Tourneur, Massinger, The Changeling, Heywood.

Symons's range was more limited but his form of impressionism was valuable for its concentration on the aesthetic experience at the heart of a work of art. His most important contributions were the study of Middleton and Massinger. Besides these four major critics numerous lesser writers worked on the series. Their editorial work was valuable and some, notably Ernest Rhys, C. H. Herford and Thomas Dickinson offered criticism of enduring importance.

In my first chapter I consider the general availability of texts of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in the nineteenth century, the general attitudes towards the drama, and the critical approaches of each of the editors. The subsequent chapters are organized around the volumes of the series. I consider the climate of opinion in which each appeared, assess its critical and editorial contribution and evaluate the work of the other Mermaid editors on the dramatist included in the volume. My study shows that the concept of the Mermaid Series and the work of its editors helped to revolutionize study of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists by providing good texts and by pointing the way to our present view of the plays as whole works of art.

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## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

At a conference on editing English dramatic texts in 1965 S. Schoenbaum spoke disparagingly of the Mermaid Series of Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists (1887-1909). He pointed out their textual inaccuracies and asserted that it was "illegitimate" to view with nostalgia the "decrepit charms" of the series which introduced readers to "an astonishing body of dramatic literature".<sup>1</sup> In this day when we have witnessed the scrupulous editing of the Regents Renaissance Drama Series, Revels Plays Series, Fountainwell Texts, and New Mermaids series, no one can argue that the Mermaids are not occasionally inaccurate. Yet until these editions appeared in the 1960's there was no other comprehensive series of the drama that was popularly priced and easily available. The audience Schoenbaum addressed would have made their first discovery of the drama through the Mermaid Series. Nostalgia for the source of such an exciting discovery is surely legitimate; and the Mermaid Series deserves to be accorded its proper place in literary history.

The series was a revolutionary concept. It marked the first time since the seventeenth century that the plays were easily accessible in their entirety to the general public. Previously it had been difficult to find a selection of plays by one dramatist in a complete form. Only

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<sup>1</sup>"Editing English Dramatic Texts", Editing Sixteenth Century Texts, edited by R. J. Schoeck (1966), p. 13.

those who could buy or borrow an expensive collected edition or had access to the British Museum Library could do so; other readers had to depend on selections, expurgated versions, or at best, settle for one play by a particular dramatist included in a large anthology. The Mermaid Series changed this and offered five complete, unexpurgated plays by one author in a volume priced within the means of the general reader.

Moreover the series marked the end of one approach to the Elizabethan drama and the beginning of another. Throughout the century the drama was read as a collection of fine verses and scenes presenting nobility, passion, manners of the time, or simply lovely descriptions. Rarely was a play considered as a complete theatrical experience; rarely were readers encouraged or given the tools to think about the ideas or view of life embodied in the whole play. This fragmented approach was perpetuated by critics and supported by the texts generally available. But the two men who conceived the Mermaid Series, Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds, had a different approach. For Symonds a play was theatre -- a whole work of art intended to be performed. For Ellis a drama offered a particular concept of life. They both firmly believed in the necessity of presenting every play in its entirety so that readers could understand its ideas and try to experience it as theatre. Of the editors who worked on the series only Symonds and Ellis held these revolutionary views and consistently expounded them in their introductions. The others, A. C. Swinburne, E. Gosse, Ernest Rhys, and Arthur Symons, applied a more traditional nineteenth-century fragmented approach. Nevertheless, by presenting the texts the Mermaid Series paved the way for the modern approach to studying the drama.

The series also had an impact on the theatre. Shakespeare and adaptations of the minor Elizabethan drama had been popularly staged throughout the nineteenth century but generally as lavish productions designed to call attention to one or two actors, and the "poetic" portions.<sup>1</sup> Spreading knowledge about the drama and popular interest in it meant that more authentic performances became a commercial possibility and eventually a necessity.

The Mermaid Series, then, closed one chapter in the appreciation of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama but opened a more exciting one. In this thesis I shall attempt to show how the Mermaid Series and its editors stand at this junction by pointing out what the editors owed to the past, what they contributed to the climate of opinion in which the Mermaids appeared and flourished, how they pointed to the future and what their work offers to us today. I shall begin by briefly describing the approach to the drama in the early nineteenth century and give a general idea of the work of the editors of the Mermaid Series.

There had been some interest in the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in the eighteenth century: Shakespeare's editors used it to illumine his text and the first edition of Dodsley's Select Collection of Old Plays appeared in 1744. But the revival of serious aesthetic interest began with Charles Lamb who was one of the first to turn to the plays in search of poetry and in 1808 compiled his Specimens of English Dramatic Poets. Where Dodsley had chosen plays for their "elegant entertainment",<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See R. H. Ball, The Amazing Career of Sir Giles Overreach (1939), and Robert Speaight, William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival (1954).

<sup>2</sup>Preface to the first edition, A Select Collection of Old Plays [edited by Isaac Reed and Octavius Gilchrist], second edition (1780), I, lxxx.

Lamb chose "scenes of passion. . .serious descriptions, that which is more nearly allied to poetry than to wit".<sup>1</sup> These criteria reflect new romantic theories of poetry which distinctly colour the approach to the drama throughout the nineteenth century.

After Wordsworth's Preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads appeared in 1801, poetry was more and more frequently defined as the overflow of powerful feelings -- or simply passion -- and acquired an important intellectual and moral function in society. It was "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"<sup>2</sup> and through reading poetry "the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified".<sup>3</sup> A. W. Schlegel's influential lectures on the drama, published in Germany between 1809 and 1811 and translated into English in 1815, applied such ideas to the drama. He defined drama as "one branch of poetry"<sup>4</sup> and poetry as "the power of creating what is beautiful".<sup>5</sup> He distinguished between romantic and classical poetry by asserting that the latter keeps emotions separate while the former is an "expression of the secret attraction to a chaos which is concealed beneath the regulated creation" and thus approaches

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<sup>1</sup>Specimens of English Dramatic Poets, edited by William MacDonald (1903), I, 2. Hereafter referred to as Lamb, Specimens.

<sup>2</sup>"Preface to the Second edition of. . . 'Lyrical Ballads'", Wordsworth Poetical Works, edited by Thomas Hutchinson, revised by Ernest DeSelincourt (1950), p. 738.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 735.

<sup>4</sup>A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, translated by John Black (1815), I, 19.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 3.

"the secret of the universe" and embodies "the animating spirit of original love".<sup>1</sup> In the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, "the spirit of the romantic poetry [is] dramatically pronounced".<sup>2</sup> Lamb and William Hazlitt, whose Lectures on the Drama of the Age of Elizabeth were published in 1820, used such ideas and felt that by isolating scenes of passion, they isolated the romantic spirit and that in turn might have a beneficial effect on their readers.

Their method of dealing with the drama proved to be popular and the reflections on specific scenes which Lamb included with his Specimens remained an almost unapproachable authority throughout the century. As late as 1893 William Archer felt that to criticize Lamb was "to take your life in your hands".<sup>3</sup> Both used a "select beauties" impressionistic approach; that is, they concentrated on describing their feelings about the scenes which most moved them. Hazlitt explained that he set out "merely to read over a set of authors with the audience, as I would do with a friend, to point out a favourite passage, to explain an objection".<sup>4</sup> He was endeavouring "to feel what was good"<sup>5</sup> and by relating his feelings to uplift his audience and "to rescue some of these writers from hopeless obscurity".<sup>6</sup> He was what T. S.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 99.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 98.

<sup>3</sup>"Webster, Lamb, and Swinburne", New Review, VIII (1893), p. 96.

<sup>4</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, in The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, edited by P. P. Howe (1930-1934), VI, 301. Hereafter referred to as Hazlitt, Works.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 302.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

Eliot later called "a Critic with Gusto" -- a term Hazlitt himself had used.<sup>1</sup> What Lamb and Hazlitt were not doing was evaluating the drama according to any rigorous critical standards. Hazlitt wrote that he was simply pointing out what he liked and was not going "to tire [a reader] nor puzzle myself with pedantic rules and pragmatistical formulas of criticism that can do no good to any body".<sup>2</sup> While on the one hand this relieved a reader who might have feared an onslaught of German metaphysics, on the other Hazlitt's and Lamb's approach inevitably meant a confusion of genres. In their criticism there is a marked disregard for drama as a complete work of art, intended for the theatre. Lamb's concentration on the passionate scenes of a play offered little illumination on its qualities as a whole. Similarly, although Hazlitt was a theatre critic, because he followed Coleridge's suggestion to concentrate on language, passion, and character,<sup>3</sup> he did not convey an awareness of the drama as theatre. He had read Schlegel's Lectures but ignored his excellent attempt to define drama as dialogue with action and as "a renovated picture of life",<sup>4</sup> as well as his study of theatrical conditions affecting drama. Lamb's and Hazlitt's easy, entertaining method prevailed through most of the century and strongly influenced the work of the Mermaid editors. J. A. Symonds was the only editor who took Schlegel's ideas to heart. I shall discuss this in a moment.

The work of Lamb, Hazlitt, Coleridge, and their friends helped to spread popular interest in the drama in the first three decades of the

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<sup>1</sup>"To Criticize the Critic", in his To Criticize the Critic (1965), p. 12. See also Hazlitt "On Gusto", in his The Round Table, Works, IV, 77-80. Hazlitt uses the term to mean the "power or passion defining any object" (p. 77) -- the quality he was trying to convey in his criticism.

<sup>2</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 301.

<sup>3</sup>Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists (1931), p. 35. These lectures were delivered between 1810 and 1811.

<sup>4</sup>A Course of Lectures, I, 22.

nineteenth century. The Retrospective Review also ran a series on the drama and new anthologies appeared in response to the complaints of Lamb, Hazlitt, and Schlegel that copies of the plays were difficult to obtain. These included Walter Scott's Ancient British Drama (1810), C. W. Dilke's Old English Plays (1814-1815), a third edition of Dodsley (1825-1827), and the Old English Drama, a series of fortnightly paper-bound volumes designed "to furnish [the drama]. . .to every class".<sup>1</sup> There were also new editions of Massinger (1805), Ford (1811), Beaumont and Fletcher (1812) and Marlowe (1826).

By the 1830's however, interest was declining. One reason for this was that the early enthusiasts were all dead by 1834 and it was generally felt that their praise of the drama "went too far".<sup>2</sup> Furthermore during these years there was a change in critical concerns. The great writers, Carlyle, Macaulay, Ruskin, Mill, were not concerned specifically with the drama but concentrated on history or the other arts or on the relation of art in its widest sense to life. Under the influence of these writers the romantic trend to define poets in "grandiose, Shelleyan terms"<sup>3</sup> solidified. They were seen as instructors of truth: sincerity was considered "the ultimate test of value" and "moral acceptability" of the poet's work determined his "right to his title".<sup>4</sup> Through popular evangelical and utilitarian channels these ideas were distorted into a stress on the didactic function of art which in turn

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<sup>1</sup>Old English Drama (1830), I, i.

<sup>2</sup>"Theatres and Music", Spectator, XXIII (November 23, 1850), p.1113.

<sup>3</sup>Alba H. Warren, English Poetic Theory, 1825-1865 (1950), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

supported the "select beauties" approach to the drama. In fact it was the only approach that was popularly encouraged for in spite of what Lamb or Hazlitt had seen as ennobling passion many of the details of the drama were questionable. The characters of The Duchess of Malfi for example were seen as "so many lumps of moral deformity",<sup>1</sup> and in 1854 G. Gilfillan announced that "more beastly, elaborate, and incessant filth and obscenity are not to be found in all literature, than in the plays" of Beaumont, Fletcher, and Massinger.<sup>2</sup> While earlier writers had praised the drama's "unshrinking honesty" that could only "offend the over-delicate and morbid",<sup>3</sup> by 1830 even Lamb's expurgated Specimens was felt by some to be "certainly not fit for female reading".<sup>4</sup> If the drama was read by general readers it was in expurgated family library editions or they could concentrate on the most instructive and beautiful portions included in such collections as The Beauties and Spirit of English Tragedy (1833).

Although popular interest in the drama waned, throughout the mid-century scholarly and editorial work continued, producing the raw materials for the second revival which culminated in the Mermaid Series. The Rev. Alexander Dyce began his remarkable editing career in 1828 and in forty-one years published the complete works of nine dramatists -- Peele (1828), Webster (1830), Greene (1831), Shirley (1833), Middleton

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<sup>1</sup>"Theatres and Music", p. 1113.

<sup>2</sup>"Modern Critics. No. 1. -- Hazlitt and Hallam" in his A Third Gallery of Portraits (1854), p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Old English Plays, [edited by C. W. Dilke] (1814-1815), I, xv.

<sup>4</sup>"Art. XIII. The Family Library", Monthly Review, XIV (May, 1830), p. 142.

(1840), Beaumont and Fletcher (1843-1846), Marlowe (1850), Shakespeare (1857), and Ford (1869). In 1840 the Percy Society (1840-1853) and the Shakespeare Society (1840-1851) were established to advance scholarship and editorial work. Through these editions and the subtle influence of Lamb's Specimens interest in the drama also spread to the two young men mainly responsible for the second revival, Symonds and Swinburne. Both discovered the drama through Lamb -- Swinburne when he was about twelve and Symonds when he was studying for examinations at Oxford.<sup>1</sup> The influence of Lamb's approach on Swinburne was particularly long-lasting.

In 1865 Symonds's three part study "The English Drama during the Reigns of Elizabeth and James" appeared in the Cornhill Magazine. His vivid evocation of the spirit of the times was designed to appeal to the nationalistic feelings of the general reader; and he tried to excuse the morality of the drama by stressing that it reflected an energetic and passionate society. Although the milieu approach was not new, it rarely had been used so vividly and so entertainingly. He followed through with a series on the drama for the Pall Mall Gazette and essays for the Academy. Although Swinburne at this stage was mostly involved in writing poetry, his first essay on the drama, "John Ford", appeared in 1871 and his important study of Chapman was published in 1874. He also aroused controversial interest in the work of F. J. Furnivall's New Shakspere Society (founded in 1874) by engaging in violent arguments over dating

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<sup>1</sup>See The Letters of John Addington Symonds, edited by Herbert Schueller and Robert Peters (1966-1969), I, 344, 356. Hereafter referred to as Symonds, Letters. Also The Swinburne Letters, edited by Cecil Lang (1957-1962), VI, 41; and Edmund Gosse, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne (1917), p. 17. Hereafter Swinburne's letters are referred to as Swinburne, Letters.

and determining the authorship of texts.<sup>1</sup> Symonds's and Swinburne's essays were supported by A. W. Ward's History of English Dramatic Literature (1875) and by further editions of the drama including a new Dodsley (1874-1876); Francis Cunningham's revisions of Gifford's Massinger (1872), and Jonson (1868); Pearson's diplomatic reprints of Dekker, Heywood, and Chapman (1873-1874); and A. H. Bullen's expensive limited editions of Day, Marlowe, Middleton, Marston, Peele, Davenport, Nabbes, and miscellaneous plays (1881-1890). In 1884 the Elizabethan Literary Society was formed with an aim to spread interest and knowledge to people of all classes; its membership included the Mermaid editors Symonds, Gosse, Ellis and Rhys.

Concomitant with this growing interest in the drama was a new aestheticism, epitomized by Walter Pater's Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873). To many the prudery fostered by evangelical forces in society and the stress on the utilitarian functions of art were stifling. Pater's definition of the Renaissance as a movement which stressed "the love of things of the intellect and the imagination for their own sake" and a "desire for a more liberal and comely way of conceiving life",<sup>2</sup> and his stress on its "spirit of rebellion and revolt against the moral and religious ideas of the time"<sup>3</sup> made a powerful appeal to "all who found themselves cramped by the narrow moral standards

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<sup>1</sup>See Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record, with a biography by John Munro (1911), pp. lvi-lix.

<sup>2</sup>The Renaissance, edited by Kenneth Clark (1961), p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

and timid conventionality of middle class society".<sup>1</sup> Some Victorians adopted Pater's aestheticism and many became newly interested in the art of the Renaissance. Each of the four major editors of the Mermaid Series -- Symonds, Swinburne, Ellis and Symons -- turned to the drama of the English Renaissance partially for these reasons.

The idea of the Mermaid Series first occurred to Symonds in 1883 after he had finished Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama. He suggested it to his publisher George Smith and thought that his book might serve "as a sort of extensive introduction".<sup>2</sup> However, Smith was not interested mainly because Symonds's book was poorly received. In June, 1886, Havelock Ellis began to consider such a series as well and wrote to Symonds asking for advice about it. He gave Ellis many practical suggestions about editors and publishers and enthusiastically backed his work. Their ideas differed in one important respect reflecting the difference in their concepts of the drama and of their audience. Where Symonds told Smith the plays should be expurgated of "superfluous nastiness",<sup>3</sup> Ellis's idea behind the series was to make "the best of these plays. . .generally accessible, and in such a way that the finest of all were not omitted for the sake of some absurd prudery".<sup>4</sup>

At the time when Henry Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) began the Mermaid Series he was described by Arthur Symons as "a remarkably clever

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<sup>1</sup>Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought (1948), p. 181.

<sup>2</sup>Symonds, Letters, II, 865.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 844.

<sup>4</sup>My Life (1940), p. 166.

& interesting fellow" who was "studying surgery, reviewing theology for the Westminster. . . & writing essays to please himself"; and who was also "something of a socialist".<sup>1</sup> Ellis had recently returned from a teaching post in the Australian outback where he had confronted his adolescent confusion between the spiritual "unuttered poetry" of sex and its physical side "imparted in us by Nature for. . . the propagation of the species".<sup>2</sup> Unable to get any accurate information about sex to help resolve his confusion he decided to "make it the main business of my life to get to the real natural facts of sex. . . and so spare the youth of future generations the trouble and perplexity which this ignorance has caused me".<sup>3</sup> It was his Studies in the Psychology of Sex which eventually fulfilled this aim but to some extent he also saw the Mermaid Series in this light. To him because "sex lies at the root of life",<sup>4</sup> all great literature "touches nakedly and sanely on the central facts of sex" and "is thus, to the adolescent soul, a part of sexual education".<sup>5</sup>

Because of his insistence that the series be unexpurgated, Ellis had difficulty finding a publisher. Finally, in spite of Symonds's warnings,<sup>6</sup> Henry Vizetelly was chosen. When Ellis contacted him he was publishing mainly cheap sensational novels, but also some works he

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<sup>1</sup>Princeton University Library, Arthur Symons Collection (hereafter PUL, ASC), Letter to Churchill Osborne, January 3, 1886.

<sup>2</sup>The Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, Havelock Ellis Collection, Item I, Diary (Microfilm Copy), November 8, 1877, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup>Preface to Studies in the Psychology of Sex, fourth edition (1936), I, ix.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, xxx.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., IV, Part I, 90.

<sup>6</sup>See Symonds, Letters, III, 151.

believed to have artistic merit. He eagerly adopted Ellis's plan, agreeing to include "unexpurgated" on the cover and title page and a note verifying that "in no case do the Plays undergo any process of expurgation . . . although they may sometimes run counter to what is called modern taste".<sup>1</sup> Most of the editors Ellis chose were young writers who shared his unconventional views, but Vizetelly insisted "that one or two names of mark should be secured for the preliminary announcement of the series, other wise it would certainly fall flat".<sup>2</sup> Ellis chose Symonds, Swinburne, and Edmund Gosse. Symonds provided the general introduction to the series, which was included with Christopher Marlowe. He also introduced Thomas Heywood and edited and introduced Webster and Tourneur. Swinburne introduced Volume One of Thomas Middleton; and Gosse introduced James Shirley. For the other volumes Ellis chose aspiring literary men like himself: Arthur Symonds edited and introduced Philip Massinger, and John Day's Humour Out of Breath and A Parliament of Bees included in Nero and Other Plays; Ernest Rhys edited and introduced Thomas Dekker; J. St. Loe Strachey edited and introduced the two volumes of Beaumont and Fletcher; Herbert Horne edited and introduced Nero in Nero and Other Plays; and A. W. Verity edited Thomas Heywood and edited and introduced Field's Amends for Ladies and A Woman is a Weathercock included in Nero and Other Plays. Ellis himself edited and introduced Christopher Marlowe, John Ford, Henry Porter's Two Angry Women of Abington included in Nero and Other Plays and Volume Two of Thomas Middleton.

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, edited by Havelock Ellis, general introduction to the series by J. A. Symonds (1887), end advertisement.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Houston Peterson, Havelock Ellis: Philosopher of Love (1928), p. 176.

The first volume of the series, Christopher Marlowe, was well received. The reviewer for the Pall Mall Gazette for example noted that it answered a great need because previously the plays were available only in "cumbrous, or crabbed, or rare, or luxurious editions". Thus most readers had found it impossible to "share in [the] raptures" of the "inner circle". So, he concluded, "the 'Mermaid Series' comes in a happy hour. We may say of it, 'Marry, well bethought!' and . . . 'On the whole, well done'".<sup>1</sup> Edward Johnson in The Dial also hailed the series as "the first really popular edition" and noted its low price and attractive appearance.<sup>2</sup>

The volumes were indeed both cheap and attractive. They cost two shillings and six pence which was dear in relation to the cost of living in 1887 when a working class family of four could live on thirty shillings a week;<sup>3</sup> but inexpensive compared with the price of other books: a novel usually cost six shillings and a multi-volume edition of a dramatist cost twenty shillings.<sup>4</sup> The volumes were small (5 x 7½ inches); the bindings were usually light brown with elaborate dark brown ornamentation, and there was also a plain green binding which some preferred.<sup>5</sup> The texts were printed on good quality paper and many decorations were used at the beginning and end of acts and scenes.<sup>6</sup> The texts were also convenient to use: they were modernized and the brief, explanatory notes

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<sup>1</sup>"The Best Plays of the Old Dramatists", Pall Mall Gazette, XLV (June 17, 1887), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>"Christopher Marlowe", Dial, VIII (September, 1887), p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Helen Lynd, England in the Eighteen Eighties (1945), p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Book Prices from the Pall Mall Gazette, 1887.

<sup>5</sup>See PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, April 13, 1887.

<sup>6</sup>See illustrations in appendix.

were placed at the bottom of the page. Thus the Mermaid volumes were far superior to the large, often double-columned anthologies or the expensive multi-volume complete works which readers previously had been forced to rely on. The former were difficult to use because of their size, often unsystematic grouping of plays, and inadequate annotation. The latter were likewise inconvenient because they were large and either inadequately annotated or had long, argumentative and unhelpful notes.

In spite of the enthusiastic welcome given the Mermaid Series, Vizetelly's publication of the new volumes ceased at the end of 1888, because of the trouble he encountered trying to publish the novels of Zola. In the 1880's Zola's work was felt by many to be ugly and immoral.<sup>1</sup> Vizetelly was always interested in books with a sensational appeal and also believed in the merit of Zola's work. But when his publication of only lightly expurgated editions of Zola was discovered by the National Vigilance Association he was brought to court, fined for publishing an obscene libel and told not to publish the novels again. He disobeyed and in spite of appeals,<sup>2</sup> was sent to prison in 1888; his firm went bankrupt. Although there was much turmoil in the company and many delays in printing,<sup>3</sup> Ellis managed to get fourteen volumes published:

Christopher Marlowe, Volume One of Thomas Middleton, Volume One of Philip Massinger, John Ford, Nero and Other Plays, Volumes One and Two

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<sup>1</sup>See Clarence R. Decker, "Zola's Literary Reputation in England", PMLA, XLIX (1934), pp. 1140-1153.

<sup>2</sup>Vizetelly's son composed a plea for a suspended sentence which was signed by over 100 literary men. See the J. Harlin O'Connell Collection of the Eighteen Nineties in the Princeton University Library.

<sup>3</sup>Symons for example complained that only a few pages of his Philip Massinger were being printed a week and at one point some of the copy was lost. See PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, January 5, 1887.

of Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster and Tourneur, James Shirley, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, William Wycherly, William Congreve, and Thomas Otway.<sup>1</sup> But more had been planned: Ellis had begun an introduction to George Chapman which Brinsley Nicholson was to edit; Arden of Feversham and Other Plays Attributed to Shakespeare was to be edited by Symons; Patient Grizzel and Other Plays by Rhys; The Parson's Wedding and Other Plays by Verity and E. C. Ward; The Spanish Tragedy and Other Plays by W. H. Dirks; Ben Jonson by Brinsley Nicholson and C. H. Herford; Nathaniel Lee by Verity and Gosse; Crowne and Southerne by Charles Sayle and Herford; Richard Brome by J. Baxter; John Marston by Symonds; Thomas Shadwell by G. Saintsbury; Etherege and Lacy by Symons and Ward; and John Dryden by Richard Garnett. This is a formidable list and had it been completed the Mermaid Series would have effectively fulfilled its aim of offering "Plays by little known writers, which although often so admirable are now almost inaccessible".<sup>2</sup>

Early in 1889 T. Fisher Unwin in London and Charles Scribner's Sons in New York took over publication of the series. Ellis was dropped as general editor. The volumes continued to be printed but no new ones except the second volume of Symons's Philip Massinger appeared until 1893 when the projected three volume Ben Jonson was published. Others eventually to appear were Richard Steele (1894) edited and introduced by G.A. Aitken; George Chapman (1895) edited and introduced by W. L. Phelps; and

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<sup>1</sup>I shall not be considering any of the volumes of Restoration or eighteenth-century drama.

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Marlowe, end advertisement. Phyllis Grosskurth has pointed out that Eleanor Marx was also asked to edit a play: A Warning to Fair Women, possibly to be included with one of the collections such as The Spanish Tragedy and Other Plays. See her Havelock Ellis: A Biography (1980), p. 112.

John Vanbrugh (1896) edited and introduced by A. E. H. Swaen. These volumes appeared in the format Vizetelly had designed but with "unexpurgated" dropped from the title page and cover. In 1903 the series was revamped: it was made smaller and slimmer and an elegant pink cloth or red leather binding with gold decorations was designed. All the volumes except George Chapman were reprinted in this new form. By 1909 four more had been added: Thomas Shadwell (1903) and John Dryden (1904) edited and introduced by Saintsbury; George Farquhar (1906) edited and introduced by William Archer; and Robert Greene (1909) edited and introduced by Thomas Dickinson.<sup>1</sup>

The four main writers who worked on the Mermaid Series when Vizetelly was publisher -- Symonds, Swinburne, Symons and Ellis -- represent an interesting cross-section of late nineteenth-century criticism. Symonds attempted to be an historian, Symons and Swinburne were both impressionistic critics but with quite different approaches, and Ellis concentrated on psychological and racial analysis.

John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) was in many ways the best editor of the series and today his approach to the drama appears to be the most congenial. His main aim in his writing was to be an historian and during a life plagued and finally cut short by tuberculosis he wrote prolifically on all aspects of the Renaissance. Although "by nature, and by urgent desire, he was a poet",<sup>2</sup> Symonds turned to writing history for a number of reasons. First, he enjoyed studying the lives of Renaissance men and

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<sup>1</sup>In 1926 Unwin was absorbed by Ernest Benn and in 1948 Benn in London and Hill and Wang in New York began reprinting the Mermaids. Since then a number have been reprinted both in hardback and paper -- some with reset type and no decorations. In 1964 Benn began the New Mermaids series with Philip Brockbank and Brian Morris as general editors and added many scholarly editions of individual plays to the series.

<sup>2</sup>J. R. Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance: the Growth of Interest in Its History and Art (1954), p. 169.

lived vicariously through them. As a homosexual he was interested in the platonic idealism of male friendships in the Renaissance and the general moral freedom of the times. He often described people and events with such devoted, subjective eloquence that J. R. Hale suggests he used history as an emotional outlet. While he was afraid to write what he felt in verse, he could safely use historical topics "as a means of self-expression".<sup>1</sup>

A second reason was that his scientific father and his tutor at Oxford, Benjamin Jowett, basically distrusted literary criticism and, fearful that it might lead the young Symonds into dilettantism, instilled a similar distrust in him. He thought that neither the "dogmatic critic" who "attempts to fix a standard of taste, propriety and beauty; and judge by rule" or the "aesthetic critic" who "too easily becomes a voluptuary"<sup>2</sup> were correctly fulfilling "the ruling instinct of the present century".<sup>3</sup> To Symonds this instinct was scientific: a critic should explain literature by applying Darwinian evolution to the history of literature. He should discover "links of connection between man and man", the "common qualities" and the "ruling principles" of the development of art. Only then had he "the right to style the result of his studies anything better than a bundle of literary essays".<sup>4</sup> Symonds was right in calling his application of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>2</sup>"Studies in the History of the Renaissance, by Walter H. Pater", Academy, IV (March 15, 1873), p. 103.

<sup>3</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama (1884), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

evolution to literature a fulfillment of the instinct of the times for the mid- and late-nineteenth century saw a great growth in the optimistic trust placed in popular science, particularly in the principles of evolution. Darwin's discoveries seemed to supply "a missing link in the chain of reasoning" and suggested that "all human problems were ultimately solvable" for if man were a part of a continually evolving nature so also were his arts and institutions and they could be investigated by the methods Darwin used.<sup>1</sup> In 1890 Havelock Ellis, whose work fits into the same tradition, declared that Darwin's "devotion to truth" and "instinctive search after the causes of things" had "become what may be called a new faith".<sup>2</sup> W. E. Houghton points out that this "extension of scientific assumptions and methods from the physical world to the whole life of man" was "perhaps the most important development in nineteenth-century intellectual history".<sup>3</sup> But it also allowed "the name of science to be claimed by woolly speculations" for it was used in areas where it was completely unsuitable.<sup>4</sup> As René Wellek has pointed out "Darwinian or Spencerian evolution is false when applied to literature because there are no fixed genres comparable to biological species. . . . There is no inevitable growth and decay. . . no actual struggle for life among the genres".<sup>5</sup> Symonds himself realized that it was unsuitable to

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Wood Krutch, The Modern Temper, A Study and Confession (1931), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>The New Spirit (1980), pp. 6-7.

<sup>3</sup>The Victorian Frame of Mind (1957), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>A.O.J. Cockshut, The Unbelievers: English Agnostic Thought 1840-1890 (1964), p. 85.

<sup>5</sup>"The Concept of Evolution in Literary History", in his Concepts of Criticism, edited by Stephen G. Nichols (1963), p. 51.

literature: in 1884 after finishing his valiant application of evolution in Shakespeare's Predecessors he wrote to T. S. Perry that he distrusted Darwinian evolution and added "it seems unwise to dogmatize upon the courses of development".<sup>1</sup>

The faults of Symonds's writing--his lack of historical objectivity and the misapplication of evolution -- are further complicated by his verbose style. Symonds's many personal problems and illnesses made him view the physical process of writing as an escape. Concentrating more on the quantity of material covered and pages written than the quality of his work, he rarely revised his writing but let it be published with many disturbing repetitions and contradictions. Furthermore, obsessed by guilt, he was overly eager to gain his middle-class readers' approval and went to great lengths to explain and excuse the morality of the art he discussed. Yet because he secretly admired and longed for the freedom of the past his tone often contradicted the facts he presented. Andrew Lang noticed this discrepancy and suggested "we seem to have a running chorus -- 'Naughty, naughty, but so nice'".<sup>2</sup>

Symonds's imperfect, verbose style, moralizings, unsuccessful historical and evolutionary method are serious drawbacks to his work as a whole and have prevented readers from discovering his shorter essays on the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.<sup>3</sup> These deserve to be re-assessed

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, II, 987. He continued, however, to find the idea of the evolution of society attractive for he hoped that eventually democracy and an ideal of male comradeship similar to what he thought he saw in Whitman's work would become dominant.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Letters, II, 488.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Schueller, for example, in his 1941 doctoral dissertation "John Addington Symonds as a Theoretical and as a Practical Critic", (University of Michigan) has nothing but contempt for his practical work.

because they are among the best of the nineteenth century. They were also important to the Mermaid Series for they helped to create an audience eager to read the plays.

In his essays Symonds makes a careful attempt to have a whole view of the drama -- to study it not as a collection of "poetic" extracts but as a whole theatrical experience. As Phyllis Grosskurth points out, this is partly because of his visual approach to art;<sup>1</sup> but he also seems to have studied Schlegel's ideas. He followed his suggestion to try to achieve the "universality of mind" through which he might be able to "transport himself into the peculiarities of other ages and nations, to feel them as it were from their proper central point",<sup>2</sup> as his strong identification with the periods he discussed indicates. So also he considered Schlegel's question "What is dramatic" and like Schlegel concluded that it is "the presentation of. . .character in action"<sup>3</sup> and that it is life objectified.<sup>4</sup> The essential quality Symonds thought drama should have was "dramatic energy" -- "the power to make men and women move before us with self-evident reality".<sup>5</sup> Again and again he stressed that drama was "written, not to be read and studied, but to be acted".<sup>6</sup> When he

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<sup>1</sup>See Phyllis Grosskurth, "The Genesis of Symonds's Elizabethan Criticism" in Modern Language Review, LIX (1964), 183-193.

<sup>2</sup>Schlegel, I, 3.

<sup>3</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors, p. 6. See Schlegel, I, 20.

<sup>4</sup>"The Novel and the Drama", Saturday Review, XVII (1864), p. 313. See Schlegel, I, 22.

<sup>5</sup>"Is Poetry at Bottom a Criticism of Life", in his Essays Speculative and Suggestive (1890), II, 160.

<sup>6</sup>"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood (First Notice)", Academy, VI (July 18, 1874), p. 57.

discussed a specific play, unlike Coleridge or Hazlitt, or even later writers like A. W. Ward, he began by relating its plot often with long extracts. While this appears unnecessary today, it was essential before 1887 when texts of the plays were scarce; it also insured that Symonds would view the play not just as character, language, and passion, but as a complete entity. He would often draw the reader's attention to the possible effectiveness of a play on stage or to its theatrical weakness or tried to describe a hypothetical performance. His approach was unique in its time and foreshadows our modern attempts to deal with a drama as a whole work of art. The main drawbacks to his dramatic criticism lay in his preference for what Schlegel had called romantic drama and his prejudices against classical drama such as Jonson's. His definition of drama as life objectified also inhibited his appreciation of the more macabre plays, great villains, or idealized characters.

A. C. Swinburne (1837-1909) was Symonds's immediate contemporary but his approach to the drama has more in common with Lamb's and Hazlitt's. Indeed, he told Edmund Gosse that Lamb's Specimens "taught me more than any other [book] in the world -- that and the Bible".<sup>1</sup> Swinburne was notorious among poetry readers for his sadistic-masochistic writings, but Elizabethan enthusiasts held him in high regard. He had written a number of essays on the drama for periodicals and for the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and at the time the Mermaids were being published he had written a revolutionary article on Tourneur. Because

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Gosse, The Life of Algernon Charles Swinburne, p. 17.

it did not take shape as he would have liked, he did not participate actively in work on the Mermaid Series; however he was generally concerned with spreading knowledge about the dramatists, editorial standards and availability of texts. He felt "every English play in existence down to 1640 must be worth re-printing",<sup>1</sup> but found the work of most editors disappointing. W. C. Hazlitt's fourth edition of the Dodsley for example was "slovenly. . .blundering. . .pretentious" and incompetent.<sup>2</sup> He devoted much of the later years of his life to writing essays on the dramatists which he intended to collect into a series of Elizabethan studies. However he completed only the Study of Shakespeare, Study of Ben Jonson and Age of Shakespeare. He felt the latter was his "magnum opus" and told Arthur Symons that it contained "so much of my life, of my thoughts, of my reading, of my research. . .that I don't mind if it chances to be my last book of prose"<sup>3</sup>. It was his last book; Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise collected his remaining Elizabethan essays and published them in 1919 as Contemporaries of Shakespeare.

Swinburne is usually classed with impressionistic critics although his work has greater intensity and is much more complex than Lamb's and Hazlitt's. The main reason for both its intensity and complexity is that Swinburne was not simply presenting his impression of a work of art but his experience, as a poet, with it. Given that art presents a unique

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<sup>1</sup>Swinburne, Letters, IV, 279-280.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 81.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Arthur Symons, "Algernon Charles Swinburne: With Some Unpublished Letters", The Living Age, CCXCII (June 16, 1917), p. 672.

perception of reality, his prose is his attempt, as an artist with his own perception, to come to terms with a work of art, to create a rapport with it. Stylistically the record of these encounters is very difficult as he tries again and again to refine and communicate what he himself knew was ultimately an incommunicable experience.<sup>1</sup> An average passage of his criticism is filled with elaborate analogies and similes which "are not merely redundant expressions"<sup>2</sup> but reveal the stages in his experience as he and a work of art find their common ground. This method has some dangerous drawbacks, for not only is it extremely difficult for a reader to follow, but it is also highly subjective. It was impossible for him to release his own personal ideas about art in order to appreciate something out of keeping with his tastes. When there was nothing in a work of art which Swinburne felt drawn to he reacted with boredom or anger. If an artist included a quality in his art which did not appeal to him he would ignore it, thus distorting the art; or he would react with violent anger because the artist did not seem to be living up to what Swinburne saw as the conditions of his art. Similarly when he created a rapport with a work of art he could react with such extreme admiration that he again distorted the work.

Swinburne's taste was rigidly romantic. Like Lamb he used the term "poetry" in its broadest sense and felt that it had two essential characteristics: it had to be a product of the imagination and it had to have harmony. He defined imagination as the controlling power of creation which insured that art would be correct in all its details. To Swinburne sublimity was the ultimate "test of imagination"<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup>See "Wordsworth and Byron", in The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne, edited by Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise (1925-1927), XIV, 24. Hereafter referred to as Swinburne, Works.

<sup>2</sup>Jerome J. McGann, Swinburne: An Experiment in Criticism (1972), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup>"Christopher Marlowe", in his The Age of Shakespeare (1908), p. 1.

constituted a "great gulf fixed" between the creative genius and the constructive intellect.<sup>1</sup> Imagination would insure that a work of art was "serious, simple, perfect" and spontaneous. The latter was vital for "the mark of painstaking as surely lowers the style as any sign of negligence". Swinburne defined harmony as a kind of organic unity "guiding without constraining";<sup>2</sup> but also used the term in a musical sense for he conceived of a poet as a singer and "the first indispensable faculty of a singer is the ability to sing".<sup>3</sup> While he asserted that "there never was and never will be a poet who had verbal harmony and nothing else",<sup>4</sup> he was only attracted to poetry that had a "bird-like note of passionate music" or a "sweet and spontaneous fluency"<sup>5</sup> which he found in its rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and images. One of Swinburne's favourite critical activities was ranking poets into the categories of Gods and Giants. The Gods had harmony and sublime imaginative powers and included Shakespeare and Marlowe; the Giants had great intellectual powers and included Chapman and Jonson. Unfortunately while such comparison and judgment is felt to be a main responsibility of a critic, as Wellek points out, Swinburne's method of ranking is based so purely on his personal taste that it "loses all interests

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<sup>1</sup>"A Note on Charlotte Brontë", Works, XIV, 5.

<sup>2</sup>"The Poems of Dante Gabriel Rossetti", Works, XV, 4-5.

<sup>3</sup>"Collins", Works, XIV, 151.

<sup>4</sup>"Under the Microscope", Works, XVI, 416.

<sup>5</sup>"John Ford", in his Essays and Studies, (1875), p. 283.

except as it gratifies our curiosity about the poet's opinions".<sup>1</sup>

Swinburne also had particular quirks of taste which affected his writing on the drama. He adored descriptions of nature at her most violent, had a great respect for extreme villains, and paradoxically for sentimental, idealized portraits of women and children. When these ingredients were included in a drama he often praised them extravagantly, neglecting more essential aspects.

Swinburne was so deeply affected by his study of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama that he attempted to imitate the form. He wrote his first drama in the Elizabethan style when he was still at Eton. He called it The Unhappy Revenge and later told Churton Collins that into it he had "contrived to pack about twice as many rapes and about three times as many murders" as are contained in the model, The Revenger's Tragedy.<sup>2</sup> His next attempt, Laugh and Lie Down, was written while at Oxford. It was a comedy "after (a long way after) the late manner of Fletcher",<sup>3</sup> concerning Imperia, a courtesan, who whips her page and finally has him beaten to death. He published his first poetic dramas in 1860 and continued to make attempts in the form until his death. Among his many plays only one, Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards, seems to have theatrical potential; the others are clogged with elaborate,

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<sup>1</sup>A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950, The Later Nineteenth Century (1966), p. 374.

<sup>2</sup>Letters, III, 229. In this letter Swinburne said that he could not remember the title of the play and that he had burned it. In a footnote Lang identified it as Laugh and Lie Down, the play he wrote at Oxford. Philip Henderson, however, has identified it as The Unhappy Revenge which he has located in a manuscript notebook now in the British Library. See Swinburne: The Portrait of a Poet (1974), pp. 15-16.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, II, 343.

sensual language and ignore what Schlegel noted as the essential ingredient of drama--action. A reviewer of The Queen Mother (1860) for example was amazed to discover that someone could "make the crimes of Catherine de Medici dull".<sup>1</sup> Swinburne's dramatic attempts point out the futility of trying to imitate the art form of one period in another -- an attempt made by many Victorian poets and playwrights which was ultimately responsible for the mediocrity of Victorian theatre. More importantly, for our purposes, it also illustrates the inadequacy of the fragmented approach to the drama. If poetic drama were only, as Coleridge suggested, passion, language, and character, then Swinburne's drama should be more successful for it has the first two in plenty. But he did not appreciate that the "poetry" of drama lies "in the depth and strength of the whole meaning of the stage action, and only indirectly in the words spoken".<sup>2</sup> For a play to work, it must have a plot, dialogue, action, an air of reality and fit together as a whole. Swinburne's understanding of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama did not include these qualities; he did not appreciate them in the plays he studied; he could not reproduce them. The verse of his poetic drama was not a way of assembling and creating dramatic meaning as it had been to the Elizabethans or as it is in the case of good modern poetic drama. His imitations are sterile and lifeless. Similarly his remarks upon the plays are "the notes upon poets by a poet"<sup>3</sup> which deserve reading but cannot communicate all the qualities of the drama because he did not feel them.

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<sup>1</sup>"Unsigned Notice, Atheneum", reprinted in Swinburne, The Critical Heritage, edited by Clyde Hyder (1970), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>J. L. Styan, The Elements of Drama (1963), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>T. S. Eliot, "Imperfect Critics: Swinburne as Critic", in his The Sacred Wood, second edition (1928), p. 17.

Arthur Symons was also an impressionistic critic but his impressionism was much more firmly embedded in a theory of art and its relation to life than Swinburne's. He modelled himself closely on Pater in asserting that one should make life as full as possible by attempting to apprehend the significance of everything seen and done<sup>1</sup> and by quickening our "sense of life" with "the poetic passion, the desire of beauty".<sup>2</sup> Symons added to this his own deeply held conviction that art was "before all things, an escape".<sup>3</sup> His critical approach was also similar to Pater's. Pater had agreed with Arnold that the aim of criticism is "to see the object as in itself it really is" but added that to fulfill this aim one must first "know one's own impression as it really is". Art to Pater was a receptacle "of so many powers or forces" which produce a sensation and impression;<sup>4</sup> the critic's function "is to distinguish, to analyse. . .the virtue" which "produces this special impression. . .to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced".<sup>5</sup> He needs no aesthetic standards, only "a certain kind of temperament" which is "deeply moved by the presence of beautiful objects".<sup>6</sup> Arthur Symons had such

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<sup>1</sup>Pater, The Renaissance, pp. 222-223.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>3</sup>The Symbolist Movement in Literature, second edition (1908), p. 172.

<sup>4</sup>Pater, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

a temperament. One of his close friends, W. B. Yeats, noted that he and Symons always discussed life "at its most intense moment, that moment. . . in which one discovers something supernatural, a stirring as it were of the roots of the hair".<sup>1</sup> Symons discussed art in the same way -- concentrating on the most intense aspect of a work of art -- the emotional experience at its centre -- and relating his own experience and understanding of it. Yeats further testified that Symons "more than any man I have ever known, could slip as it were into the mind of another".<sup>2</sup> Accordingly his best work is more than a record of his personal impressions; it attempts to pass into the mind of the creator himself and re-create as nearly as possible the moment of creation. When Symons's criticism does this it offers an important insight into a work of art and this is its main value for us today. We tend to want to know all about a work of art and do not publicly explore the emotional experience which prompted it and which is embodied in it. Although explorations of the emotional side of art are generally disparaged today because of their subjectivity, Symons's criticism is "far superior to most of the type"<sup>3</sup> because its beautiful style frequently does seem to convey something of the profundity of the aesthetic experience.

Nevertheless, Symons's criticism is subjective and for it to be helpful a reader must have tastes similar to his. He was most interested in symbolist art which he defined as seeking "the very essence of truth" by its attempt to relate "the 'soul' of that which can be

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<sup>1</sup>Yeats, Autobiographies (1955), p. 320.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>3</sup>Eliot, "The Perfect Critic", in his The Sacred Wood, p. 6.

apprehended only by the soul -- the finer sense of things unseen, the deeper meaning of things evident".<sup>1</sup> He searched for this deeper meaning in all art. To him the best style had its origins in unspeakable profundity, rising "beautifully out of a depth into which words have never stretched down their roots".<sup>2</sup> Poetry should deal with these depths and not present simply ideas or real life. Donne for example committed "heresy" by using words in his verse "that have had no time to take colour from men's association of them with beauty", and by putting thoughts "into verse as if he were setting forth an argument". This was "the real thing" but "poetry will have nothing to do with real things, until it has translated them into a diviner world".<sup>3</sup> Symons required of an artist "a world like our own, but a world infinitely more vigorous, interesting, profound".<sup>4</sup> His ideas naturally extended into his consideration of poetic drama where he felt the aim was not to realistically present life<sup>5</sup> but "to create a new world in a new atmosphere, where the laws of human existence are no longer recognized".<sup>6</sup> For Symons it was the use of verse as opposed to prose in drama which allowed this world to be created. "Verse" he thought "can render [emotions] more as they are in the soul, not being tied down to probable words, as prose talk is. . . . Poetry, which is. . . the speech of something deeper

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<sup>1</sup>"The Decadent Movement in Literature", Harper's New Monthly Magazine, XXVI (November, 1893), p. 859.

<sup>2</sup>"Francis Thompson", in his Dramatis Personae (1925), p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>"John Donne", in his Figures of Several Centuries (1916), p. 105.

<sup>4</sup>"Balzac", in his Studies in Prose and Verse [1904], p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>"On Crossing Stage Right", in his Plays Acting and Music, second edition (1909), p. 168.

<sup>6</sup>"Algernon Charles Swinburne", Figures of Several Centuries, p. 189.

than thought, may let loose some part of that answer which would justify the soul".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, Symons thought, the poetic dramatist "may come much nearer to the truth, to the real meaning of words, than the dramatist who writes in prose can ever come".<sup>2</sup>

These ideas anticipate our modern justifications for using verse in drama and were supported by his own dramatic attempts and theories of the theatre.<sup>3</sup> Although his drama was not commercially successful, it was performed and was more successful than Swinburne's because he was not trying to imitate an archaic form. Indeed, in one of his earliest papers, read at a meeting of the Browning Society in 1885, he pointed out the necessity of dramatic form growing out of its time. Thus Browning "could never naturally and healthily take the same course as Shakespeare".<sup>4</sup> Symons's own poetic drama grew out of his symbolist concerns; he used verse to extend the range and power of his language and to evoke an awareness of the spiritual dimensions of life. However, when he turned to the poetic drama of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period he seemed to forget the historical context from which this art form grew and studied it in the light of his own symbolist expectations. He devoted much of his study to searching for evidence of what Frank Kermode calls the "radiant truth out of space and time"<sup>5</sup> in the

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<sup>1</sup>"A Theory of the Stage", Plays Acting and Music, pp. 211-212.

<sup>2</sup>"Mr. Stephen Philips", Studies in Prose and Verse, p. 253.

<sup>3</sup>See "A Theory of the Stage", pp. 200-212.

<sup>4</sup>"Is Browning Dramatic?", read at the 29th meeting of the Browning Society, Friday, January 30, 1885. (In the Arthur Symons Collection, Princeton University Library.)

<sup>5</sup>Frank Kermode, The Romantic Image (1971), p. 13.

Elizabethan drama. His search was not futile but he was often disappointed because communicating these truths was not necessarily the intention of Elizabethan drama -- particularly not of the dramatists who concerned him most, Middleton and Massinger. One can see in his essays that he tried to remain open-minded; unlike Swinburne he was never angry with art which did not fulfill his expectations. But they were too intense for him to relinquish them and study the drama in relation to its own poetic conventions.

Symonds, Swinburne, and Symons were romantic critics; they considered poetry as an expression of spontaneous emotion and used terms to describe it similar to Wordsworth's or Coleridge's. Havelock Ellis, as a psychologist, scientist, and radical moralist, approached art almost without standards. To him anything was art; even "the true man of science is an artist".<sup>1</sup> His main principle was that life and art were inseparable: living was an art and to cultivate it one should learn to see beauty in all things for "to see the World as Beauty is the whole End of Living".<sup>2</sup> Unlike Symons or Swinburne with their narrow sense of beauty the art Ellis appreciated most was that which presented the fullest view of life; he turned to the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama not out of "the poetic passion, the desire of beauty" but because he appreciated its wholeness

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<sup>1</sup>The Dance of Life (1923), p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Impressions and Comments: Second Series (1921), p. 139.

of view. To Ellis the best way to understand the view of life in a work of art was to understand the personality of the artist. In criticism analyzing an artist's personality seemed to him to fulfil the century's "ruling instinct". He disapproved of Arnold's moralism, Pater's impressionistic evocative style, Swinburne's strong likes and dislikes. He approved only of Symonds's catholicity and of Taine's desire to be a "naturalist of the soul". The latter seemed to have "a clear and distinct scientific conception" underlying it.<sup>1</sup> Although being a "naturalist of the soul" hardly sounds today like a "scientific conception" it is another illustration of the "woolly speculations" that were passed off as science in the nineteenth century.

Ellis wanted his criticism too to have a scientific basis. Because he concentrated on the personality of an artist he turned to current theories of heredity in order to explain it scientifically for he believed that "the qualities we have inherited from our ancestors count for more in our lives than anything we have acquired by our own personal efforts".<sup>2</sup> Following this assumption if one could learn all about a writer's heredity, his work and view of life would be explained. To analyze a single individual's heredity is an almost impossible task; but Ellis further complicated it by including the qualities of an artist's "race" in his inherited characteristics. In subscribing to these concepts of race and heredity Ellis was using a set of popular nineteenth-century pseudo-scientific assumptions which arose first from the misapplication of

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<sup>1</sup>"The Present Position of English Criticism", in his Views and Reviews, First Series, 1884-1919, (1932), p. 20. Taine's words are quoted.

<sup>2</sup>"The Individual and the Race", in his Little Essays of Love and Virtue (1922), p. 149.

genetic and evolutionary theories leading to the belief that all characteristics are inherited and secondly from the nationalistic idea that a group of people or a "race" could share these characteristics. The two ideas reinforced each other; by mid-century, having "seduced such eminent historians as Niehuhr, the Brothers Thierry, Carlyle, Michelet"<sup>1</sup> race-theories penetrated criticism and history and terms such as "teutonic gloom" or "Celtic melancholy" were commonly used to explain qualities of an artist or his work. However, the concept of "race" on which these terms depend was never defined as a cultural, national, or language group and no precise data were collected to support them. Consequently to explain a writer's style by relying on racial catch-phrases is ultimately meaningless and, as Jacques Barzun explains, is a cloak "to conceal complexity. . .praising or damning without the trouble of going into details".<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately much of Ellis's criticism retreats behind these racial cloaks and his key point about the view of life in a work of art gets lost in irrelevant speculations about a writer's heredity.

Of the other writers who worked on the series when Ellis was general editor only Edmund Gosse (1849-1928) pursued criticism in a whole-hearted way. Gosse modelled himself on Sainte-Beuve and wrote congenial but often inaccurate essays which were basically intended to entertain and spread an interest in literature. He was the only editor who was not attracted to the Elizabethan drama for either its passion or its open view of life. To

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<sup>1</sup>T. E. Faverty, Matthew Arnold the Ethnologist (1951), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Race: A Study in Superstition, second edition (1965), p. 81.

him it was "barbaric"<sup>1</sup> and appealed "to the most primitive instincts of revenge and fear. . .without much consideration of what is called taste".<sup>2</sup> He preferred instead "the good sense. . .solidity of judgment. . .and simplicity" of neo-classical literature.<sup>3</sup>

The other four young writers Ellis chose remained on the periphery of the literary world. Ernest Rhys (1859-1946) was a friend of both Ellis and Symons. Rhys's critical talents were limited and he found it difficult to write on abstract topics. His sincere commitment to the cause of art for the masses led him to originate the monumental Everyman Library in 1906. Luckily Ellis asked Rhys to edit Thomas Dekker whose democratic concerns and tangible personality appealed to him. J. A. Symonds's young nephew J. St. Loe Strachey (1860-1927) also worked on the series. Although later in life he became editor of the Spectator and devoted himself to politics, at the time the Mermaid Series appeared his main interests were in writing poetry and studying prosody. Herbert Horne (1864-1916), editor of The Century Guild Hobby Horse, was primarily concerned with the decorative arts; his critical talents were limited. A. W. Verity's (1865-1937) work for the Mermaid Series was mainly editorial and in later life he edited the Pitt Press Shakespeare for Schools and the Student's Shakespeare.

The editors that worked on the series when Unwin and Scribners were publishing the volumes were primarily from the new class of academics which had arisen in America and England since English literature had become a recognized course of university education. The most important of

<sup>1</sup>The Jacobean Poets (1894), pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>English Literature: An Illustrated Record (1903), II, 331-332.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., III, 175.

this group was Charles Herford (1853-1931) who actually had been chosen by Ellis to introduce the volumes of Ben Jonson. Herford had distinguished himself at Cambridge by writing three prize-winning essays, The Essentials of Romantic and Classical Styles, A Sketch of the History of the English Drama in its Social Aspects and an edition of the first quarto of Hamlet, and quickly climbed the academic ladder eventually becoming head of the English Department at Manchester University. His Mermaid work on Ben Jonson was the forerunner of much more work including the monumental Works of Ben Jonson (1925-1952) which was completed by Percy and Evelyn Simpson.

Thomas Dickinson (1877-1961) and William Lyon Phelps (1865-1943) were two other academics who edited volumes. Both were Americans; Dickinson, editor of Robert Greene, was a lecturer at the University of Wisconsin and in later life devoted himself to the theatre. Phelps who edited George Chapman was a popular innovative lecturer who taught the first course in Elizabethan drama (excluding Shakespeare) at Yale and the first course at any university "confined wholly to contemporary fiction".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Phelps, Autobiography with Letters (1939), p. 29.

## CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE MERMAID SERIES, WEBSTER AND TOURNEUR, EDITED  
BY J. A. SYMONDS, AND THOMAS HEYWOOD, INTRODUCED BY J. A. SYMONDS

## I. General Introduction

A. Origins in Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama

John Addington Symonds's introduction to the Mermaid Series grew out of his book, Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama. He had hoped that it might serve as an introduction to a series of the dramatists similar to the Mermaids which he had suggested to his own publisher and mentioned in the book itself. But Shakspeare's Predecessors was too poorly received for Smith to think the idea was viable.

The failure of Symonds's book was partly due to its "ridiculously expensive form"<sup>1</sup> but it was also, as he knew, "a piece of inartistic patchwork".<sup>2</sup> Its origins were the series of essays which he had written for the Cornhill Magazine and Pall Mall Gazette in the 1860's. After publication he had placed them in his "desolation box" where he put all work he intended to have reprinted as a book. From there they "sank to the bottom of the Dead Sea of my pride"<sup>3</sup> and were not resurrected until 1882 when he had no other work to escape to. But as his letters during this year and the next show, while he was trying to put the essays into

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, III, 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 810.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 782.

book form, his heart was not in his work. He called it "rancid abgeschmacht [tasteless], thrice crambe repetita [warmed over cabbage; stale repetition]" which smelled "of an old man's night cap".<sup>1</sup> When it was finished he thought it dull,<sup>2</sup> unsuccessful,<sup>3</sup> and at one point reflected, "it might be prudent to suppress it".<sup>4</sup>

It finally appeared in 1884, along with an apologetic dedication to his nephew, John St. Loe Strachey, suggesting that he had written the book mainly "at his request".<sup>5</sup> He also included an apology in his preface saying that he felt "diffidence in bringing forth my own studies to the light of day", because of the difficulty of the subject and because it was "produced under the disadvantageous conditions of continued residence in the High Alps" where he had lived for his health since 1877, "at a distance from all libraries except my own". He further tried to disclaim responsibility for the book by noting "but for the generous and disinterested assistance rendered me by Mr. A. H. Bullen, I should almost dread to print a work of this nature, composed in such unfavourable circumstances" (pp. viii-ix).

Symonds's doubts about Shakspeare's Predecessors were justified for it is a confusing and often irritating book. This confusion is reflected in the diversity of opinion about it: Herbert Schueller has called it a dangerous and distorted book which should be removed from library

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 789.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 843.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 811.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 828.

<sup>5</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama (1884), p. v. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

shelves<sup>1</sup> while René Wellek has praised it as being "one of the few great achievements of English literary historiography in the 19th century".<sup>2</sup> Taken together perhaps these statements adequately sum up Shakspeare's Predecessors; it presents a wide-ranging conglomeration of nineteenth-century approaches but because of this, it has many contradictions and inconsistencies.

As Wellek points out, it applies evolution mixed with Hegelianism to literature, attempts in the milieu tradition to evoke the spirit of the times, and is a glorification of the role "of the English noble savage"<sup>3</sup> in the development of the drama. Symonds saw the drama as "the expression of [the English] race" and maintained that it "grew instinctively, spontaneously, by evolution from within" (p. 5) from the miracle plays to those of Webster, Ford, Massinger and Shirley. Like Schlegel he emphasized that this drama was romantic; it was challenged by classical drama but after a "vigorous struggle" (p. 37) the "genius of the people" (p. 249) rejected the "abstract conceptions" (p. 80) and concentration on "ethical wisdom" (p. 226) of the classical drama and turned to drama which portrayed the life of the nation. This was achieved with the aid of the Hegelian hero of the drama -- Christopher Marlowe who "drew forth the unity of the English Drama" "from the chaotic and conflicting elements around him"

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<sup>1</sup>See his "John Addington Symonds as a Theoretical and as a Practical Critic" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1941), p. 452.

<sup>2</sup>Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism: 1750-1950. The Later Nineteenth Century, p. 407.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

(p. 589). From the thesis of "the puerile and lifeless pastimes of the multitude" (p. 586) and the antithesis of the drama of "the pedants" (p. 587) he achieved a synthesis by adopting "the subjects of the romantic and the verse of the classic school" and into drama "breathed the breath of life" (p. 589).

These central ideas of Shakspeare's Predecessors which make it an interesting example of nineteenth-century literary historiography also account for the book's failure to be a useful, practical history. Its most glaring fault is the distortion caused by his stress on the native origins of the drama and by the application of evolutionary principles. Both made him maintain that classical and foreign influences simply attempted to impose rules on the drama, divert it into satirical channels, or thwart its native freedom and spontaneity. Consequently he could not give full attention to the influence of classical and foreign drama. This is most vividly seen in the fact that he devoted a disproportionately long chapter to five domestic tragedies (A Warning for Fair Women, A Yorkshire Tragedy, Arden of Feversham, A Woman Killed with Kindness, and The Witch of Edmonton) which seemed to him to portray native life, but only a very brief chapter to what he called the "tragedy of blood". These domestic tragedies had only a small influence upon the development of the drama but Symonds tried to assert their importance by calling them "doubly valuable, first for their portraiture of manners, and secondly as powerful life-studies in dramatic art" (p. 414); the revenge tragedy on the other hand was very important but of foreign origin. He tried to minimize its importance by asserting that it existed "solely in and for bloodshed" and that it was written only to "stir the passions and excite the feelings"

(p. 486) of an audience whose sensibilities were like "the chords of a warrior's harp, strung with twisted iron and bulls' sinews. . . needing a stout stroke to make them thrill" (p. 485).

He created further problems for himself by not revising the previously published essays included in the book to make them consistent with his evolutionary theory or to explain why they were not. A simple example of this is seen in Chapter Two where he divided romantic comedy into comedies of imagination, character, and manners and then pointed out that the latter had classical origins (p. 65). A more serious example is Chapter Thirteen on Lyly which was taken from an essay written in 1868.<sup>1</sup> It includes a long discussion of Euphues, euphuism, and its continental sources and counterparts which is both irrelevant and inconsistent with his evolutionary theme. Still more glaringly irrelevant is Chapter Nine, "Masques at Court", which had not been published previously but it was to reappear in his Ben Jonson (1886). Its discussion of Italian masques, Jonson and Inigo Jones, and the fates of those who performed in the masques would be more appropriate in a book on Shakespeare's successors.

Another reason for some of the inconsistencies and distortions of the book was Symonds's adoption of moralistic attitudes he thought would appeal to his middle-class audience. This is most obvious in Chapter Fourteen, "Greene, Peele, Nash, and Lodge". Although by the 1880's critics were arriving at a more rational view of Greene, early in the century his prose works were cited as evidence of the licentiousness of Elizabethan times. Symonds reverted to this attitude using the sordid details of Greene's life to prove that

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<sup>1</sup>"Euphuism", Pall Mall Gazette, VII (November 3, 1868), p. 12.

some of [the dramatists] deserved the stigma for vagrancy, loose living, and profanity, which then attached to players and playwrights. Excluded from respectable society, depending on the liberality of booksellers and managers, with no definite profession, enrolled in no acknowledged guild or corporation, they passed their time at taverns, frequented low houses of debauchery, and spent their earnings in the company of thieves and ruffians. (p. 539).

These remarks contradict the loving enthusiasm he expressed for the period in Chapter Two as well as his approving reference in 1867 to the "riotous fraternity" of playwrights who led "a very jolly life" and spent their money in "good cheer".<sup>1</sup> Further comments calculated to appeal to his audience were his condemnation of Greene for his remarks about Shakespeare which revealed his jealousy of Shakespeare's literary success, of the "golden opinions" he was winning "by the sobriety of his conduct", and of his ability to amass "wealth by thrift and business-like habits" (p. 550).

The problems resulting from applying evolution to the drama were immediately noted by Symonds's most severe reviewer, John Churton Collins who maintained that "by no process of evolution could the drama of Bale and Heywood have developed into the drama of Marlowe and Peele".<sup>2</sup> As pointed out earlier, Symonds himself did not feel it was an adequate approach. Collins also noticed another serious fault of the book -- its florid verbosity. This was not Swinburnian as Collins maintained; its elaborations are not refining an impression but merely clog his ideas and distract the reader.

But Shaksperé's Predecessors was not a complete failure. Although it has been surpassed and appears unreliable today, it made four important

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<sup>1</sup>"Elizabethan Dramatists. No. III. -- Greene", *Pall Mall Gazette*, VI (September 4, 1867), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>"Art. II. -- Shaksperé's Predecessors in the English Drama", *Quarterly Review*, III (1885), p. 343.

contributions which deserve to be noted. First the book was the most vivid and entertaining history of the English drama available and would have helped to arouse interest in the drama -- interest which later would have been satisfied by the Mermaid Series. Comparable books such as A.W. Ward's more accurate and comprehensive History of English Dramatic Literature made much duller reading, and Schlegel's Course of Lectures and Taine's History of English Literature did not cover the Elizabethan drama in such detail. Secondly some of its most vivid sections were making extremely important points about the drama which were rarely brought out in the 1880's. Particularly valuable was Chapter Eight, "Theatres, Playwrights, Actors, and Playgoers" where he impressed the reader with the drama as a theatrical experience by describing theatres and audiences in vivid detail. Thirdly he provided many valuable plot summaries, long quotations from the plays and often tried to imagine performances. Chapter Three on miracle plays is especially helpful for here he made the invaluable point that "the character of the spectacle was determined not by the poetic genius of the monk who wrote the words of the play, but by the unison of forms and colours which prevailed throughout the edifice" (p. 120). Finally, as I shall take up in more detail in Chapter Three, his last chapter offered an emphatic statement of nineteenth-century enthusiasm for Marlowe, and earned him the title "impassioned Marlovian".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Harry Levin, Christopher Marlowe: The Overreacher (1961), p. 13.

## B. General Introduction to the Mermaid Series

Shakspeare's Predecessors made its most important contribution in Symonds's own day. Similarly his general introduction to the Mermaid Series was aimed primarily to induce "the English of the Victorian age . . . to study the best pieces of Shakespeare's fellow-workers",<sup>1</sup> Although today certain aspects of it seem dated, it is a much sounder work than Shakspeare's Predecessors: it has none of its faults and many of its stronger points.

The most dated aspects of his introduction lay in his continued use of the idea of evolution and in his patriotism. He did not here rigidly apply evolutionary theory; but he used the word frequently and continued to speak of the drama as it developed as if it were a living entity. For example, he noted how the "courtly makers" were unable to "divert the English Drama from its spontaneously chosen path into the precise and formal channels of pedantic imitation" (p. ix; Symonds quotes "courtly makers"). The concept, however, did not distort the drama so severely here as it did in Shakspeare's Predecessors. He noted the importance of classical and foreign influences while still stressing that the drama did not adopt classical rules.

Symonds's patriotism seems today like a kind of moralistic chauvinism designed to win readers who might question the value or purity of the drama. He asserted that the drama was "representative of our national life at its most brilliant period" (p. xx) and then described the period in positive terms. He defined the Renaissance as an

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, edited by Havelock Ellis, general introduction to the series by John Addington Symonds (1887), p. xxvi. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

"emancipation of the reason" rather than as the aesthetic rebellion which Pater had implied; and he explained that the Reformation, which Victorian readers already approved of, and the Renaissance were aspects of the same humanistic movement and liberation from "superstition and decadent ideals" (p. xiv). In Shakspeare's Predecessors Symonds rarely mentioned the Reformation; but here he continually referred to it as one of the main forces of the period and stressed that the drama was "permeated with [its] free pure honest stalwart spirit" (p. xxvi). Thus he could expect his readers to accept the drama's "frank touch on nature" (p. xxii) because it preserved "decorum in the elementary decencies of morals and religion" (p. xxi). He further maintained that the English were superior to Italians and Germans because they experienced the Renaissance and the Reformation simultaneously, thereby avoiding German and Italian excesses (pp. xiv-xv). This approach was supported by his explanation of the English romantic drama as a product of native traditions. After briefly tracing the history of the drama, he maintained that "the people in its youthful vigour. . .conscious of a great deliverance from Rome" chose the romantic over the classic drama as a "sphere for the display of its native genius" (pp. xvi-xvii). He also appealed to his readers' patriotism when describing the characteristics of the drama. Calling the "distinctive mark" of the drama "spontaneity and freedom", he explained the first as "the spontaneity of an art-product indigenous and native to our soil" and the second as "the freedom of a land bounded upon all sides by the ocean, the freedom of high-spirited men devoted to a mistress who personified for them the power and majesty of Britain" (p. xxi). Combining spontaneity with nationalistic and democratic ideals he went on: it was

freedom from pedantry, from servility to scholastic rules, from observance of foreign or antiquated models; freedom from the dread of political or ecclesiastical oppression; freedom from courtly obsequiousness and class-prejudices. (p. xxi)

Such a blatant appeal to readers' prejudices could hardly fail.

The aspects of Symonds's introduction which are most helpful to us today are his assertions that the dramatists' "paramount object was to feel and to make his audience feel the reality of life exceedingly" and that to do this he had "to evoke living men and women" (p. xi); and his description of the Elizabethan theatre. He summarized this description with three important points which "should never be forgotten. To the simplicity of the theatres, the absence of scenical resources, and the close contact of the players with their audience, we may ascribe many peculiarities of our Romantic Drama" (p. xix). These valuable ideas reflect Symonds's own attempt to appreciate the drama as theatre and his hope that readers of the Mermaid Series would do likewise. It also illustrates his position and the Mermaids' at the junction of the old fragmented approach and the new whole view. Symonds's points were subtly made in subsequent volumes with the inclusion in each of a frontispiece illustrating the drama's connection with the theatre. For example, Hollar's view of the Bankside is included with John Ford; a view of the Fortune Playhouse is included with Thomas Dekker and a view of the Globe with Webster and Tourneur.

Symonds's introduction provided an excellent start to the Mermaid Series. His appeal to readers' patriotism was effective; his reminder of the religious aspect of the period and the historical importance of the drama helped soften the "unexpurgated" on the title page; and his summary of the history of the drama and its theatrical conditions placed

the drama in a historical and theatrical perspective. Today it has limited effectiveness, but if we can cast our minds back to the time when the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama was still being discovered, when the Mermaid Series was holding out a fresh promise of "a carnival display, mask and antimask, of impassioned life -- breathing, moving, acting, suffering, laughing" (De Quincy's words quoted, p. xxviii) then Symonds's introduction warmly welcomes a reader to an uncharted realm of enjoyment.

II. Webster and Tourneur, edited by John Addington Symonds.

Symonds edited and introduced Webster and Tourneur, which included Webster's The Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil and Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy and The Revenger's Tragedy. But, as indicated by his reflections in Shakspeare's Predecessors on the tragedy of blood, Symonds was not the best person for the task. A much better editor would have been A. C. Swinburne for he profoundly admired Webster and had just written a revolutionary article on Tourneur when Ellis began the series. In fact, he offered his essay to Ellis, but on the conditions that Ellis begin the series with Tourneur and that Ellis himself edit the text.<sup>1</sup> However, such conditions made it impossible to use Swinburne's essay for Christopher Marlowe was to be the first volume; nor did Ellis have time to edit the text. Furthermore, because there are only two extant plays by Tourneur and following suggestions made by Hazlitt and A. W. Ward that Webster and Tourneur were similar,<sup>2</sup> it was planned to combine

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<sup>1</sup>Swinburne, Letters, V, 168.

<sup>2</sup>See Hazlitt, Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, Works, VI, 246; and Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature (1875), II, 262.

them with Webster's Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil. Finally, Symonds volunteered to edit and introduce Webster and Tourneur, agreeing that "not to class them together. . . would be uncritical".<sup>1</sup> But while he could write sympathetically on Webster, he had a profound antipathy towards Tourneur.

A controversy raged over the value of the dramas of Webster and Tourneur throughout the nineteenth and earlier twentieth century. As writers of "tragedies of blood" their strange stories of physical violence and nihilistic ideas appalled most readers. Nor did concentration on the language of their drama win enthusiasts for Tourneur's vivid images of corruption are, as they are meant to be, disgusting; and Webster's animal imagery which links man with the bestial world offers neither instruction nor purifying delight. Extracting whole scenes from their plays was a more successful approach, and one which apologists often resorted to. The whole view, however, such as Symonds attempted, was not successful for most people simply could not stomach the details of their drama. Today taste has changed considerably. Young readers of Webster and Tourneur who are familiar with existentialism, aware, after two world wars, of man's bestial nature and his powers of endurance, and who have seen the cinema and television screens awash with much less dignified blood, feel the controversy over the value of their plays is over. Their work belongs with other great drama; and the heated arguments of the past are simply an indication of changing tastes.

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<sup>1</sup>Webster and Tourneur, edited by J. A. Symonds (1888), p. ix.

### A. Tourneur

The controversy over Tourneur was less violent than that over Webster probably because his plays were not so readily available: the first collected edition did not appear until 1878. Generally, his verse did not appeal to nineteenth-century lyrical tastes and his action, if taken literally, was too horrible. Symonds, with his visual approach to drama and insistence that it portray real life was at a particular disadvantage, for to appreciate Tourneur seriously, his plays must be read emblematically with the characters and actions pointing to larger moral truths. On the other hand, The Revenger's Tragedy in particular need not be read seriously at all but as a black comedy or satire on the revenge tradition, as, indeed, it has been performed.<sup>1</sup> Then the horrors acquire a comic or satiric function.

Ironically the mistakenly literal approach to Tourneur was initiated by one of his greatest admirers, Charles Lamb. In particular Lamb praised "the reality and life" of the dialogue between Hippolito, Vindice, and Gratiana in The Revenger's Tragedy (IV, vi) with a statement which disparagers of the impressionistic method often cite as typical:

I never read it but my ears tingle, and I feel a hot blush spread my cheeks, as if I were presently about to "proclaim" some such "malefactions" of myself. . . . Such power has the passion of shame truly personated not only to "strike guilty creatures unto the soul", but to "appal" even those that are "free".<sup>2</sup>

The dialogue does have an air of reality but this scene and its corresponding one, II, ii, are markedly different from the rest of The Revenger's Tragedy. Approaching the whole play with Lamb's remarks in mind points out an essential shortcoming of his fragmented approach, for

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<sup>1</sup>In February, 1977, it was performed in Cambridge as a "Pantomime of Blood".

<sup>2</sup>Specimen, II, 59.

the rest of the play makes a much different impression.

A few years later Hazlitt noticed this difference but did little to define it. He commented on Act II, scene ii, which was "of as high and abstracted an essence of poetry" as any scene of Webster's; and he praised the language of The Revenger's Tragedy generally as being equal to Webster and Shakespeare "in 'the dazzling fence of impassioned argument', in pregnant illustration, and in those profound reaches of thought, which lay open the soul of feeling". But as for the drama as a whole, he simply complained that it does not fulfill "the expectations it excites".<sup>1</sup>

The anonymous writer for The Retrospective Review (1823) went to Tourneur expecting the reality Lamb had noted but was caught short by the action, detail, and strong verse of The Revenger's Tragedy. Tourneur seemed to him to have "an itching to touch that, of which the bare thought would make others shudder with horror". He presented only the most disgusting details, "from the exposure of which, nature herself teaches us to shrink with shame". The writer was so shocked by Tourneur's tendency "to dwell with delight on the grossest and coarsest sensualities" that he felt his plays were "without any relief from imagination -- without even the voluptuousness and rapture of enjoyment".<sup>2</sup> Yet, in fact, no character ever expressed greater "rapture of enjoyment" than Vindice.

During the mid-century Tourneur's plays were unnoticed; to those who concentrated on art's relation to life he must have seemed simply

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<sup>1</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 246.

<sup>2</sup>"Art. VII. The Revenger's Tragedy...The Atheist's Tragedy...", Retrospective Review, VII (1823), p. 332.

beyond the pale. In 1875 A. W. Ward discussed The Revenger's Tragedy briefly in his History of English Dramatic Literature. Still under the influence of Lamb he found some of it "horribly realistic", though not the scenes Lamb or Hazlitt had praised; and thought that it had "one of the blackest and most sanguinary of plots which a perverted imagination fed by the worst scandals of the age, could have devised".<sup>1</sup> But more importantly Ward recognized that "there is power in the totality of the dramatic picture" and "occasional touches of grim humour" which make Hippolito and Vindice approach "the ideal of a tragedy of revenge humorously propounded" in The Little French Lawyer<sup>2</sup>. These are extremely important points which look ahead to one of our modern views of The Revenger's Tragedy as a satire or black comedy.

Three years later John Churton Collins's The Plays and Poems of Cyril Tourneur included a complimentary but often misleading introduction which among other things claimed that the writer for the Retrospective Review had "given emphatic testimony to [Tourneur's] extraordinary merit".<sup>3</sup> Collins noticed the "condensed energy" of The Revenger's Tragedy and called it "the consummate work of a consummate genius"<sup>4</sup> but also asserted that Tourneur was an egoist and cynic of narrow vision who "hated vice because he hated men".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 262.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 262-263. He quotes The Little French Lawyer, IV, iv: "I love a dire revenge./ Give me the man that will all others kill,/ And last himself".

<sup>3</sup>The Plays and Poems of Cyril Tourneur, edited by John Churton Collins (1878), I, xiv.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, xxxvii.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, xliii.

Swinburne pounced upon this remark ten years later in his essay in the Nineteenth Century for he thought Collins made Tourneur sound like "little more than a better sort of Byron".<sup>1</sup> Swinburne's own ideas about Tourneur were much more overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Tourneur's verse in particular appealed to Swinburne's love of grand, passionate emotion and to his sadistic/masochistic temperament. Throughout his essay he referred to Tourneur's "burning eloquence", his "strenuous yet spontaneous energy" and admiringly compared his verse to the violence of nature. (p. 267); It was as exciting as a thunderstorm: "it quickens and exhilarates the sense of the reader as the sense of a healthy man or boy is quickened and exhilarated by the rolling music of a tempest and the leaping exultation of its flames" (p. 266). His experience in fact appears to have been emotionally overpowering; his essay is long and repetitive as he tries through formula after formula to refine and relate his emotional reaction to Tourneur's work. Because he is relating his reactions rather than examining their sources, his essay falls into the category in which Eliot complained "the drum is beaten, but the procession does not advance".<sup>2</sup> We are subjected to a "tumultuous outcry of adjectives" and a "headstrong rush of undisciplined sentences"<sup>3</sup> and then Swinburne leaves us "just at the moment when we are most zealous to go on".<sup>4</sup> His essay is indeed "the index to impatience and perhaps laziness of a disorderly mind".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Cyril Tourneur", in his The Age of Shakespeare (1908), p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>"Imperfect Critics: Swinburne as Critic", p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

This disorderliness is most clearly seen in Swinburne's grasp of aspects of the essence of Tourneur's art, but failure to fuse them together in order to help explain it. Through the "head-strong rush" of his discussion we learn that he thought the primary source of Tourneur's emotion was "adoration of good and abhorrence of evil"; that the power of his verse was derived from the "intensity of his moral passion" (p. 260) and that his unique vision was "of a wild world of fantastic retribution and prophetic terror" (p. 259). But while his "fierce and indignant imagination" and "obsession of evil" inspired (p. 261) his "absolute and imperial command" of blank verse (p. 285) it did not help him create realistic plays. Indeed, here, Swinburne disagreed with most of his predecessors for to him his dramas did not seem realistic; they had realistic sections but Tourneur was generally too much of a moralist to be concerned with realism. His "tone of thought" was "so essentially ...that of a natural Hebraist" that he filled "every line of his satire" with "the single-hearted fury of...indignation". He agreed that there were faults in his drama; for example, perhaps there was "too much play made with skulls and crossbones" on his stage (pp. 277-278) but Swinburne's appreciation of Tourneur's language and moral purpose enabled him to overlook his grotesquerie and more importantly to see his plays as satires. It is unfortunate that his ideas come so haltingly from this essay because they are by far the most sympathetic nineteenth-century evaluation and occasionally offer an insight which is only now becoming a part of a general view.

Swinburne was brief with The Athiest's Tragedy, finding a "didactic or devotional aim" which accounted for "the magnificent if grotesque

extravagance of the design" and predictably praising D'Amville who seemed "a genuine man, plausible and relentless, versatile and fearless" (pp. 262-263). But he discussed The Revenger's Tragedy extensively calling it significantly a "great tragic poem" (p. 285) and concentrating on its language. He thought here Tourneur's verse united perfectly with his "depth of insuppressible sincerity" (p. 280) making "the harmony of its fervent and stern emotion. . .as perfect. . .as the fiery majesty of its verse" (p. 266). Swinburne's study of the play from this verbal and moral angle helped him justify the levels of violence in its action and thus find in Vindice a "high sense of honour and of wrong which is the mainspring of [his] implacable self-devotion and savage unselfishness" (p. 269). However, he also noted the enjoyment which creeps into Vindice's anger (p. 266) and felt his "sarcastic realism" (p. 278) made him "original and impossible to forget" (p. 270). He explained "sarcastic realism" by pointing out how in the midst of his "hunger after the achievement of a desperate expiation, comes the sudden touch of sarcasm" which breaks "the raging tide of his reflection" and makes "the justicer . . .a jester". His sarcastic realism was also seen in his "power of self-abstraction" (p. 271) and in some of his verse, such as the opening soliloquy where Swinburne heard an "echo of such laughter as utters the cry of an anguish too deep for weeping" (p. 272). Swinburne was touching on an important point here; it is Vindice's sarcasm and the "laughter" of the active imagery of his verse which accounts for the strange tone of the play and makes it possible to read it as a black comedy or satire on the revenge tradition.

But unfortunately he did not elaborate on this: he did not describe the source of the laughter or the dramatic effect of Vindice's sarcastic

realism; nor was he prepared to go out on a limb and make these ideas the basis of his essay. Most of his remarks look at the play from the serious angle, similar to that of other nineteenth-century writers. For example, like Lamb and Hazlitt he praised Gratiana's scenes for their realism and found Tourneur's "profound and noble reverence for goodness" in Castiza who was unique among "virginal heroines" because Tourneur had invested her with a "definite difference" (p. 268). One can assume he was referring here to her pluck and ability to defend herself even from her mother's attempt to corrupt her. Another character Swinburne singled out was the duchess's youngest son who was "original and consistent" but also "revolting and . . . detestable" (p. 268). However, this may be too strict an interpretation for within the context of the Duke's blackly comic court there is a pathos in the contrast of the son's view of his actions -- which are no worse than the actions of those around him -- and their consequence. His rape of Antonio's wife was a prank to him which only gained weight by her suicide -- and act which was out of place at court and which serves to remind the audience of absolute standards of conduct. His death by a trick of fate seems cruel in context and is one of the only deaths in the play which has tragic overtones.

Swinburne's essay was written out of a deep emotional sympathy with the central qualities of Tourneur's humour and violence. But the strong feeling which made him appreciate Tourneur so intimately also made his essay chaotic and repetitive; while it must have sparked curiosity in Tourneur, its style prevented it from offering suggestions for interpretation to subsequent critics.

J. A. Symonds, whose Webster and Tourneur was published a year later certainly did not benefit from Swinburne's view: his treatment of Tourneur was brief and unsympathetic because his search for the "reality

of life" was thwarted by Tourneur's bloody, extreme action. Throughout his introduction he employed adjectives like "diseased" and "crippled" to convey his impression that Tourneur was a "moral leper".<sup>1</sup> Symonds could not concede that his drama had a moral purpose. What morals he had were "venemous" (p. x) and "scaled within the key of sin and pollution" (p. xv). All he found in The Revenger's Tragedy was "an entangled web of lust, incest, fratricide, rape, adultery, mutual suspicion, hate and bloodshed" (p. xiv) and absolutely no humour. Furthermore, following Collins's suggestion he thought "it was inherent in this poet's conception of life that evil should be proclaimed predominant". His "cynicism stands self-revealed in the sentence he puts in Antonio's mouth, condemning Vendice [sic] to death: -- 'You that would murder him would murder me.' Even justice, in his view, rests on egotism" (p. xv). Symonds's reading of this line illustrates his narrow view of Tourneur's drama for in context Antonio's statement is not prompted by egotism. Previous to this Vendice and Hippolito were congratulating themselves on the success of their murders and sought the opportunistic motive for their murders in saying that they had been trying to help Antonio gain power. The statement comes as a revelation of the true natures of the brothers as men who would murder anyone. His "me" is universal and Tourneur uses it as he used Antonio's wife's suicide -- to remind the audience of the real standards of morality and justice and ultimately to assert that evil is not to "be proclaimed predominant".

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<sup>1</sup>Webster and Tourneur, edited by J. A. Symonds (1888), p. xv.

Nor did Symonds perceive a moral or satiric dimension in *Vindice*. He was the only character with any redeeming qualities amongst the "brood of flat-headed asps" who were "curling and engendering. . .in the slime of their filthy appetites and gross ambitions" (p. xiv); he was at least "true to his ideal of duty" and "sense of honour" (p. xv). But his ideals were totally evil. He was "a fiend incarnate. . .penetrated to the core with evil" and fully aware of his sin (p. xiv). His temptation of his mother and sister was the action of a "moral leper" and his murder of the Duke (III, iv) showed "him malicious beyond the scope of human cruelty and outrage" (p. xv). It is unfortunate that Symonds did not look more closely at these two characteristics he has isolated -- *Vindice*'s consciousness of sin and his extreme villainy for he might have been led to Swinburne's understanding of Tourneur's angry moral purpose and *Vindice*'s sarcastic realism.

He did note some of Tourneur's strong points. Although his plots were narrow and his characters mechanical -- even Castiza was "a mere lay figure" to Symonds (p. xv) -- like Webster he had "an acute sense of dramatic situation". He could develop a scene fully and "find inevitable words. . .not indeed always for their specific personages, but for generic humanity under. . .intense emotional pressure". But Tourneur could not sustain such situations; his intense moments come in "apocalyptic flashes" (p. xii) and seemed like the "good work. . .of a remorseful and regretful fallen angel" (p. xi). Tourneur's poetry was also a strong point of his drama; but whereas Swinburne had felt his verse offered "perfect models of style"<sup>1</sup> and praised *Vindice*'s opening

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<sup>1</sup>"Cyril Tourneur", p. 266.

soliloquy, Symonds felt Tourneur tended to enlarge needlessly achieving only a "lurid rhetorical effect" in his opening speech (p. xiii).

Symonds's treatment of Tourneur was far too brief, unsympathetic and superficial to provide an adequate introduction to his plays. Had he paid more attention to Tourneur's own hints about how The Revenger's Tragedy should be read -- the overpowering effect of his visual, active images; Vindice's delight with his witty murders; the generic names of the characters -- he might have arrived at a more sympathetic understanding. The shortcomings of this part of the introduction were immediately noticed. The reviewer for The Spectator confessed "to no small degree of disappointment" for he, like Swinburne, had noticed Vindice's "moral indignation" and "intensity of feeling".<sup>1</sup>

#### B. Webster

Symonds's introduction to Webster was fuller and more sympathetic; he had studied his plays in some depth for two previously published essays and concluded that he was the only dramatist who took the tragedy of blood "beyond the reach of vulgar workmen".<sup>2</sup> Nineteenth-century controversy over Webster's plays was much more heated than that over Tourneur because his plays were more easily accessible and because there were adaptations on stage. It centered on the horrors of his two greatest

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<sup>1</sup>"Webster and Tourneur", Spectator, LXI (December 1, 1888), p. 1681.

<sup>2</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors, p. 493.

plays; The Duchess of Malfi and The White Devil but also ranged into their structure, credibility, and the credibility of the characters. Concentration on the language of Webster's plays generally evoked the most favourable responses for it minimized their horrors and allowed more sensitive critics to see the function of the horror within the world created by his verse.

Charles Lamb was one of these critics. He recognized that Webster used horror as a means to test the human spirit; and he did so "skillfully", with dignity and decorum. The extraordinary horrors of Act IV of The Duchess of Malfi suited both Webster's purpose and the Duchess's "dialogue of despair".<sup>1</sup> Lamb's most controversial remark concerned the trial scene of The White Devil (III, i). There he felt Vittoria

sets off a bad cause so speciously, and pleads with such an innocence-resembling boldness, that we seem to see that matchless beauty of her face which inspires such gay confidence into her; and are ready to expect. . .that. . .all the court, will rise and make proffer to defend her in spite of the utmost conviction of her guilt.<sup>2</sup>

Most critics misunderstood this remark and thought that Lamb was implying that Vittoria deported herself innocently in this scene. Only Swinburne explained it as meaning that when the judges observed her boldness they would assume that she could behave so boldly only if she were innocent.

William Hazlitt was of a more prosaic frame of mind and could not share Lamb's view. While he praised the "richness of imagination" in Webster's verse<sup>3</sup> and found Vittoria "fair as the leprosy, dazzling as

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<sup>1</sup>Lamb, Specimens, II, 34.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 12.

<sup>3</sup>Hazlitt, Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 240.

the lightning",<sup>1</sup> he thought his plays could not "exalt the fancy, or meliorate the heart" for he took "both terror and pity to a . . . painful and sometimes unwarrantable excess".<sup>2</sup> The horrors of Act IV of The Duchess of Malfi particularly "exceed. . . the just bounds of poetry and of tragedy".<sup>3</sup>

This view of Webster as horror-monger became the accepted view. For example Henry Maitland in Blackwood's Magazine felt Webster's main strength lay in depicting the "wild, grotesque, fantastical, and extravagant" products of his dark imagination.<sup>4</sup> Neither The White Devil nor The Duchess of Malfi seemed to him satisfactory plays. Except for Vittoria none of the characters seemed to "clearly and boldly [stand] out before us".<sup>5</sup> The White Devil was the worse of the two; it was shocking, painful and some scenes "altogether revolt and disgust".<sup>6</sup> The Duchess of Malfi was slightly redeemed by "the delineation of the mutual affection" of the Duchess and Antonio, but it had "much low and worthless matter".<sup>7</sup>

The anonymous writer for The Retrospective Review likewise asserted that Webster was "enamoured of horror"<sup>8</sup> as did Alexander Dyce in his introduction to Webster's works (1830). Dyce however was much more

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>4</sup>H[enry] M[aitland], "Analytic Essays on the Early English Dramatists. No. V. The White Devil", Blackwood's Magazine, III (August, 1818), p. 561.

<sup>5</sup>"Analytic Essays on the Early English Dramatists. No. IV. Duchess of Malfy", Blackwood's Magazine, II (March, 1818), p. 658.

<sup>6</sup>"Analytic Essays...No. V. The White Devil", p. 561.

<sup>7</sup>"Analytic Essays. . .No. IV. Duchess of Malfy", p. 659.

<sup>8</sup>"Art VI. The White Devil...The Duchess of Malfi...", Retrospective

sympathetic, particularly towards the Duchess and Antonio.<sup>1</sup> Charles Kingsley's essay "Plays and Puritans" (1856) on the other hand was completely unsympathetic. Webster to him seemed to be trying to "arouse terror and pity", rather than thought, "by blood and fury, madmen and screech-owls". Nor was he aiming to study human nature for his characters were "mere passions or humours in a human form".<sup>2</sup>

These views were taken to excess by J. A. Symonds in his early essay on Webster (1867) where he concentrated with delight on Webster's horrors and "sepulchral language"; asserting that they came naturally from him for "to the subtlety and vices of the South he added the melancholy, meditation, and sinister insanity of the North". Symonds seemed morbidly fascinated with Webster's plays and described "the wretched victims of his bloody plots" with loving vividness. He even went so far as to try to make The White Devil seem more lurid by implying that Flamineo corrupted his sister and then killed both his mother and brother because they tried to thwart his ambition. However, he did not corrupt Vittoria; he merely played the pander. He did not kill his mother; she died of grief. And he killed his brother presumably to avoid a duel over an insult to Zanche. Symonds further suggested that Flamineo had been "ruined by debauchery" but he appears in the play to be simply poor. Symonds was more just with The Duchess of Malfi, describing its horrors with restraint, and was one of the first to put

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Review, VII (1823), p. 90.

<sup>1</sup>The Works of John Webster, edited by Alexander Dyce, second edition (1857), p. xiv.

<sup>2</sup>"Plays and Puritans", in his Plays and Puritans and other Historical Essays (1873), p. 49.

forth the more modern sympathetic view that Bosola was not simply the "villain of the piece" as Kingsley had asserted<sup>1</sup> but regretted the "sacrifice of his virtue and freedom".<sup>2</sup>

Symonds incorporated some of these ideas into his next essay "Vittoria Accoramboni and the Tragedy of Webster" (1883) and the ideas from both into his introduction to the Mermaid volume. In these later essays his morbid delight was subdued, perhaps partly because of A. W. Ward's attempt to understand and explain Webster's "favourite furniture of theatrical terror".<sup>3</sup> Like Lamb, Ward thought Webster used his horrors to touch the "inmost recesses of the soul" and to evoke "the fury and the bitterness. . .and the after-sting of passion, and the broken vocabulary of grief". Webster's ability to do this was "one of the highest. . .powers of true dramatic genius".<sup>4</sup> But he agreed with Kingsley that he had not created believable characters; even Vittoria was only "true to nature. . .in one of her abnormal moods".<sup>5</sup>

Symonds's second essay was written mainly to compare the versions of Vittoria's history recorded by Henri Beyle in Chroniques et Nouvelles (1855) and Domenico Gnoli in Vittoria Accoramboni (1870) with Webster's and to elaborate on the northern melancholy and natural pessimism which like many other writers he had suggested was his main trait. He asserted that Webster was a "constitutional pessimist"<sup>6</sup> who

<sup>1</sup>Kingsley, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>"Elizabethan Dramatists, No. VII.-- Webster", Pall Mall Gazette, VI (October 9, 1867), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>Ward, II, 259.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 260.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 255.

<sup>6</sup>"Vittoria Accoramboni and the Tragedy of Webster", in his Italian Byways (1883), p. 181. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

turned to tales of Italian villainy for subject matter because in them "he found something akin to his own imaginative mood" (p. 183) which could be transformed according to "the moral impression made. . . on a Northern imagination" (p. 193). Although this seems to be a retreat into racial and psychological irrelevance, he went on to identify how Webster altered his stories by "robbing the Italian character of levity" and complicating it with a "sense of sin". His anglicized Italian villains are thoroughly evil but also "brood upon their crimes . . . analyse their motives" and "dread. . . coming retribution" (p. 184). The proof Symonds offered of his theory was Flamineo and Bosola. Flamineo was not "a simple cutthroat" (p. 185) but had Marlovian dimensions as a "desperado frantically clutching at an uncertain and impossible satisfaction"; Bosola, as he had noted earlier was a more reflective villain with a noble despair (p. 187). In contrast to these anglicized villains, Symonds found Vittoria true to the Italian concept of evil. She had no awareness of sin or any Marlovian desires; she was "uncompromising, ruthless" and followed "ambition as the loadstar of her life" (p. 174). She was a "magnificent vixen" with an "egotism so hard and so profound that the very victims whom she sacrifices to ambition seem in her sight justly punished" (pp. 177-8). He also implied a further aspect of her characterization by describing Act IV, scene i, where Brachiano protests his love for Vittoria following his jealous outburst: "At this point she speaks but little. We only feel her melting humour in the air, and long to see the scene played by such an actress as Madame Bernhardt." (p. 175) He is touching here on the central problem of The White Devil -- the interpretation of Vittoria herself, obviously feeling that to appreciate her we need the help of

a sensitive actress. Webster has given us few clues to her character. In each of her five scenes her circumstances are different: she varies from a "magnificent vixen" to a woman despairing over the death of her lover. The difficulty of her character was illustrated in a 1976 production at the Old Vic in London when Glenda Jackson played Vittoria. Although a fine actress, even Miss Jackson could not illuminate Vittoria by making her reactions to her various situations consistent with a comprehensive idea of her character. Symonds also pointed out the difficulty of presenting Isabella on stage because of the strong contrast of her "scenes of rarest pathos. . .with the ghastly and contorted horrors that envelope them" (p. 192). Here again, the most recent production of The White Devil attests to this difficulty for the director chose to have Frances de la Tour play Isabella with "urgency and passion"<sup>1</sup> rather than confront the problem.

Unlike his approach in his 1868 essay Symonds tried here to apologize for Webster's horrors. Using Isabella and the Duchess of Malfi he pointed out that Webster was able to create characters and circumstances of pathos. He was not the first to notice this; Henry Maitland and Dyce had both pointed it out, but Symonds asserted that "in the domain of pathos [Webster] is even more powerful than in that of horror" (p. 190). This was a unique perception, indicating that his understanding of Webster was perhaps more sympathetic than he had admitted.

Symonds's essay made a helpful contribution to the Webster controversy by the subtle reminder that his plays were theatre and more

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<sup>1</sup>Michael Coveney, "The White Devil", Financial Times, July 14, 1976, p. 3.

importantly by relating the sources of his stories. Suggesting that he made his characters more reflective did much to defend Webster against the charges of delighting in horror for its own sake. His essay is one of the few nineteenth-century studies to which readers are still referred.<sup>1</sup>

By far the most devoted Webster enthusiast was A. C. Swinburne whose major essay on Webster appeared in 1886. Next to Shakespeare he was Swinburne's favourite dramatist; he ranked him with the gods of literature calling him "but. . . a limb of Shakespeare: but that limb. . . was the right arm".<sup>2</sup> He had first read parts of The Duchess of Malfi when he was twelve and at that time had been "much entranced and fascinated. . . by its unique beauty and power".<sup>3</sup> Webster was also the topic of his first essay on the Elizabethans written when he was twenty. In it he spoke of Webster with an awe that is witness to his deep sympathy: "One thinks of what he knew and of what he has told us, till it seems as though one might almost say, what had this man done, that he should see such things". Swinburne's awe did not come just from his reaction to Webster's stories, but also from his intimate understanding of his verse enabling him to appreciate Webster's "clear, sad insight into sorrow and sin".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See The White Devil, edited by Elizabeth M. Brennan (1966), p. xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup>"John Webster", in his The Age of Shakespeare, pp. 15-16. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>3</sup>Letters, VI, 41.

<sup>4</sup>"The Early English Dramatists: Marlowe and Webster", in New Writings by Swinburne, edited by Cecil Lang (1964), p. 38.

Yet, while he appreciated this level of Webster's plays, as in his essay on Tourneur, he leaves us just as we are ready to go on. He does not tell us how Webster's verse conveys this impression, but merely repeats his opinion that Webster is as great as Shakespeare, defending him against the charges of "those to whom [his] great name . . . represents merely an artist in horrors, a ruffian of genius" (p. 41) by claiming that his horrors were not in fact horrible. He started from the assumption that Webster possessed "the crowning gift of imagination" which was infallible. It was "the power to make us realise that thus and not otherwise it was, that thus and not otherwise it must have been" (p. 15). Accordingly all aspects of his plays were inevitable, containing "the force of hand, the fire of heart, the fervour of pity, the sympathy of passion, not poetic or theatric merely, but actual and immediate" (p. 16). To Swinburne it was impossible to question this power or to find fault with any of the components of Webster's two greatest plays. Not even Marlowe or Shakespeare "had so fine, so accurate, so infallible a sense of the delicate line of demarcation which divides the impressive and the terrible from the horrible and the loathsome" (p. 32). Never did he "break the bounds of true poetic instinct" (p. 33). But this last remark and many others like it left Swinburne open to attack. Because of his use of the word "poetic" and his reference to Webster as a "poet" his detractors saw Swinburne's defense as irrelevant. William Archer for example asserted that like Lamb's it was based on the fragmented approach -- on an appreciation of Webster's language alone and failed to adequately visualize the action. To him "to argue that Webster's aesthetic sense was refined and unperverted is simply to maintain that black is white and blood is rose-water". Of course Archer's approach was equally fragmented;

he erred in the opposite direction by divorcing action from language and could see "no conceivable purpose" to Webster's plays "except just to make our flesh creep".<sup>1</sup>

Nor was Archer's complaint completely just for Swinburne did grapple with some of the objections to Webster's drama. For example to those like Maitland who complained that "the interest of [The Duchess of Malfi] . . . expires with the fourth act",<sup>2</sup> Swinburne explained that the fifth only seemed weak in comparison with the "overwhelming terrors and overpowering beauties" of the fourth (p. 54). He agreed with those who complained that Antonio was not "dramatically striking" but praised his "pensive and manly grace of deliberate resignation" (p. 55). Again he agreed with writers such as Symonds who felt the actions of Isabella in The White Devil were extreme but her extravagant sacrifice added "a crowning touch of pathos to the unsurpassible beauty" of Act III, scene i, where Giovanni discusses death with his uncle (p. 41). He also made the perceptive suggestion that the purpose of this scene was to provide a dramatic contrast to Brachiano's death scene (V, iii). The effectiveness of this contrast, Swinburne asserted, was second only to Shakespeare (p. 45).

Swinburne also took up some new points. For example he was one of the few to try to understand Webster's tragic view. He contrasted it with Aeschylus's world of redemption and retribution and with

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<sup>1</sup>"Webster, Lamb, and Swinburne", The New Review, VIII (1893), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>"Analytic Essays. . .No. IV Duchess of Malfy", p. 662.

Shakespeare's where "righteousness. . . seems subject and subordinate to the masterdom of fate". In Webster's fate is "merely the servant or the synonym of chance" (pp. 30-31). Thus in the Duchess of Malfi Bosola and Ferdinand die "perplexed; indomitable, defiant of hope and fear" in a mist which involves the innocent as well: "blind accident and blundering mishap. . . are the steersmen of their fortunes" (p. 31). He also touched specifically on Webster's language, pointing out how he used lyricism in a more sublime and profound way than his predecessors, particularly in Bosola's dirge, "Hark now everything is still" (IV, ii) where he "has touched and transfigured its note of meditative music into a chord of passionate austerity and prophetic awe" (p. 49). Indeed, Bosola seemed to be Swinburne's favourite character because of this "magnificent lyric poetry" which fell "naturally. . . from [his] bitter and bloodthirsty tongue" (p. 48). Nevertheless most of his verse "halts and hovers" (p. 53) in its "villainous laxity of versification" (p. 52) which seemed "a step on the downward way that leads to the negation. . . of all distinctions between poetry and prose" (p. 53). Although Flamineo (The White Devil) had "not a touch of imaginative poetry" in him (p. 48) Swinburne admired him intensely for his "sublime fervour of rascality" and "ruffianly good-humour". He was, to Swinburne "unmistakably an emperor in the egg" (p. 47). A further detail of this essay was his attack on those who explained Webster's choice of subject-matter by asserting that he was "morbidly fascinated" with perverse delights and that instinct led him to "darken the darkness of southern crime or vice by an infusion of northern seriousness" or "introspective cynicism" (p. 46). To Swinburne it seemed that he chose his topics because of his "noble English loathing for the traditions associated with" great

Italian families (p.7); thus his treatment of his topics ennobled them and allowed Swinburne to assert that "there is no poet morally nobler" (p. 36).

Swinburne's essay made some important points but it did not contribute nearly as much as one might expect or hope to the Webster controversy. In spite of his intimate appreciation of Webster's verse, sympathy towards his horrors, and understanding of his comic view, he did not penetrate any of them enough to help readers understand them. Nevertheless, he was thought to be something of an authority for when Symonds's introduction to the Mermaid volume finally appeared in 1888 he noted Swinburne's essay and advised readers to turn to it for further comment.

Symonds's introduction was mainly a combination of his earlier essays with the addition of some points from Swinburne's essay. For example Symonds noted Webster's "lyrical faculty" and his despairing view of "human fates and fortunes"<sup>1</sup> which blends "tenderness and pity with . . . acute moral anguish". He also suggested that Webster offered many "situations which reveal the struggle of the human soul with sin and fate" (p. xii). Symonds did not include a detailed account of Webster's plays, ostensibly because he thought it would take him beyond the limits of his introduction. But in fact twenty years after his first essay appeared, Webster still baffled him. He seemed to "touch the depths of human nature in ways that need the subtlest analysis for their proper explanation" and Symonds was unable to rise to the occasion. His impression of the plays was "blurred" by the many "fantastic incidents crowded into a single action" and the amount of "profoundly studied matter" the plays contained (p. xix). Such plays he thought needed to be performed before a student could understand them for "able representation upon the public stage of an Elizabethan theatre"

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<sup>1</sup>Webster and Tourneur, p. xiii. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

would give them "the coherence, the animation, and the movement which a chamber student misses" (p. xx). This last point illustrates how Symonds stands at the junction between the old approach and the new. Had he been able to see the plays performed, as we are today, he would have been helped towards the whole view that eluded him.

Symonds's introduction to Webster and Tourneur is only partly successful. The Tourneur section is inadequate and it would have been better if Swinburne had been able to write it. His section on Webster, while less enthusiastic than Swinburne's, in fact puts forward the views which were to prevail for the next 40 years.<sup>1</sup> Neither section however has withstood the changes of tastes and new experiences which make it possible for us today to accept and enjoy their plays as total theatrical experiences, and his introduction is mainly interesting as an illustration of nineteenth-century taste and as a landmark in the Webster-Tourneur controversy.

The most important contribution of Webster and Tourneur was Symonds's text of Tourneur's plays for The Atheist's Tragedy had previously been available only in Collins's unmodernized complete edition. The other three plays in the volume had been more readily available. They had been included in Scott's Ancient British Drama

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<sup>1</sup>See Webster, The White Devil and The Duchess of Malfi; A Casebook, edited by R. V. Holdsworth (1975), p. 21.

(1810); The Revenger's Tragedy had been in Dodsley's Select Collection of Old Plays (1825-1827). The Revenger's Tragedy and The White Devil had been in Hazlitt's Dodsley (1874-1876); and The Duchess of Malfi had been in J. S. Keltie's The Works of the British Dramatists (1870). There was one complete edition of Webster's plays edited by A. Dyce in 1830 and revised in 1857; and many stage adaptations of The Duchess of Malfi.<sup>1</sup>

For his text, Symonds followed Dyce and Collins, incorporating many of their emendations, devising a few of his own, and modernizing the text of The Atheist's Tragedy himself. He also adapted their notes by simplifying them, adding many of his own and including Lamb's remarks on the plays. Symonds's major textual innovation was the addition of stage directions to Tourneur's plays which are frequently used in modern editions.<sup>2</sup> They were not limited to exits and entrances, but described the actions of the characters, such as "Gives him money" (p. 357) or "Stabs Spurio" (p. 429). Such directions illustrate Symonds's attempt to visualize the plays and his desire to help his readers to do so.

### III. Thomas Heywood, introduced by J. A. Symonds

Symonds's preference for drama portraying real life which impeded his appreciation of Webster and Tourneur made him well qualified to

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for full bibliographical information.

<sup>2</sup>As for example, The Revenger's Tragedy, edited by R. A. Foakes (1966); and The Atheist's Tragedy, edited by Irving Ribner (1964).

introduce Thomas Heywood; his domestic stories and depiction of intense male friendships appealed to him. Heywood had been a favourite with most nineteenth-century readers because of his attitudes, sentiment and subject matter. He wrote plays for the middle-class about the middle-class with the didactic aim "to perswade men to humanity and good life, to instruct them in civility and good manners".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly he presented idealized characters, situations middle-class readers could identify with, and domestic lessons based on the assumption that deviations from the middle-class norm were wrong. There were few disturbing problems of individual morality or areas of grey in Heywood's drama. Another reason for his appeal was his attitude toward women which was shared by many readers. He saw them as inferior beings whose prime virtues were chastity, loyalty, and obedience, and whose most serious sin was adultery. Male readers approved of his good female characters and the fate of his bad ones. Moreover, used to the bloody revenge usually perpetrated by outraged husbands in Italianate tragedy, Heywood's less violent approach to fallen wives was applauded as truly Christian for he has them die with remorse after being forgiven by their husbands. Furthermore Victorians held Heywood's double standard and were not dismayed when Wendoll or Delavil or Chartely went unpunished for their sexual transgressions. Of all nineteenth-century critics only Swinburne objected to Heywood's exploitation of his female characters. Finally, Victorians liked Heywood for his tales of adventure and English

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<sup>1</sup>Heywood, An Apology for Actors (1612), in English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, edited by O. B. Hardison (1967), p. 227.

heroism which appealed to their nationalism.

Ironically the characteristics which made a Heywood a favourite with Victorian readers are those which today make him one of the least studied dramatists. This change in taste is perhaps best illustrated by the changing connotations of the word "bourgeois" first used by Symonds in 1874 to describe Heywood's drama. At that time the word simply meant "resembling the middle-class" (OED) and Symonds used it in good faith and as an uncoloured adjective. The word has since acquired the connotation of "hum-drum" (Concise Oxford Dictionary) or "a tendency towards mediocrity" (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary); nevertheless it is still applied to Heywood's work and its pejorative overtones are used to express a lack of sympathy with his drama.<sup>1</sup> Symonds's introduction was the last enthusiastic comment on Heywood and the Mermaid volume was the last generous selection of his plays to be published. The modern view disparaging his middle-class morality, didacticism, and exploitation of women began with Swinburne in 1895. In this Swinburne for once did not agree with Lamb who had offered the classic appreciation. He called Heywood "a sort of prose Shakespeare": his scenes were "as natural and affecting" as Shakespeare's, and his characters, especially his country gentlemen were "exactly what we see

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<sup>1</sup>See for example, Otelia Cromwell, Thomas Heywood: A Study in Elizabethan Drama of Everyday Life (1928) or The Fair Maid of the West, edited by Robert K. Turner (1968), pp. xv-xviii.

(but the best kind of what we see) in life".<sup>1</sup> Lamb isolated the most sentimental qualities of Heywood -- those which had also "gained for Shakespeare the attribute of gentle. . . -- generosity, courtesy. . . sweetness. . . and gentleness; Christianity and the true hearty Anglicism of feelings".<sup>2</sup> He admitted, however, that Heywood was not "the Poet"<sup>3</sup> that Shakespeare was for he "possessed not the imagination".<sup>4</sup>

Almost every critic who wrote on Heywood used Lamb as his starting point. Hazlitt developed his remark about Heywood's naturalness: his style was "natural, simple, and unconstrained" like "beautiful prose put into heroic measure". He also noted his subjects which affect readers "from their very familiarity".<sup>5</sup> The author of an article in the Retrospective Review (1825) developed another of Lamb's ideas -- Heywood's gentleness and "Christianism". He noticed in the plays

a politeness founded on benevolence and the charities of life, a spirit of the good and kind which twines around our affections, which gives us an elevation above the infirmities which flesh is heir to, and identifies us with the nobleness of soul and strength of character which shed "a glory" round their heads.<sup>6</sup>

He succumbed to the sentimental appeal of A Woman Killed with Kindness; it seemed "the most tearful of tragedies" which "overwhelmed [him] with the emotion".<sup>7</sup> He also had an unusual appreciation of the wild irregularities

<sup>1</sup>Specimens, I, 246.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 284.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, 246.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 284.

<sup>5</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 212.

<sup>6</sup>[C. W. Dilke], "Art. VII. Edward the Fourth... The Rape of Lucrece... A Woman Killed with Kindness", Retrospective Review, XI (1825), pp. 127-8.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 153.

of The Rape of Lucrece; however Charles Baldwyn, who edited it for The Old English Drama thought it was "a sort of dramatic monster" which must have been written when Heywood was "in a state of inebriety".<sup>1</sup>

As part of the mid-century antiquarian interest in the drama, John Payne Collier edited twelve of Heywood's plays for the Shakespeare Society. He responded so strongly to the sentiment of A Woman Killed With Kindness that it seemed to impede his work:

Nothing can be more tragically touching than the whole [of the last scene] of this fine moral play and we are not ashamed to own. . . . that we could not go through the mechanical process of correcting the proofs, without a degree of emotion that almost disqualified us for the duty.<sup>2</sup>

Collier also found The Fair Maid of the West "extremely touching" because of its "truth to nature and its graceful simplicity".<sup>3</sup>

By the 1870's Lamb's enthusiastic remarks carried less weight. A. W. Ward did not think that Heywood had any Shakespearian qualities or could portray natural characters. His strengths instead lay in being able to create "effective dramatic situations"<sup>4</sup> and in accommodating himself "to conditions imposed by the prevailing tastes of the day" (pp. 128-9). However, these tastes seemed to be similar to Ward's for he found his work effective, tender, natural, and free "from false

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<sup>1</sup>Introduction to The Rape of Lucrece in The Old English Drama, [edited by Charles Baldwin], (1824-1825), no. IV, p. iii.

<sup>2</sup>The Royal King and Royal Subject, A Woman Killed with Kindness, edited by John Payne Collier (1850), pp. viii-ix.

<sup>3</sup>The First and Second Parts of the Fair Maid of the West, edited by J. P. Collier (1850), pp. ix-x.

<sup>4</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 129. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

pathos" (p. 130). He was particularly attracted to Heywood's treatment of Mrs. Frankford in A Woman Killed with Kindness and Mrs. Wincott in The English Traveller for the death of these fallen wives "satisfies our sense of justice" (p. 116). In spite of the fact that the seductions and falls of the wives are unmotivated, Ward felt the situations were "carried out with dramatic force" and although the seducers escape only slightly singed, he thought the situations showed "true delicacy of feeling" (pp. 114-5) and were "highly credible to [Heywood's] moral sentiment (p. 117).

J. A. Symonds was the last of the Heywood enthusiasts. He agreed with Lamb's praise and often mentioned his Christianity; but he sowed the seeds of twentieth-century ideas about Heywood by noting that Lamb had exaggerated his talents and more importantly by noting the relation of Heywood's drama to "what the Germans style das bürgerliche Drama"<sup>1</sup> and by using the word "bourgeois" to describe it (p. xvi).

Symonds was drawn to Heywood not only because his drama presented domestic real life but also because of the patriotic fervour of his adventure tales and because of his "high-spirited young men" (p. xxi) who seem to "speak to us across two centuries with the voices of friends; while the far more brilliant masterpieces of many contemporary dramatists "such as Webster "stir only our aesthetic admiration" (p. viii). As a homosexual it is not surprising that Symonds should have been attracted to Heywood's young men whose ardent friendships are often destroyed by women. However, his appreciation of the men in

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Heywood, introduced by J. A. Symonds, edited by A. W. Verity (1888), p. xv. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Heywood's drama did not blind him to the shortcomings of his females. He noted that he seemed to have little understanding of women (p. xxi) and that they were usually "weak and vacillating characters" like Mrs. Frankford (p. xxx). But Symonds did fail to point out how these weak pictures of women make his domestic stories only partially true.

This is most obvious in his remarks on A Woman Killed with Kindness, his favourite play in the whole range of drama. In his personal copy of Lamb's Specimens he had written on the interleaf facing the selections from Acts IV and V: "It is impossible to write on such scenes as this. They are life."<sup>1</sup> That was the highest praise he could give a play. In his introduction he asserted that the play "touches one like truth" (p. xxviii) and "exhibited in perfection" all of Heywood's best points: his ability to show "the English life he knew so well, his faculty for lifting prose to the border-ground of poetry by the intensity of the emotion which he communicates, his simple art of laying bare the very nerves of passion" (pp. xxvii-xxviii). Act IV, scene vi, where Frankford confronts his wife, seemed particularly "full of pathos" with its "simple and homefelt" passion; nor did the tear-jerking power Collier noted seem "merely sentimental" (p. xxx). To his credit, Symonds remarked on the weakness of Mrs. Frankford and the inconsistency of her rapid fall with her later servile contrition when she begs to "have this hand cut off, these my breasts seared, / Be racked, strappadoed, put to any torment" (IV, vi,

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<sup>1</sup>Symonds's personal copy of Lamb's Specimens of English Dramatic Poets was published by Henry Bohn in 1854 in two volumes. It has blue interleaves and is now in the British Library. This remark is in Volume I on the interleaf facing p. 93. For an interesting discussion of his remarks in his copy of the Specimens in relation to his published criticism see Phyllis Grosskurth, "The Genesis of Symonds's Elizabethan Criticism", Modern Language Review, LIX (1964), 183-193.

Mermaid text, p. 56); but he quickly passed over her weak character, calling attention instead to Wendoll and "the combat in his soul" between his love for Mrs. Frankford and his duty towards Mr. Frankford (p. xxxi).

The most useful remarks in Symonds's introduction were an elaboration of Lamb's comments on Heywood's style. He called it "simple, easy", suited to his homely scenes and to setting "forth unaffected feeling". While his "means of reaching the heart" were simple, "yet they are often deep and effectual". He frequently used "some mere name -- Nan, Nan!" or "allusions to Christ and our religion" which "go straight to the very soul". Symonds preferred Heywood's tragic appeal to that of his contemporaries such as Webster and Tourneur who relied on "midnight horrors" and "sarcastic knaves" (p. xxi). This natural style and his simple stories seemed to Symonds to be unpremeditated; consequently while he "has produced no masterpiece, no thoroughly sustained flight of fancy" (p. xx) he occasionally "touches the spring of true poetic language" (p. xxi). To Symonds one of his highest moments was in Act IV, scene v, Mermaid text page 52, of A Woman Killed with Kindness where Frankford discovers his wife in bed with Wendoll and says "Astonishment,/ Fear, and amazement play against my heart./ Even as a madman beats upon a drum". These lines were an example of how Heywood linked dissimilar ideas in order to heighten emotion.

Other useful remarks in his introduction were his reminder that "plays. . . were written, not to be read and studied, but to be acted" (p. x); his discussion of Heywood's complaints of pirating, a topic which might have been unfamiliar to his readers in 1888; and his remarks on the infrequently discussed Valerius in The Rape of Lucrece.

Valerius seemed to Symonds "the most striking instance of the licence with which the poets of the time were forced to treat their subjects for the sake of the gallery". He suggested that especially after Lucrece's rape at the end of Act IV, where Valerius breaks into a bawdy song, the play was best considered as a burlesque (p. xxiv). Both these remarks are valuable and show Symonds's attempt to consider Valerius's dramatic function. Furthermore they draw attention to the infrequently appreciated aspect of Elizabethan entertainment illustrated here -- the comic byplay which rarely found its way into print -- and to suggest the best approach to this strange play: as a burlesque. Much of it reads like a school boy's satire of a tragedy<sup>1</sup> and the characters do absurdly extreme things such as declare "'twould do me good/ To wash my coach-naves in my father's blood" (I, ii, Mermaid text p. 340).

The main shortcoming of Symonds's introduction was that he used an essay which had been published previously as a review of Pearson's diplomatic reprint of Heywood's plays and did not revise it to make it applicable to the five plays in the Mermaid volume: A Woman Killed with Kindness, The Fair Maid of the West, The English Traveller, The Rape of Lucrece, The Wise Woman of Hogsden. Instead it covered all the plays in his formidable canon, and, as it happened, touched on The Fair Maid of the West and The Wise Woman of Hogsden only briefly but dealt enthusiastically with plays not in the volume such as Fortune by Land and Sea. Symonds

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<sup>1</sup>It has been suggested in fact that The Rape of Lucrece was one of Heywood's earliest plays written when he was practically a school boy. See The Rape of Lucrece, edited by Allen Holaday (1950), pp. 5-9.

tried to make up for this shortcoming by adding a feeble note at the end regretting that more plays could not have been included "for Heywood is essentially an author who we love the better the more we read of him" and hoping that students will "carry their researches further" (p. xxxii). But this statement itself contradicted what he had written for his review and had failed to exclude for the introduction: that "with all our affection for him, we are forced to admire his poetry in fragments and with reservations" and that "perhaps he shows to best advantage in the extracts made by Lamb" (p. xx).

Symonds's introduction is a landmark in Heywood studies and an excellent example of Victorian middle-class taste. A. C. Swinburne's essay marks the beginning of modern reactions to his drama. As an aristocrat and rebel, he did not share his contemporaries' belief in the sanctity of middle-class conventions or the value of didactic drama: as an atheist he was indifferent to Heywood's Christianity; nor did he share Heywood's assumption about the place of women in society. He idolized them and wanted women protected rather than exploited. He agreed with Lamb that Heywood was a "prose Shakespeare": but this was not a compliment. To Swinburne his style and subject matter were commonplace and their prosaic nature failed to make a powerful impression on him. Even Heywood's greatest play, A Woman Killed with Kindness seemed to bore him: "the whole play, as far as we remember or care to remember it, is Frankford."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Thomas Heywood", in his The Age of Shakespeare, p. 236.

Swinburne's refusal to be overwhelmed by Heywood's sentiment, middle-class ideals, or Christianity is his essay's strongest point for he was quick to point out two of Heywood's most serious shortcomings. First he disagreed strongly with Lamb's remarks about country gentlemen, which referred only to characters like Frankford. His Actons and Montfords were not the best one could see in real life; they were in fact "of a worse than the worst kind: more cruel or more irrational, more base or more perverse than we need to fear to see in life unless our experience should be exceptionally unfortunate" (pp. 198-199). Secondly and most importantly he was the first to object strenuously to Heywood's exploitation of his female characters. He used his married heroines ignobly, "sacrificing propriety and consistency of character to effective. . . developments of situation" (p. 241). A typical example is found in The Wise Woman of Hogsden where Heywood showed "the most infamous of murderers as an erring but pardonable transgressor" fit "to be received back with open arms by the wife he has attempted, after a series of the most hideous and dastardly outrages, to dispatch by poison". This use of a woman as a stage prop in order to heighten the effectiveness of a scene could only be excused by assuming that Heywood held to the medieval "orthodox ideal of a married heroine" as being "none other than Patient Grizel" (p. 243). Two other examples of Heywood's exploitation are found in A Woman Killed with Kindness and The English Traveller. In the first Mrs. Frankford only seemed to come to life on her death bed and her seduction was "so roughly slurred over" that one could not deplore her fall. The seduction of Mrs. Wincott in The English Traveller was

so poorly handled it appeared to be a "transformation from the likeness of a loyal and high-minded lady to the likeness of an impudent and hypocritical harlot" (p. 237). These important reflections on Heywood's domestic drama negated much nineteenth-century appreciation and point to the twentieth century's much less enthusiastic response.

Swinburne's reaction to The Rape of Lucrece is among his most interesting, for while others found it a dramatic monster or a burlesque, Swinburne thought it was "a really noble tragedy" (p. 220). He especially appreciated its occasional stirring verse and the characters of Sextus and Tullia. They seemed to have "touches of criminal heroism and redeeming humanity" and moments of "almost chivalrous dignity" (p. 221). They are also totally evil and must have struck the same chord in Swinburne as Flamineo.

Swinburne's essay put an end to the tradition begun by Lamb's praise; it also seems to have silenced Lamb's plea that new editions of the dramatists begin with Heywood, for only three of the five plays in the Mermaid (A Woman Killed with Kindness, The Fair Maid of the West, and The Rape of Lucrece) are available in individual modern editions. The Mermaid, edited by A. W. Verity, makes as important a contribution today as it did in the 1880's. Before it appeared the only collected edition of his plays was Pearson's diplomatic reprint (1874) and only A Woman Killed with Kindness had been fairly widely available in three other collections (Scott's Ancient British Drama, 1810; the third edition of the Dodsley, 1825-1827; Keltie's Works of the British Dramatists, 1870) and in Collier's edition done for the Shakespeare Society. However The English Traveller had been available only in Dilke's Old English Plays (1815); The Rape of Lucrece in The

Old English Drama (1825) and The Fair Maid of the West in Collier's edition.<sup>1</sup>

Verity's edition was based on Shepherd's text and Collier's edition and they all seem to have been reasonably faithful to the original.<sup>2</sup> Verity's most important contributions to the text were in providing full adequate notes, scene and act divisions, and stage directions, thus making his edition still the most dependable of one of Heywood's best plays, The English Traveller, and one of his most unusual, The Wise Woman of Hogsden.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for full bibliographical details.

<sup>2</sup>Allan Holaday, in his edition of The Rape of Lucrece, and Robert Turner in his edition of The Fair Maid of the West, make no complaints about their work.

## CHAPTER THREE

PART ONE -- CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE, JOHN FORD, TWO ANGRY WOMEN OF ABINGTON

BY HENRY PORTER, EDITED BY HAVELOCK ELLIS

PART TWO -- THOMAS MIDDLETON, INTRODUCED BY A. C. SWINBURNE, EDITED BY

HAVELOCK ELLIS

Part One. I. Christopher Marlowe, edited by Havelock Ellis.

As general editor of the Mermaid Series Havelock Ellis edited and introduced the first volume, Christopher Marlowe. His introduction combined the two common nineteenth-century approaches to Marlowe: reading his plays as a reflection of his personality and concentrating on the "select beauties" which revealed his passion or his sense of beauty. In the first approach J. A. Symonds was his immediate predecessor; in the second A. C. Swinburne. Together the work of the three men is a landmark in nineteenth-century criticism of Marlowe, taking the general trends to their most extreme. Of the three, only Symonds occasionally transcended the tendency to view Marlowe's plays as careless "throw-outs of poetic genius",<sup>1</sup> and pointed ahead to twentieth-century studies of Marlowe's drama as theatre.

Marlowe was admired highly throughout the nineteenth century. Early in the century his plays appealed to two strains: to the "mad . . . passion for poetry, and more especially for poetry in which the stronger passions of our nature are delineated",<sup>2</sup> and to "the Romantic

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<sup>1</sup>Nicholas Brooke, "Marlowe the Dramatist", in Elizabethan Theatre, edited by John Russell Brown and Bernard Harris (1966), p. 104.

<sup>2</sup>H[enry] M[aitland], "[Analytic Essays on the Early English Dramatists, No. I.] Marlowe's Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus", Blackwood's Magazine, I (July, 1817), p. 394.

challenge to eighteenth-century rationalism" which enabled readers to take seriously and in some cases admire his ideas and characters.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Faustus was the most popular: readers felt sympathy with Faustus's "pride of will and eagerness of curiosity sublimed beyond the reach of fear and remorse"<sup>2</sup> and enjoyed its "many splendid passages"<sup>3</sup> while at the same time critics stressed that as a drama it was "imperfect and disproportioned".<sup>4</sup> Edward II was attractive to readers for its pathos and nobility of subject and The Jew of Malta for the "air of wild humanity thrown around" Barabas.<sup>5</sup> A performance of it in 1818 with Edmund Kean as Barabas even made one reviewer feel it was Marlowe's best play.<sup>6</sup> Critics generally agreed that Tamburlaine was "perfect 'midsummer madness'"<sup>7</sup> or more harshly that Tamburlaine was "a right royal robber and most kingly murderer".<sup>8</sup> William Hazlitt was the first to express an admiring fascination with the passion of his verse and the ideological rebellion in his plays and to see them as revealing an essential quality of Marlowe's personality:

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<sup>1</sup>Marlowe Doctor Faustus: A Casebook, edited by John Jump (1969), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Hazlitt, Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, pp. 202-3.

<sup>3</sup>H[enry] M[aitland], "Analytic Essays on the Early English Dramatists. -- No. II. Edward II. -- Marlowe", Blackwood's Magazine, II (October, 1817), p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>M[aitland], "Marlowe's Tragical History. . .of Doctor Faustus", p. 393.

<sup>5</sup>H[enry] M[aitland], "Analytic Essays on the Early English Dramatists. No. III. Jew of Malta. -- Marlowe", Blackwood's Magazine, II (December, 1817), p. 265.

<sup>6</sup>"Notices of the Acted Drama in London. No. V. . . . Drury-Lane Theatre. Marlowe's Jew of Malta", Blackwood's Magazine, III (May, 1818), p. 209.

<sup>7</sup>Lamb, Specimens, I, 42.

<sup>8</sup>"Art. X. -- Tamburlaine. . .Edward the Second. . .Doctor

There is a lust of power in his writings, a hunger and thirst after unrighteousness, a glow of the imagination, unhallowed by any thing but its own energies. His thoughts burn within him like a furnace with bickering flames; or throwing out black smoke and mists, that hide the dawn of genius, or like a poisonous mineral, corrode the heart.<sup>1</sup>

Later Symonds was to show a similar admiration for his passionate audacity.

In the mid-century Marlowe's plays were more and more frequently viewed as merely a vehicle for his personal passion or for his beautiful verse. For example, in his Imagination and Fancy: Selections from the English Poets (1845) Leigh Hunt repeatedly likened Marlowe to Spenser, rather than to any dramatist, and spoke of him as a "born poet".<sup>2</sup> Virtually ignoring the dramatic form of his art, Hunt asserted that Marlowe was one of the first to appreciate "the beauty of words" (p. 141) to perceive "things in their spiritual as well as material relations" (p. 136) and to reflect "beauty through the feeling of the ideas" (p. 141). Hunt's remarks appealed particularly strongly to Swinburne.

The appearance in 1867 of J. A. Symonds's Pall Mall Gazette article on Marlowe marked the beginning of a great crescendo of enthusiasm for his work. Symonds stressed his personality, finding the "largeness, fulness, breadth, audacity, and exuberance" of his imagination representative of his age. Like Hazlitt he suggested that all his characters were invested with "the pride and ardour of his own restless spirit". Barabas's avarice seemed "a splendid passion"; Tamburlaine's boldness offered "splendid

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Faustus. . . Jew of Malta. . .", Retrospective Review, IV (1821), 147.

<sup>1</sup>Hazlitt, Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 202.

<sup>2</sup>Imagination and Fancy, second edition (1845), p. 136. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

rhetoric"; and Faustus represented "the true spirit of the adventurous age".<sup>1</sup>

Three years later Edward Dowden topped this by suggesting that in each of his plays Marlowe was trying to render "into artistic form the workings of a single passion". In Tamburlaine one saw a love of power; in Faustus a love of knowledge; in Barabas a love of money. To Dowden each passion was "a different form of life assumed by one great passion" which claimed "the whole man" and was "in its operation fatal".<sup>2</sup> It only remained for J. A. Symonds to give it the name "L'Amour de l'Impossible".<sup>3</sup>

A. C. Swinburne agreed with Dowden that Marlowe's characters were "the embodiments or the exponents of single qualities"<sup>4</sup> but he was more interested in Marlowe's verse. As he asserted in his earliest essay, "The Early English Dramatists -- Marlowe and Webster", he thought Marlowe was driven by aesthetic idealism: "'sensuous and passionate' beauty. . . lies at the very inmost core of his power"<sup>5</sup> and his aim was for a "sensuous perfection of language".<sup>6</sup> Because of this Swinburne thought that Marlowe was one of the greatest Gods of literature. Furthermore as "the absolute and divine creator" of blank verse and consequently of the Elizabethan drama, he was the "true Apollo of our dawn".<sup>7</sup> He was also "the first poet whose powers

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<sup>1</sup>"Elizabethan Dramatists -- No. II. -- Marlowe", Pall Mall Gazette, VI (September 2, 1867), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>"Christopher Marlowe", Fortnightly Review, VII (January, 1870), p. 75.

<sup>3</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors, p. 608.

<sup>4</sup>A Study of Shakespeare (1880), p. 81.

<sup>5</sup>"The Early English Dramatists -- Marlowe and Webster", p. 34.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>"George Chapman", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, edited by Edmund Gosse and T. J. Wise (1919), p. 128.

can be called sublime";<sup>1</sup> nor did any poet ever come "nearer than Marlowe to the expression of inexpressible beauty, to the incarnation in actual form of ideal perfection".<sup>2</sup>

Like Hunt, Swinburne blithely ignored the dramatic form of most of Marlowe's plays. With Tamburlaine for example he suggested that "the majestic and exquisite excellence of various lines and passages" should partially make up for its "monotony of Titanic truculence"<sup>3</sup> and he isolated Tamburlaine's soliloquy in Part I (V, i, 98-110, "If all the pens that poets ever held. . ."). To him it was "one of the noblest passages, perhaps indeed the noblest in the literature of the world, ever written by one of the greatest masters of poetry in loving praise of the glorious delights and sublime submission to the everlasting limits of his art" (p. 2). Dr. Faustus, he insisted, was a "tragic poem -- it has hardly the structure of a play". It was a "great [poem] in dramatic form" because of its "intensity of purpose and sublimity of note". There was "actual sublimity" in the "intense perception of loveliness" in the vision of Helen and a "sublimity of simplicity" in Faustus's last scene where the "absolute fitness" of its language gave it "the highest note of beauty" (pp. 4-5).

However, Swinburne did try to read Edward II as a play. In his Study of Shakespeare he compared it with Richard II, finding Marlowe's play

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<sup>1</sup>"Christopher Marlowe", in his The Age of Shakespeare , p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"George Chapman", p. 131.

<sup>3</sup>"Christopher Marlowe", p. 1. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

superior,<sup>1</sup> and in his main essay he suggested that it was his dramatic masterpiece. Dr. Faustus surpassed it "in pure poetry, in sublime and splendid imagination" but "in dramatic power and positive impression of natural effect" Edward II was Marlowe's best (p. 6). Nevertheless to Swinburne the play was imperfect because of the depiction in Act V of Edward's imprisonment and murder. There Marlowe did not seem to be as adept at using horror as Webster, for he had failed to find the "exact balance of mutual effect" between "animal" and "spiritual" suffering and had not yet found "the final note of scenic harmony between ideal conception and realistic execution" (pp. 6-7).

Swinburne's concentration on Marlowe's verse marked a culmination of the view which had been put forward throughout the century. It offered few new ideas but much profound respect for his verse and achievement. J. A. Symonds's remarks in his chapter in Shakspeare's Predecessors represents the nineteenth century's most enthusiastic admiration of Marlowe's personality and offered a new approach as well. He followed Dowden's suggestion about Marlowe's passion but at the same time had an unique awareness of his drama as theatre.

Like Swinburne Symonds almost worshipped Marlowe but his worship originated in his personal identification with him. In Shakspeare's Predecessors he defined Marlowe's L'Amour de l'Impossible as the "love

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<sup>1</sup>A Study of Shakespeare, pp. 38-9.

or lust of unattainable things; beyond the reach of physical force, of sensual faculty, of mastering will" and as the desire of things forbidden by God but "not beyond the scope of man's inordinate desire";<sup>1</sup> but he also had another idea in mind. A year earlier he had used the phrase as the title to a sonnet sequence obliquely referring to his homosexual desires;<sup>2</sup> he felt that Marlowe too might have been so inclined. Always strongly attracted to artists who seemed to share his propensity because they justified his own position,<sup>3</sup> he hinted, "the tender emotions and the sentiment of love were alien to Marlowe's temper. It may even be doubted whether sexual pleasures had any powerful attraction for his nature." (pp. 614-615)

Apart from this private definition of Marlowe's passion, Symonds described the basic desire in his characters as the desire for power. It was most blatant in the character of the Guise in The Massacre at Paris; in Faustus it was modified by the desire for knowledge, in Barabas for money, both of which would lead to power. In Tamburlaine, "the desire for absolute power is paramount" (p. 611) and Symonds asserted that,

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<sup>1</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors in the English Drama (1884), p. 608. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, "Renunciation":  
 Those tyrannous appetites, those unquelled desires,  
 Day-dreams arrayed like angels, longings crude,  
 Forth-stretching of the heart toward wandering fires,  
 Forceful imaginations, loves imbued  
 With hell and heaven conmingling, which here thrust  
 Hope, health, strength, reason, manhood in the dust.  
 "L'Amour de l'Impossible", in his Anima Figura (1882), p. 42. Oscar Wilde also used the phrase in a letter referring to homosexuality. See Rupert Croft-Cooke, Feasting with Panthers (1967), p. 202.

<sup>3</sup>See for example his enthusiastic Walt Whitman: A Study (1893) and The Life of Michaelangelo Buonarroti (1893).

especially in the key speech "Nature that framed us of four elements" (Part I, II, vii, 18-29), Marlowe had identified "himself with his creation. . .and utters through his mouth the poetry of his desire for the illimitable" (pp. 611-612).

He discussed the plays in some detail and unlike Swinburne tried to give an idea of each as a whole by relating plots, transcribing dialogue or speeches as they throw "light. . .on Marlowe's dramatic conception" (p. 640) and describing the possible appearance of the stage. With Tamburlaine for example he noticed its occasional beautiful verse but also stressed that "the action is one tissue of violence and horror" and that it "intoxicated the audience of the London play-houses" (p. 627-628). With the Jew of Malta he concluded his discussion by pointing out that "it is not easy to calculate the acting capabilities of plays", and that its "bustle, bloodshed, and continual business" may have made it very popular with audiences (p. 654). Edward II made its theatrical impact by offering excellent dialogue: "for the first time in a play of this description steel grates on steel and blow responds to blow, in the quick tense speech of natural anger" (p. 655). But Symonds's most important remarks were on Dr. Faustus. It profoundly impressed him because of the way Marlowe had taken a medieval legend and given it a "mythic largeness" which expressed "a real experience of humanity". He had made "a modern work of art" with "great and tragic unity" in its study of Faustus's "protracted vacillation between right and wrong" (p. 631). Where earlier critics had often condescendingly pointed out that Elizabethans believed in devils and angels and that one had to suspend his disbelief in order to accept Dr. Faustus,<sup>1</sup> Symonds perceived that the subordinate characters

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<sup>1</sup>See, for example, "Art. X. Tamburlaine. . .Jew of Malta", Retrospective Review, IV (1821), p. 173.

were "expressing the psychological condition of Faustus from various points of view" (pp. 632-633). He also noted Faustus's position at an intellectual junction. Based on traditional medieval Christianity, audiences "acquiesced in his doom" (p. 637) but "at the same time, their own strong passions responded to his arrogant intrepidity" for he had in him the aspiring spirit of the Renaissance (p. 636). Symonds's remarks on Dr. Faustus as well as on the rest of Marlowe's plays were the most illuminating of the century. He plunged more deeply into their ideas, their passion, and their qualities as drama than any other writer before him. They point ahead to the many twentieth-century studies of Marlowe's drama as theatre rather than as poetic passages and to the discussion of the ideas embodied in his plays. Although today his repetitive ecstasy over L'Amour de l'Impossible and his autobiographical readings of his plays are too extreme for our taste and even thought to be distorting,<sup>1</sup> there nevertheless are still adherents to this view, the most notable being Harry Levin whose Christopher Marlowe, the Overreacher merely substitutes libido sentiendi, libido dominandi and libido sciendi for L'Amour de l'Impossible.<sup>2</sup>

Havelock Ellis's Mermaid introduction which appeared three years after Shakspeare's Predecessors was a combination of all the conventional approaches to Marlowe: he used Symonds's catch-phrase, L'Amour de l'Impossible by varying it with Swinburne's idea that Marlowe was driven by the desire for unattainable beauty. In using the common approaches

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<sup>1</sup>See Nicholas Brooke, "Marlowe the Dramatist", p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Harry Levin, Christopher Marlowe: The Overreacher (1961), pp. 45-46.

Ellis took each to its logical extreme and produced an essay which glaringly illustrates the dangers inherent in any approach which ignores Marlowe's achievement as a dramatist. His essay is a monument to how not to read Marlowe. Ellis did not find the same ardency in Marlowe as Symonds and disagreed with the idea that his characters had a lust for power. To him as to Swinburne, Marlowe was an aesthetic idealist or dreamer: his characters and verse reveal "a peculiarly intense full-blooded inner life, the quintessence of youthful desires and youthful dreams".<sup>1</sup> Following his theories about inherited personality Ellis sought the source of this idealism in his heredity and used the only fact he knew -- that Marlowe's father was a shoemaker. Accordingly he asserted "shoemakers have sometimes possessed and left to their children a strangely powerful endowment of idealism" (p. xxxi). Another explanation for his idealism was that he was "a child of the Renaissance" which Ellis thought could be seen in his "repugnance to touch images of physical ugliness". For this reason Marlowe excluded the detail of Tamburlaine's lameness from his play, was not responsible for the more extreme sections of the 1616 text of Dr. Faustus, and generally allows little "material horror" in his drama (p. xxxix). However, just as Ellis's assertion about shoemakers is difficult to support so is this one. Tamburlaine is full of material horror; one of the main complaints about Edward II was the horror of Edward's imprisonment and death; and it is now believed that Marlowe was responsible for much of the longer text of Dr. Faustus. Ellis's treatment of these details reveals one

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, edited by Havelock Ellis, general introduction by J. A. Symonds (1887), p. xxx. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

of the dangers of the autobiographical approach to literature; having first decided that Marlowe was an idealist he had to distort certain details in order to prove his preconception. In this he was simply combining Symonds's suggestion that Marlowe was representative of the Renaissance and Swinburne's that he was a seeker after ultimate beauty; that combining the ideas leads to Ellis's distortion shows the fallacy in both.

In an ambiguous passage he also seemed to imply, like Symonds, that Marlowe was moved by the platonic idealism of homosexuality. Ellis first noted that "his unorthodox views had much to do with the accusation of 'vices sent from hell' in an anonymous play written shortly after his death" and in the next sentence said "It is certain that he had friends among the finest-natured men of his time" (p. xlv). He then quoted protestations of friendship from Marlowe's contemporaries and concluded "one lingers over the faintest traces of this personality which must have been so fascinating" (p. xlvi). While here he only vaguely implied that Marlowe was a homosexual in later works such as in his essay on George Chapman and in his Studies in the Psychology of Sex, he openly asserted it.<sup>1</sup>

Ellis chose parts of Tamburlaine as being the most representative of Marlowe's idealism. Following Symonds he suggested Marlowe spoke through Tamburlaine, but unlike Symonds he used the soliloquy answering "What is beauty?" (Part I, V, ii, 97-110) as his main illustration for it showed

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<sup>1</sup>See "George Chapman", in his From Marlowe to Shaw, edited by John Gawsworth (1950), p. 63, and his Studies in the Psychology of Sex, fourth edition (1936), II, Part II, 43-44.

him most clearly as "a divinely strong and eager-hearted poet" (p. xxxiv). He did quote the example that Symonds had used but disregarded its political implications. To Ellis the "Nature that framed us of four elements" soliloquy indicated that "an unattainable loveliness" was "beckoning him across the world", but he could only assert this by dismissing the final lines "That perfect bliss and sole felicity/ The sweet fruition of an earthly crown" as "Scythian bathos" (p. xxxiv-xxxv). As Nicholas Brooke points out however to dismiss these lines is "an obvious failure of critical response"<sup>1</sup> because they are essential to the play; as Tamburlaine speaks them over the dying king Cosroe they also add an important dramatic irony. It is a failure on Ellis's part; however in isolating this section and dismissing the last lines, he again was following the example set by his predecessors of ignoring the dramatic structure of Marlowe's work. Ellis's failure points out the general inadequacy of the approach and, by implication, the failure in critical response of almost all Ellis's predecessors.

Ellis was on surer ground with the other plays. With Dr. Faustus he followed Symonds noting how it illustrated "the conflicting stress of new and old" (p. xli). But here too he found ideal beauty in Helen's appearance (scene xiv), emphasizing its "impassioned loveliness" with Swinburnian enthusiasm (p. xl). Edward II represented "the summit of his art" to Ellis (p. xlii), but also showed that Marlowe had outgrown his

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<sup>1</sup>Brooke, p. 89.

idealism for the play was "a fiercely ironical response to Tamburlaine's supreme desire" (p. xliv). Although to make this point he had to contradict what he earlier had called Tamburlaine's driving passion and to note in fact that it was a desire for an "earthly crown", it is an interesting reflection on Edward II and one place where Ellis's idea illumines rather than distorts.

Ellis's introduction is interesting today as a combination of nineteenth-century approaches to Marlowe, but it offers little practical help to readers and in fact seriously distorts some of the plays. For all its repetition and ecstasy Symonds's essay is far more reliable. Next to its distorted ideas, the most serious shortcoming of Ellis's introduction is his style. One of his main stylistic traits was the grouping together of superficially dissimilar facts and ideas in order to show a fundamental similarity. In his later work he did this successfully by using transitional phrases and created an open, free-ranging style. But here he had not yet perfected this approach and his introduction contains many short, jerky sentences which do not relate to each other and longer ones which are often merely lists of ideas joined together with semi-colons. This makes his introduction very confusing and disjointed.

The most notable feature of Ellis's Christopher Marlowe was the inclusion of an appendix giving a statement, made by Richard Baines, a contemporary of Marlowe, which accused Marlowe of blasphemy. As early as 1830 parts of it had been included in The Gentleman's Magazine; Bullen also had published it in his edition, excluding the more shocking parts of what Marlowe supposedly said, such as "the Women of Samaria were Whores, and . . . Christ knew them dishonestlye", "St. John. . . was bedfellow to Christe. . . he used him as the synners of Sodome", "all thei that love

not tobacco and boyes are fooles".<sup>1</sup> Bullen dismissed Baines's other accusations, however -- that Marlowe had asserted that the earth was older than Adam, that Moses was a juggler, that the Old Testament was better literature than the New, that the rites of the Roman Catholic Church were preferable to those of the protestant church and that he might mint his own money -- by pointing out that Baines was a "ruffian" and that in 1885 no one would find fault with such remarks.<sup>2</sup>

When Bullen's edition was reviewed in The Academy, H. C. Beeching thought he made "some sensible remarks" on the accusations but wished he "had been even more outspoken".<sup>3</sup> Swinburne too held this view, suggesting that it was unnecessary to expurgate the statement since the preposterous nature of some of the remarks "help to show that the whole thing was either a bad joke or an impudent calumny". Furthermore, as the edition was limited to 900 copies and was not "a school or college edition" it need not be bowdlerized<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps in response to Beeching's review and certainly in keeping with his general policy, Ellis printed Baines's accusation in full and included a remark similar to Bullen's, stating that while some of the statements were jokes, the others "have . . . been substantially held. . . by students of science and of the Bible in our own days". He included in

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, p. 429.

<sup>2</sup>The Works of Christopher Marlowe, edited by A. H. Bullen (1885), III, 314.

<sup>3</sup>H. C. Beeching, "The Works of Marlowe, ed. by A. H. Bullen", Academy, XVI (November 14, 1884), p. 316.

<sup>4</sup>Swinburne, Letters, V, 95.

this list of things about "which many authorities seem now to side with Marlowe" the assertions about "the nature of [Christ's] intimacy with Mary Magdalene" and "the connection between the relationships of Jesus and John and those relationships which were common among the noblest Greeks" and concluded that these "acute and audacious utterances. . .are of great assistance in enabling us to realise Marlowe's personality".<sup>1</sup>

Ellis's handling of this matter was insensitive; even today Baines's and Ellis's statements are rather shocking; in 1887 those who received presentation copies of Christopher Marlowe were outraged. Vizetelly, who was under pressure from the National Vigilance Association over his Zola publication, quickly deleted the more obscene parts of the statement and omitted Ellis's remarks. Those who had received the early copies were relieved. Swinburne, for example, wrote to Ellis, "I am happy to see the note announcing the suppression of the horrible and disgusting passages . . . . I greatly regretted to find those monstrous abominations made public" in an edition for general readers.<sup>2</sup> Ellis, however, was unrepentant and viewed his actions as "characteristic".<sup>3</sup> As an editor of an unexpurgated edition of the dramatists, presenting the drama in its entirety was only part of his aim; he also wanted to shock his readers and at the same time make them feel that their reactions were unreasonable.

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<sup>1</sup>Christopher Marlowe, pp. 430-431.

<sup>2</sup>Swinburne, Letters, V, 183.

<sup>3</sup>Ellis, My Life, p. 167.

He did this here by what Arthur Calder-Marshall has explained as "a trick Ellis was to play more subtly over and over again in his career, to assume that what he had wanted to prove had already been accepted by enlightened people, the invitation [being] to join the company of enlightened spirits and no questions asked".<sup>1</sup>

Surprisingly the Pall Mall Gazette partly defended Ellis. The reviewer of Christopher Marlowe felt it was a better idea to print Baines's statement in full because "by expurgating [it], you lame the reader's judgment as to its inherent credibility". Expurgation was "manifestly absurd" in "an edition heralded by a somewhat unnecessary anti-Bowdlerian trumpet blast". However, the reviewer felt Ellis did err in including his "futile note" with the statement which, as Symons pointed out, made it appear that he believed the accusations<sup>2</sup>, and in being "unduly conscious of the 'expurgated' on the title-page. He lingers a little too long over the questionable elements in his subject. Taste in short is not his strong point."<sup>3</sup>

Ellis's text did not make a major contribution for Marlowe was one of the few dramatists whose works had been fairly readily available to readers in the nineteenth century. There had been four collected editions (Robinson's, 1826; Dyce's, 1858; Cunningham's, 1870; and Bullen's, 1885). Tamburlaine was available only in the collected editions but Dr. Faustus and Edward II had been available separately and in many collections and The Jew of Malta had been included in the third edition of Dodsley (1825-

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Calder-Marshall, Havelock Ellis (1959), p. 109.

<sup>2</sup>See PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, March 28, 1887.

<sup>3</sup>"Best Plays of the Old Dramatists", Pall Mall Gazette, XLV, (June 17, 1887), p. 3.

1827).<sup>1</sup> Ellis followed Bullen's text, occasionally adopting emendations from Dyce's text if they appealed to him, as with Act I, scene iv, line 136 of Edward II where Dyce changed Gaveston's remark to Edward "My lord drops down a tear" to "My love drops down a tear". Ellis no doubt adopted the emendation to stress Gaveston's and Edward's homosexual relationship.

The only aspect in which Ellis's text is inferior to his predecessors' is in his treatment of the two quarto texts of Dr. Faustus. Although today most editors find the 1616 quarto more authoritative than the 1604 quarto<sup>2</sup> nineteenth-century opinion varied widely. Dyce, Cunningham and Bullen had each allowed the reader to decide for himself which text was better by either printing both texts in full or the variant scenes in an appendix. But because it did not support his impression of Marlowe as an aesthetic idealist Ellis felt that the quarto of 1616 did not represent much of his work and excluded most of it. A few of the more interesting additions of the 1616 text were put in the footnotes but always with a statement which pulled his characteristic "trick", thus impeding the reader's independent judgment. For example in scene vi Lucifer says "think on the Devil" and in the 1616 text Belzebub chimed in with "And his dam too". Ellis wrote humourlessly, "I venture to relegate [this] meaningless line. . .for which no editor considers Marlowe responsible, to a foot-note".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix.

<sup>2</sup>See the introduction to Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, parallel texts, edited by W. W. Greg (1950).

<sup>3</sup>Christopher Marlowe, p. 199.

Perhaps the best feature of Ellis's text is his annotation. Here he excelled himself for his notes often seem to be based on much original research. Occasionally they go into more detail than is required -- as with the notes explaining the geography of Tamburlaine but they are always clear, informative and vivid.

II. John Ford, edited by Havelock Ellis.

Havelock Ellis also edited and introduced John Ford. Because Ellis had no dogmatic standards for verse and was interested in the ideas presented in literature he was one of the best-qualified to introduce Ford's plays for throughout the nineteenth century, critics had difficulty appreciating the nature of Ford's verse or the essence of his dramas.

Ironically Lamb who thought Ford "was of the first order of poets" isolated the reason his verse did not appeal to most readers: "he sought for sublimity, not by parcels in metaphors or visible images, but directly where she has her full residence, in the heart of man; in the actions and sufferings of the greatest minds".<sup>1</sup> In other words his sublimity was not in his language so much as in his complete dramatic picture; the characters and their actions were embodiments of his "poetry" using the term in the sense Lamb had in mind -- of his passion. For example to Lamb it was in the totality of Anabella and Giovanni's "poor perverted reason" and "hints of. . .improveable greatness" that one found Ford's sublimity.<sup>2</sup> His language itself is often calm, understatement without the lyric raptures

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<sup>1</sup>Lamb, Specimens, II, 203.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 203-204.

which seekers after select beauties could detach. At the same time the situations of Ford's characters were generally unacceptable and many readers were unable to see that Ford used them to present deeper themes of human suffering. Even Lamb did not approve of Ford's presentation of "prodigious and nameless sins" such as incest;<sup>1</sup> and many felt like Thomas Campbell: "better that poetry should cease, than have to do with such subjects".<sup>2</sup>

William Hazlitt delivered the "classic of anti-Fordian criticism".<sup>3</sup> Missing the point of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, he asserted that the repulsiveness of subject "constitutes [its] chief merit".<sup>4</sup> Comparison of it with his other plays showed that Ford's power lay in "knowing the use of poisoned weapons" for "where they have not the sting of illicit passion, they are quite pointless".<sup>5</sup> Ford consciously chose not to "work upon our sympathy, but on our antipathy or our indifference". Nor did his style seem in any way praiseworthy; Hazlitt deplored its almost mathematical regularity, "scholastic subtlety" and "innate perversity of understanding".<sup>6</sup>

William Gifford's only slightly less harsh opinion was the one most widely adhered to. It appeared as the introduction to his 1827 edition of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, 190.

<sup>2</sup>Specimens of the British Poets, edited by Thomas Campbell (1819), III, 235.

<sup>3</sup>M. Joan Sargeant, John Ford (1935), p. 180.

<sup>4</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 268.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

Ford, with the Family Library expurgated edition (1831) and with Dyce's revision of Gifford's text (1869). As a neo-classic, Gifford did not object to many qualities of Ford's verse. Although "rarely sublime"<sup>1</sup> his best verse made a "deep and lasting impression" (I, xxxix) which was "rather felt than understood" (I, xxxviii). It arose from Ford's "intense thought" about the ideas he was trying to embody in his characters and situations (I, xxxix); but on the other hand he often "perversely labour[ed] with a remote idea till he has confused its meaning" (I, xxxviii). Generally Ford's plays had little to recommend them. In 'Tis Pity She's a Whore he used his "exquisite harmony of versification. . .to allure the reader through [a] dreadful display of vice and misery" (I, 132) and Love's Sacrifice was completely despicable. Its comic subplot was offensive; "the plot is altogether defective; and the characters proceed. . .from crime to crime, till they exhaust their own interest, and finally expire without care or pity" (I, xxvii). Act III was "uniformly reprehensible and disgusting" (I, 454) and Bianca was "a gross and profligate adultress (I, 475).

However, Ford did have admirers among those who could appreciate his central themes and the appropriateness of his style to his themes. Lamb for example was particularly moved by the intensity of the suffering in the final scene of The Broken Heart which prompted a comparison with "Calvary and the Cross".<sup>2</sup> Although Gifford called this comparison "the blasphemies

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<sup>1</sup>The Dramatic Works, edited by William Gifford (1827), I, xxxviii. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Lamb, Specimens, II, 203.

of a poor maniac",<sup>1</sup> Henry Weber, Ford's first nineteenth-century editor, was similarly moved. He also called attention to Ford's female characters. Calantha and Penthea (The Broken Heart) were "admirable portraits of the gentle yet noble female mind, borne down by excess of affliction, yet preserving throughout untainted honour and firmness of mind, to which most of the stronger sex are utter strangers".<sup>2</sup> Francis Jeffrey even found nobility of suffering in 'Tis Pity She's a Whore. Its subject was "somewhat revolting" but Anabella and Giovanni's "sort of splendid and perverted devotedness" was "managed with great spirit, and . . . considerable dignity".<sup>3</sup> Indeed, "the strange perversion of kind and magnanimous natures, and the horrid catastrophe by which their guilt is at once consummated and avenged, have not often been rivalled".<sup>4</sup> Henry Hallam, in his Introduction to the Literature of Europe (1839) was also moved by Ford's drama. His situations were awesome, his "distress intense" and his "thoughts and language" were adequate to "the expression of deep sorrow".<sup>5</sup>

In 1867 J. A. Symonds wrote the most detailed study of Ford which had appeared to date. Although he prudishly insisted on renaming 'Tis Pity She's a Whore The Tale of Giovanni and Annabella because "our refinement does not suffer" the full title "to be mentioned", he attempted to understand

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<sup>1</sup>"Article IX The Dramatic Works of John Ford", Quarterly Review, VI (December, 1811), p. 485. He was rebuking Weber for quoting Lamb in his edition of Ford's works. This cruel remark in fact did more harm to Gifford than to Weber or Lamb and it was referred to long after his death as an example of his irascibility.

<sup>2</sup>The Dramatic Works of John Ford, edited by Henry Weber (1811), I, xxxiii.

<sup>3</sup>"John Ford", in his Essays on English Poets and Poetry (n.d.), p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>5</sup>Introduction to the Literature of Europe, III, 615.

and evaluate both Ford's verse and subject matter. Symonds was unwilling to place him in the first order of poets because there was no lyricism in his verse but this did not diminish his estimation of Ford's drama. He called him "by far the most pathetic" and "the 'most tragical'" of dramatists and noted how he aimed specifically at "the hidden spring of our tender emotion" by using situations which involved "some carefully protracted suffering". His powerful style was particularly well suited to his drama because his "repetition of little words. . . imparts a weighty and meditative force to their monosyllabic simplicity". Symonds also explained Ford's choice of subject matter by reminding readers that he was writing at a time when the drama was in decline and had to depend "upon novelty of situation" for success. Accordingly he took "incest, madness, murder, infidelity, suicide -- all that is most harassingly painful in the history of guilty or unhappy passions -- to the pitch of cynical audacity".

His remarks on 'Tis Pity She's a Whore were particularly illuminating. The subject was "revolting" but he thought Ford ennobled it "by the force of the passions which he had described" and above all by Giovanni's "intellectual greatness". One of Symonds's most important points was his historical interpretation of Giovanni which helped his readers accept the use of incest. He noted that Ford presented him as "a professed and hardened atheist" in order to be consistent with Elizabethan morality for "incest implied either insanity or atheism -- the curse of intellectual impotence or banishment from God". He was allowed to realize his desires but Ford made it clear that while "death has no terrors for him" he would be damned. Another important point was his discussion of Anabella who seemed to him to be the tragic figure. Her "repentance and anguish" and "conscience-stricken"

death made her one of Ford's "most powerful delineations".<sup>1</sup> By rightly concentrating on Annabella's remorse rather than on her sin Symonds added a new dimension to appreciation of the play which contradicted Hazlitt and others who maintained that Ford was simply exploiting a sensational subject and even more modern critics such as T. S. Eliot who could see Annabella only as "a moral defective".<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to know how much influence Symonds's brief essay had. It has never been reprinted and one can point to no directly derivative views. But one would like to think that readers who awaited the Mermaid edition of Ford which was to appear some twenty years later had read it and appreciated Symonds's historical perspective, understanding of Annabella and refusal to condemn Ford's verse for its lack of lyricism. At any rate Symonds's views place him at the forefront of Ford's nineteenth-century critics and foreshadow our views today.

Certainly he deserves a higher place than A.C. Swinburne whose essay on Ford (1871) seemed a response to Symonds's as he maliciously suggested "it is somewhat unfortunate that the very title of Ford's masterpiece should sound so strangely in the ears of a generation 'whose ears are the chastest part about them'".<sup>3</sup> While Swinburne made one or two valuable points, he was unable to offer an appreciation of Ford's drama as a whole, because he viewed Ford as a poet, as distinguished from a dramatist, and was unattracted to Ford's verse. Without any lyrical qualities, he denied Ford a place in the first order of poets. He had "dramatic ability", intellectual force" (p. 283), the power to fasten "the fangs of his

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<sup>1</sup>"Elizabethan Dramatists. No. VIII. John Ford", Pall Mall Gazette, VI (October 30, 1867), p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>"John Ford" (1932), in his Elizabethan Dramatists (1963), p. 126.

<sup>3</sup>"John Ford", in his Essays and Studies (1875), p. 278. Subsequent references will be included in the text.

genius and his will. . .deeply in your memory" and make "his work. . . part of your thought and parcel of your spiritual furniture for ever" (p. 313) but Swinburne could not hold a high opinion of Ford because of his lyrical inadequacies.

Swinburne described Ford's verse in some detail, starting from the assumption that in order to qualify for the first order it must have "sweet and spontaneous fluency" and a "bird-like note of passionate music". Ford's did not, but had instead "too much . . .of rule and line" which frequently gave his verse a "hard limitation" and "apparent rigidity" (p. 283). His power was not spontaneous but the result of conscious effort: "the knowledge and mastery of passion" and "the science of that spiritual state in which the soul suffers force from some dominant thought or feeling" (p. 306). "Science", "knowledge", and "mastery" all implied a lack of spontaneity which put Ford in the second order and prevented Swinburne's involvement in his drama.

A further, more justifiable, charge Swinburne made about his work was that he had knowledge only of tragic sentiment. His comic subplots were indecent and offensive. In saying this he asserted that he was not speaking "from the preacher's point of view"; but art "by the very law of her life" must "reject whatever is brutal, whatever is prurient". Ford's subplots were both: they were "without spirit, without humour, without grace" (pp. 288-289). While the bawdy subplots of other dramatists were excusable because of their "height of spirits", their genuine comedy, or the contrast offered to the main work, Ford's comedy could not be thus "honourably excused nor reasonably explained" (p. 290). Few in Swinburne's day or our own would disagree. The only comic character who

is not despicable is the simpleton Bergetto ('Tis Pity She's a Whore) who does offer effective comic relief.

Swinburne's appreciation of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore was not as full as Symonds's because he lacked Symonds's historical perspective and did not appreciate Giovanni's atheism. To Swinburne Giovanni not Annabella was the tragic figure because "his crime falls like a curse. . . he stands before us as one plague-stricken in the prime of spiritual health, helpless" (p. 279). However, as an atheist himself Swinburne's idea of "spiritual health" distorts Ford's use of Giovanni's atheism. As Symonds pointed out, Ford did not intend for it to be seen as a mark of well-being but used it in a way his audience would understand -- as a banishment from hope of eternal life. His scepticism and eventual atheism prove his strength of character and desire to aim beyond human and divine limitations, but they are also the source of his near-madness and ultimate damnation. However, Swinburne did point out a quality in Giovanni, which Symonds had mentioned but not discussed: his "curious interfusion of reason with passion" which makes it impossible for him to resist his desires (p. 279). Being able to rationalize his passion gives his character a special power and truth. Unlike other Jacobean malefactors, such as Fletcher's who act only from passion and are shallow and ridiculous because they do not control their actions, Giovanni has a genuinely tragic dimension because he believes he is in control of his behaviour.

Swinburne's failure to see that Ford's drama reflected attitudes of his time also led him to find a "jarring and startling" moral ambiguity in the Friar's suggestion that Annabella marry Soranzo; it weakened "the poet's hold on the reader by the shock [given] to his faith and sympathy" and made the Friar similar to some of Beaumont and Fletcher's characters who appear

to be virtuous but are more really and more justly offensive to the natural sense, more unsavoury to the spiritual taste" than their villains (p. 292). But Swinburne has not appreciated, as Ford's audience would have, the reasons for the Friar's action. There was little else that he could do within his society; to not advise her to save her honour, an attribute of great concern to Jacobean characters, would be inviting a tragic catastrophe. Furthermore the Friar still desired to save her soul which he felt might be possible if she repented and vowed to be faithful to Soranzo.

Swinburne did note one aspect of the play in passing which had not been brought out before and which, if he had pursued it, would have helped him appreciate Ford's dramatic skill. He condemned the Hippolita-Soranzo subplot as "neither beautiful nor necessary" but went on to point out how it serves to stifle our sympathy for Soranzo and show Richardetto and Hippolita as "worthless impediments" (pp. 298-299). This is another example of how Swinburne has left us as we are eager to go on. He did not make the obvious point that Ford intended his subplot to show these things and thereby heighten our sympathy for Annabella and Giovanni who are caught in a corrupt society and are consequently justified in feeling drawn to each other.

In some ways Swinburne preferred "the softer tone and more tender colour" of The Broken Heart, although he found "a certain rigid and elaborate precision of work" especially in Penthea who seemed "over hard and severe" with "a vein of harshness and bitterness in her angry grief which Shakespeare or indeed Webster would have tempered and sweetened". Only in Act III, scene v, where Penthea gives away her "three poor jewels" did he approve of her portrayal (pp. 286-287). But here Swinburne

is rigidly applying his own tastes and preconceptions to Ford's characterization. He preferred tender heroines and because two greater dramatists created such women he felt that all females should be stereotyped in this way. But it is to Ford's credit that he does not have Penthea accept the ruin of her life by her brother's absurd whim. Instead he gives her the strength to be bitter and to escape in the only honourable way -- suicide. Ford further emphasizes her justified bitterness by having her choose a slow method of death -- starvation -- so that all will feel a protracted guilt and be made to share in the suffering they inflicted on her. Although Swinburne had disagreed with Lamb about Ford's position, he echoed Lamb's praise of the play's final scene. It was a "greatly conceived" spectacle and had grand "moral and poetic force" based on "solemn and calm emotion" (pp. 285-286).

His most unsympathetic remarks were prompted by Love's Sacrifice. Hoping that he would "not be liable to any charge of Puritan prudery" he declared the play "utterly indecent" because the "obscene abstinence of Fernando and Bianca" was false; and "in the sight of art nothing is so foul as falsehood" (pp. 287-288). Like Gifford, Swinburne found nothing to redeem "the paltry villainies and idiocies" of the characters; it was beneath Ford's genius and had "no height or grandeur of evil" and "no aspiration or tenderness of afterthought" (p. 288). Although Ford did not intend to show great evil or tenderness, but presumably designed the play to be another study of suffering, Swinburne's disgust is justified; none of the characters is moving. The Duke who suffers from jealousy is a coward; and Bianca who suffers in being torn between her marriage vows and her love for Fernando is true to neither. Nor is Fernando allowed

to suffer his enforced abstinence nobly but is given absurd actions such as appearing in Bianca's coffin in a shroud, and misunderstands the nature of her love for him.

Swinburne's essay made some important points and he concluded it with an interesting comparison and ranking of the Giants of the drama -- Dekker, Marston, Chapman, Massinger -- but for readers in his own day he offered a less sensitive appreciation of Ford's verse and his greatest play 'Tis Pity She's a Whore than Symonds whose historical and dramatic perspective made him more sympathetic to Ford. Swinburne noticed some of the finer points of Ford's technique but his failure to consider the dramatic form of his work meant that he underestimated Ford's dramatic achievement. His essay is notes as a poet on another which in fact tells us as much about Swinburne's tastes as about Ford's drama. As a study of Ford it has limited value.

Before Havelock Ellis's Mermaid introduction appeared, A. W. Ward offered some interesting reflections on Love's Sacrifice which Ellis was able to use. Surprisingly Ward was one of the play's apologists. With all its "coarse threads" he found it "fascinating". He was intrigued by Bianca for "never has the intensity of passion been more forcibly portrayed". He found "psychological truth" in her characterization and suggested that she "resembles those conceptions of modern French literature in which temptation is represented as woman's doom".<sup>1</sup> While Ward's attitude towards women seems to have been founded on some unfortunate and hopefully atypical

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<sup>1</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature (1875) II, 301-302.

experiences with faithless women, his suggestions were helpful to Ellis whose study was the most balanced and thoughtful of the nineteenth century. While disagreeing with some of its points T. S. Eliot has called it "excellent"<sup>1</sup>.

Ellis was attracted to Ford because of his sympathetic portrayal of women, his exploration of unconventional behavior and his method of presenting "the conflict between the world's opinion and the heart's desire . . . not as a moralist brow-beating the cynical or conventional world, but as an artist" who solves problems only "by the rough methods of the tragic stage".<sup>2</sup> Of special concern was Ford's treatment of incest, for Ellis himself had experienced incestuous emotions when he was re-united with his sisters after living in Australia.<sup>3</sup>

As if in defiance of Swinburne and others, Ellis included Lamb's suggestion that Ford was "of the first order of poets". He found the same qualities in his verse that others had -- he "wrought, laboriously, cool, lucid lines" -- but to Ellis such qualities were not faults. They simply made his verse different from "the half delirious freedom of Marlowe or Beaumont" (p. x). Ford was "a master of brief mysterious words, so calm in seeming, which well up from the depths of despair". His style was perfectly suited to his themes of suffering, to his presentation of "the burden of a

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<sup>1</sup>"John Ford" (1932), in his Elizabethan Dramatists, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>John Ford, edited by Havelock Ellis (1888), p. xiv. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>3</sup>See Ellis, My Life, p. 141.

passionate and heavy-laden heart" and to the expression of "the grief deeper than language" (p. xiv). Ellis also noted that Ford's women were different from those of other dramatists and, unlike Swinburne, preferred his to other dramatists' "tender, or picturesque, or tragic" women. They had only "looked. . .from the outside, and were satisfied with . . . gracious or gorgeous stage-pictures". Ford, on the other hand "writes of women . . .as one who had searched intimately and felt with instinctive sympathy the fibres of their hearts" (pp. xvi-xvii).

Ford's style, interest in women and psychological subject matter seemed to Ellis to make him "the most modern of the tribe to whom he belonged" (p. xvi). Following Ward's suggestion he asserted that Ford was more akin to "those poets and artists of the naked human soul" such as Flaubert and Stendhal than to Shakespeare or Heywood (p. xvii).<sup>1</sup> To Ellis it seemed that he was the writer with whom poetic dramatists in 1888 "instinctively ally themselves" (p. xvi). Although he did not elaborate he was thinking here of the symbolist plays of Yeats or Symons and touching on Lamb's point about the origins of Ford's "poetry" in the totality of his dramatic picture. By Ellis's day Shakespearian imitations with their elaborate verse were an anachronism. Ford's poetry, which through its calm understatement evokes a wealth of ideas and touches on unspeakable profundities, came closer to being an adequate dramatic model for dramatists at the turn of the century responding to the symbolist movement than that of any other Elizabethan or Jacobean dramatist.

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<sup>1</sup>This is the main point Eliot disagreed with, rightly pointing out that Flaubert and Stendhal "are analysts of the individual soul as it is found in a particular phase of society; and in their work is found as much sociology as individual psychology" ("John Ford", p. 130). Ellis probably would have agreed with Eliot for following Ward he was thinking primarily of Ford's treatment of women which like Stendhal's was revolutionary in that it did not condemn them for sexual transgressions.

In spite of his praise of some aspects of Ford's work Ellis found other problems in his drama. For example Ford seemed interested only in his main characters; his others were often shallow and with his comic characters "it is for once impossible to go beyond the dictum of Gifford: they are a despicable set of buffoons". A second shortcoming, Ellis maintained, was an inconsistency with "action or time" and an indifference "generally to dramatic effect" (p. xiv). This last point however needs more explanation for if by dramatic effect Ellis meant theatricality, he has failed to note the many moments which are theatrically powerful, such as Calantha's final dance in The Broken Heart (V, iv) or Giovanni's final scene.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore was for Ellis Ford's best play; it was a "simple, passionate, and complete" study, "free comparatively from mixture of weak or base elements" (p. x). Unlike many critics he did not question its morality; indeed when compared with A King and No King, which to him was better theatre, it showed Ford's "insight and sincerity. . . fineness of moral perception" and "sure and deliberate grasp of the central situation". The only "failure in Ford's grasp" was Annabella's words as Giovanni stabs her -- "Brother unkind". He thought the word "unkind" "fails to carry the impress of truth, and falls short of the tragic height of passion to which we are uplifted" (p. xi). However, even this might not have been a failing because one of the word's seventeenth-century meanings was "physically unnatural; contrary to the usual course of nature. . . esp. unnaturally bad or wicked" (OED). Annabella's use of the word is doubly effective implying not only her brother's cruelty but also the sincerity of her repentance and renunciation of their love as

unnatural and wicked.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Swinburne or Gifford Ellis was not shocked by Love's Sacrifice. He objected to the "feeble and foolish sentiment" of its conclusion but, playing his trick, suggested that as enlightened readers "we can only smile when we hear these lovers. . .celebrated as miracles of chastity and truth". He tried to view it in relation to its times and called it "a complete. . .moral collapse" which along with its "occasional touches of forced material horror" showed Ford as a "child of a society tainted by the affectation of purity, and a court that had ceased to be national and robust". Nevertheless, following Ward, he suggested that the relationship of Bianca and Fernando was "true to nature and wrought with Ford's finest art and insight" (p. xii).

Ellis's introduction was free of the stylistic problems of Christopher Marlowe. Its aloof tone which "smiled" at Ford's morality cleared the air of prejudices about Ford's verse and subject matter; and his emphasis on Ford's main theme of human suffering paved the way for the more sympathetic modern view of his drama.

Ellis's text too was important, for in the nineteenth century only two of the five editions which had appeared were reliable: Gifford's edition of 1827 and Dyce's revision of it (1869). The others were Weber's edition (1811) which Gifford had found to be extremely faulty;<sup>2</sup> the

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<sup>1</sup>It is surprising that Ellis did not know this meaning because Ford frequently uses "unkind" or "kind" in this way and because in his edition of Two Angry Women of Abington Ellis defined "kind" as "nature". See Henry Porter, Two Angry Women of Abington, edited by Havelock Ellis in Nero and Other Plays (1888), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>See The Dramatic Works, edited by William Gifford, I, li-clxiii.

heavily expurgated Family Library edition (1831); and Hartley Coleridge's (1840) poorly annotated, double columned edition which combined Ford with Massinger. The Broken Heart had also been available in Scott's Modern British Drama (1811) and had been included, along with 'Tis Pity She's a Whore in Thomas White's sixpence pamphlet series, The Old English Drama (1830).<sup>1</sup> Ellis used Dyce's text as his base, simplifying or adding notes where necessary, and produced a text basically as sound as Dyce's. The Mermaid volume still makes an important contribution because no new complete edition of Ford has appeared in the twentieth century and only two other smaller collections have been published: S. P. Sherman's edition of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore and The Broken Heart (1916) and K. Sturgess's Penguin edition of 1970 containing only three plays: 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, The Broken Heart, and Perkin Warbeck. For readers who want a full sample of Ford's work, Ellis's edition is still the most convenient and easily accessible.

### III. Two Angry Women of Abington, edited by Havelock Ellis.

Porter's work had received little attention in the nineteenth century Lamb called Two Angry Women of Abington a "pleasant" play and praised Porter's versification which was "unencumbered and rich with compound epithets".<sup>2</sup> But it was the general neglect of dramatists like Porter which led him to ask

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for full bibliographical details.

<sup>2</sup>Lamb, Specimens, I, 98.

Why do we go on with ever new editions of Ford, and Massinger, and the thrice-reprinted Selections of Dodsley? what we want is as many volumes more as these latter consist of, filled with plays (such as this), of which we know comparatively nothing.<sup>1</sup>

In answer to this Ellis devised Nero and Other Plays and included Two Angry Women of Abington. The play had not been unknown to nineteenth-century readers. Dyce had edited it for the Percy Society in 1841 and W. C. Hazlitt included it in the fourth edition of Dodsley;<sup>2</sup> but Dyce's unmodernized edition was available only to subscribers and neither included any critical introductory remarks.

Ellis's brief introduction offered the first criticism since Lamb's day. Unfortunately, however, its value is limited because he confined himself to a vague racial concept -- Porter's "Englishness". He explained that some writers "seem to be peculiarly free from all exotic influence, and. . . thus embody what is most native and aboriginal in the nation from whose heart they spring". Porter was one such writer, representing "the special unadulterated characteristics of the English people". Ellis came to this conclusion because Porter seemed different from his contemporaries like Jonson who had "gulped down prodigiously the Mermaid wine of Italy". Porter by contrast was "absolutely unaffected by the rush of the stream that surrounded him". He did not elaborate on these "unadulterated characteristics" but gave other examples of "pure-blooded men of this Anglo-Saxon breed" who shared the quality of "heartiness": John Heywood, Chaucer, Jonson, Landor, Browning.<sup>3</sup> These last three are particularly

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 99.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix for full bibliographical details.

<sup>3</sup>Two Angry Women of Abington, edited by Havelock Ellis, in Nero and Other Plays (1888), p. 91. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

unlucky choices because he had earlier noted the Italian influence on Jonson and Landor; and Browning too dealt with Italian or Greek stories. With only these representatives to explain his idea, the concept of "Englishness" is very unclear. He may have hoped his readers would generalize from his remarks about Porter's style in order to understand this Anglo-Saxon spirit. He found it "springing always from within" without "any artificial and outward impulse". It was "grave and broad, finely modulated" and able to ennoble "comic themes with tones of solemnity" (p. 91). Porter always displayed "the frank and conscious homeliness, the warm-blooded humanity" of his "English heartiness" (Ellis's italics, p. 92).

Porter's writing obviously struck some deep chord in Ellis and he was only able to explain his sympathetic reaction in terms of racial consciousness. His ideas probably appealed to readers in the 1880's; today however they are what Barzun calls a cloak "to conceal complexity. . . praising . . . without the trouble of going into details".<sup>1</sup> His text made a more lasting contribution. Relying on Dyce's Percy Society reprint, and incorporating Hazlitt's modernizations, he made his text easier to read than Dyce's and more reliable than Hazlitt's. He also divided the play into acts and scenes and added a great many of his own carefully researched notes. His text is still a convenient way to read Two Angry Women of Abington. The only other collection in which it appears is Charles Gayley's Representative English Comedies

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<sup>1</sup>Jacques Barzun, Race: A Study in Superstition, second edition, (1965), p. 81.

(1903). The other available texts are specialist editions, W. W. Greg's Malone Society Reprint (1907) and Farmer's Tudor Facsimile Text (1911).

Part Two: Thomas Middleton, introduced by A. C. Swinburne, edited by Havelock Ellis.

Swinburne and Ellis were both responsible for the two volume Thomas Middleton. Ellis edited the volumes and wrote a preface to Volume Two and Swinburne provided an introduction which had been published previously as a review of A. H. Bullen's edition of Middleton (1885-1886). It was Ellis's original intention to have Arthur Symons introduce the volumes,<sup>1</sup> but because Swinburne's essay on Tourneur could not be used and apparently he was unwilling to write a new essay, and because Ellis and Vizetelly thought it important to have Swinburne's name included with the series, Symons's excellent ideas on Middleton had to wait until 1908 to be published in the Cambridge History of English Literature.

Swinburne's essay was generally inadequate as an introduction to a selection of plays (Volume One: A Trick to Catch the Old One, The Changeling, A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Women Beware Women, The Spanish Gipsy; Volume Two: The Roaring Girl, The Witch, A Fair Quarrel, The Mayor of Queenborough, The Widow) and although Ellis's preface is better it is appended to the second volume which is very rarely seen. The single copy I have located is in the British Library. It is possible that it was published at Ellis's own expense: it appeared in 1890 after Unwin had

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<sup>1</sup>See PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, May 20, 1886.

taken over the series but gives Vizetelly as the publisher and includes "unexpurgated" on the title page.<sup>1</sup> Unwin reprinted both volumes in 1904 but the second volume is still rarely found in libraries. When John Gawsworth edited Ellis's dramatic criticism in 1950 he also attested to the volume's rarity by not including Ellis's preface in his otherwise exhaustive collection.<sup>2</sup>

Criticism of Middleton falls into two categories: criticism of his comedy and criticism of his tragedy. While the latter has been fairly consistent since the 1840's, gathering depth and insight, the former has undergone a radical change in the past thirty years as we have acquired new knowledge about the social and economic changes which were taking place in Jacobean England. In the nineteenth century many critics simply condemned Middleton's comedy because of its view of sex. Those who could accept it either found his comedy had no aim except to amuse or suggested that his plays were important for their portrayal of Jacobean life. A. H. Bullen for example promised a reader "plenty of entertainment" from A Chaste Maid in Cheapside although he could not "commend it virginibus puerisque";<sup>3</sup> and Alexander Dyce pointed out that the comedies

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<sup>1</sup>The copyright library at Cambridge University is still waiting for Volume Two. When the librarian placed Volume One on the shelf he put a note beside it to leave a space for Volume Two. The note has been there since 1888.

<sup>2</sup>See From Marlowe to Shaw, edited by John Gawsworth (1950), p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by A. H. Bullen (1885-1886), I, xliii.

so "faithfully reflect the manners and customs of the age" that "even the worst. . .are not without their value".<sup>1</sup> This latter view of Middleton as an unblinking realist was first examined in detail by Arthur Symons and was the view most often expressed by critics in the first part of the twentieth century. T. S. Eliot for example asserted that Middleton had "no point of view" and "no message"<sup>2</sup> and Una Ellis-Fermor characterized him as "a wide and keen observer".<sup>3</sup> A. W. Ward was the single nineteenth-century critic to assert that Middleton's comedy had a moral aim, but he was using the term to mean "moral justice". Because it was not "very symmetrically dealt out"<sup>4</sup> he suggested that Middleton was not "cast in a sufficiently strong mould" to fulfill his moral purpose but, he added, "there is no hollowness about the ring of his morality".<sup>5</sup> However, the very haphazardness of Middleton's moral justice is in fact its moral point. As recent studies, based on our new understanding of Jacobean society, have shown, his plays are massive denunciations of the materialistic standards of the rising bourgeoisie in Jacobean London.<sup>6</sup> His stage

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<sup>1</sup>The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by Alexander Dyce (1840), I, lvi-lvii.

<sup>2</sup>"Thomas Middleton" (1927), in his Elizabethan Dramatists, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>The Jacobean Drama (1936), p. 128.

<sup>4</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 85.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 105.

<sup>6</sup>See for example Charles Hallet, "Middleton's Allwit: The Urban Cynic", Modern Language Quarterly, XXX (1969), 498-507; and his Middleton's Cynics (1975). Also J. Watson's introduction to his edition of A Trick to Catch the Old One (1968).

is dominated by middle class characters who hold materialistic values opposite to traditional ones;<sup>1</sup> and there is no moral order behind who is trickster and who is tricked. Middleton's point is that there can be no moral justice as long as characters continue to exploit each other and all human activity for personal gain. In the nineteenth century however research into the details of the economic and social changes of Jacobean London had only just begun. It is unlikely that critics were aware of the importance of these changes to Middleton's work; consequently, nineteenth-century criticism of Middleton's comedy has limited value for us today.

The discussion of Middleton's tragedy and of his collaborative work with Rowley is more valuable. Lamb opened it with praise of "the vigorous passions, and virtues clad in flesh and blood" found in Middleton and Rowley's drama which made it preferable to "the insipid levelling morality" of his own stage.<sup>2</sup> He also praised Act II, scene ii of Women Beware Women as being "an immediate transcript from life" for Livia seemed a true picture of a "jolly housewife".<sup>3</sup> However the vagaries of Lamb's fragmented approach are such that he did not mention the fact that Livia is also a bawd. Hazlitt followed Lamb's example of concentrating on Women Beware Women rather than on the greater play, The Changeling.

<sup>1</sup>For example Witgood in A Trick to Catch the Old One says  
 He that doth his youth expose  
 To brothel, drink and danger,  
 Let him that is his nearest kin  
 Cheat him before a stranger (I, i, 14-17)  
 Such an idea directly contradicts traditional standards of family loyalty.

<sup>2</sup>Lamb, Specimens, I, 334.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, 306.

His opinion of it as a whole was that it was "like the rough draught of a tragedy". It had "a number of fine things thrown in" but Middleton seemed to use them all up first so that "the interest decreases. . . as we read on".<sup>1</sup> Similarly Alexander Dyce focused on Women Beware Women and like Lamb pointed out its "life and reality";<sup>2</sup> but he also thought the characters were "repulsive from their extreme depravity".<sup>3</sup>

In 1845 Leigh Hunt drew deserved attention to The Changeling and to how De Flores "for effect at once tragical, probable, and poetical, surpasses anything I know of in the drama of domestic life".<sup>4</sup> These remarks were a turning point; critics began to concern themselves with The Changeling and with the collaboration of Middleton and Rowley which produced it. Ward for example noted that some of the scenes of The Changeling were "terribly effective"<sup>5</sup> and more importantly suggested that its "graver spirit" was a result of Rowley and Middleton's collaboration. However he was unable to elaborate because the scarcity of Rowley's plays meant that he could not study his style in detail.<sup>6</sup> In 1885 A. H. Bullen compared The Changeling with Shakespearian tragedy -- a comparison which critics have been repeating ever since. He called special attention to the scenes between Beatrice and De Flores and particularly to Act III,

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<sup>1</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup>The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by Alexander Dyce, I, liv.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, lv.

<sup>4</sup>Imagination and Fancy, second edition, p. 222.

<sup>5</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 82.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 134.

scene iv, which he felt "for appalling depth of passion" was "unequaled outside Shakespeare's greatest tragedies"<sup>1</sup>. Such comparison with Shakespeare was common in nineteenth-century criticism; it was the ultimate superlative offered by admirers. Symonds had used it with Heywood; Hazlitt with Webster; Jeffrey with Ford. But in this case it is completely justified because of the moral tragedy of Beatrice, the power of De Flores, and the psychological truth of their meetings. As Eliot points out like "the greatest tragedies" it is "occupied with great and permanent moral conflicts".<sup>2</sup>

It was Swinburne who first isolated the details which made The Changeling Shakespearian in his review of Bullen's edition which became the introduction to Thomas Middleton. His study of The Changeling was by far the most important of the nineteenth century. His ideas, which have been more fully developed by modern critics, still offer a sound introduction to the play. Although Swinburne referred to Middleton and Rowley as poets here, he did not concentrate solely on their verse. Indeed, he noticed that other dramatists such as Webster and Tourneur had "more splendour of style and vehemence of verbal inspiration"<sup>3</sup> but the fine characterization of Beatrice and De Flores profoundly impressed him. De Flores seemed "so horribly human. . .in his single-hearted brutality of devotion. . .that we must go to Shakespeare for an equally. . .unquestionable revelation of

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<sup>1</sup>The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by A. H. Bullen, I, lx.

<sup>2</sup>"Thomas Middleton", p. 87.

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Middleton, introduced by A. C. Swinburne, edited by Havelock Ellis (1887, 1890), I, xxxiv. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

indubitable truth" (p. xxxiv); Beatrice too was masterful. He called attention to the essential details of her character: how she was "incapable of seeing more than one thing. . .at a time" and how she, who was in fact "the first criminal", was "honestly shocked as well as physically horrified" at De Flores' motives (pp. xxxvi-xxxvii). The language of their scenes had "the pure infusion of spontaneous poetry" and indicated "the presence. . .of a poet". But significantly Swinburne also pointed out that it showed "the instinctive and inborn insight of a natural dramatist" (p. xxxvii). He gave his final approval of The Changeling as a drama by noting that "the real power and genius of the work cannot be shown by extracts" (pp. xxxvii-xxxviii). As we have seen appreciation of a play as a whole work is extremely rare in Swinburne's criticism. Here it attests to the power of The Changeling and constitutes one of his major contributions to Elizabethan studies.

Unfortunately the rest of Swinburne's remarks fall far below these for while the truth and power of The Changeling helped him ignore its lack of lyrical verse and the immorality of the characters, Middleton's other work did not appeal to him. Unlike Beaumont and Fletcher for example, who created an unreal world and had such graceful lyrical verse that Swinburne could overlook a basically immoral conception, Middleton's verse was too often just the "rapid effluence of easy expression" (p. xxvi) and his world too realistic to blot out the unfavourable impression made by his sex and greed driven characters. Swinburne was unwilling or unable to discuss Middleton's morality. It hindered his appreciation and led him to use words like "repulsive" and "disgusting" to describe his characters

and plots. Another reason for his difficulty with Middleton was that in 1886, like Ward he could not "as yet lay claim to an exhaustive acquaintance" with his main collaborator -- Rowley (p. xxi).<sup>1</sup> On the basis of his fine tragic work in The Changeling he asserted that Rowley was best suited to writing tragedy; but this meant that he was continually irritated and frustrated by the "sheer bewildering incongruity" of Rowley's comic subplots which seemed so far beneath his genius (p. xxii). When he was finally able to study Rowley in depth in 1907<sup>2</sup> he responded sympathetically; had he had this understanding in 1886 he might have appreciated Middleton and Rowley's work more fully.

An even greater shortcoming of Swinburne's essay as an introduction to the Mermaid volumes is the fact that as a review of Bullen's collected edition it unnecessarily discusses the details of Bullen's text, such as noting that Bullen altered Dyce's arrangement by placing Blurt, Master Constable first in his edition but disregarding that the Mermaid excludes the play altogether. Nor does it concentrate on the plays included in the Mermaid volumes. For example he simply referred to Middleton's best comedy A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, included in Volume One, as "a play of quite exceptional freedom and audacity, and certainly one of the drollest and liveliest that ever broke the bonds of propriety or shook the sides of merriment" (pp. xviii-xix); but he discussed Anything for a Quiet Life, which was not in the Mermaid, much more extensively. He was also unsympathetic towards many of the plays in the volumes. For example he was most

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<sup>1</sup>There was and still is no collected edition of Rowley's work. Swinburne would have read his plays in the original quarto texts as with All's Lost by Lust which he acquired in 1877. See Letters, IV, 24.

<sup>2</sup>See "William Rowley", in his The Age of Shakespeare, pp. 184-196.

unkind about The Roaring Girl. Because Moll did not fit his female ideal he suggested that she "must have been . . . rather like Dr. Johnson's fair friend Bet Flint"; that is "generally slut and drunkard; occasionally whore and thief" (p. xvii, Johnson's words quoted). Similarly he compared The Spanish Gipsy to "one of those half-baked or underdone dishes of various and confused ingredients, in which the cook's . . . hurry has impaired the excellent materials of wholesome bread and savory meat" (pp. xxx-xxxii).

Aside from his excellent remarks on The Changeling, Swinburne's essay was inadequate as an introduction to Thomas Middleton: its lack of sympathy could not encourage a reader to take up his plays. For this reason Havelock Ellis included a preface with Volume Two dealing more sympathetically with its five plays, and with Middleton's viewpoint. Where Swinburne was unmoved by his verse and disgusted by his outlook, Ellis's undogmatic standards did not hinder his appreciation of either.

Ellis was one of the critics who saw Middleton as simply an observer of humanity. To him his morality was ideal -- "a natural instinct, not a stern law".<sup>1</sup> His world was real: there were no completely virtuous characters in it because his "insight into human weakness was far too keen". The most influential remarks in his preface concerned Rowley and Middleton's collaboration; Symons later took them up and explored them in detail. Ellis pointed out that Middleton's knowledge of people made it impossible for him to create any characters with "unalloyed virtues or colossal vices" (p. x). Rowley, on the other hand was "enamoured of the

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Middleton, II, xiii. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

passions of the 'absolute man'; thus "each supplied the other's deficiencies" making their collaboration produce "such happy results".

For us today the most significant part of Ellis's preface was his his re-assessment of The Roaring Girl. Moll seemed an ideal woman and fore-runner of the feminists of Ellis's own day. He praised her strength, courage, frankness, modesty and the way she used her understanding of crime "not to practise but to defeat vice". She was a "knight errant" who "would like in her own person to avenge all the wrongs of woman" (p. viii). He also noted in a biographical note that Moll was "the first woman who vindicated for her sex the right of smoking" (p. 2).

As an antidote to Swinburne's low-key remarks, Ellis concluded his preface on an upbeat. Discussing The Widow and its secret performances during the Commonwealth period he noted that its "unalloyed cheerfulness" offered the Puritan a glimpse into "a large and sunny world that has vanished forever" (p. xiii). Although the play was probably a favourite because of its denunciation of thieves and quacks, Ellis's remark places the reader in the same position as the Puritan and encourages him too to seek in Middleton the world in which morality was not a "stern law" -- a world which seemed to have vanished.

Swinburne's essay and Ellis's preface together came close to providing as adequate an introduction to a selection of Middleton's plays as was possible at the time. Still valuable to readers are Swinburne's comments on The Changeling and Ellis's on The Roaring Girl. But neither essay was as sensitive as that written by Arthur Symons for The Cambridge History of English Literature which would have formed the basis for the Mermaid

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<sup>1</sup>"Middleton and Rowley", The Cambridge History of English Literature, edited by A. Waller and A. W. Ward (1908-1927), VI, 62. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

introduction had Ellis's original plan been carried through. Symons conveyed the usual reflections on Middleton's tragedy but also was the first to discuss his collaboration with Rowley in detail and to consider seriously the tone and viewpoint of Middleton's comedy, thus suggesting a starting point for our modern studies.

He started from the assumption that Middleton was an amoral realist whose "aim is at effect" and whose "main material. . . is the acts and moods of the human animal". But he was not as ready as his predecessors to dismiss his comedy as simple entertainment for he noticed a disturbing element in his viewpoint: "as he lets vice peep through all cloaks and stand self-condemned, so he shows us a certain hardly conscious 'soul of goodness in things evil'" (p. 63). His plays were full of "paradoxes of event" where he seemed to be "unaware that some hideous piece of villainy is being set to rights (so far as relative justice is concerned) by a trick of 'virtue' hardly less pardonable" (p. 65). Symons could only explain Middleton's choice of topic and use of sex as "an occupation" (p. 63) as being attempts to please public taste; and his "paradoxes of event" were explicable only as sacrifices of "a point of conscience to a theatrical solution" (p. 65). But Symons himself was not satisfied with his explanations and asked "Is it a merit. . . that he shows us vice always as an ugly thing, even when he seems to take pleasure in it and forget to condemn it?" (p. 63). In 1908 he could not arrive at a completely satisfactory explanation of Middleton's tone, but by seeing and questioning it, he pointed out the necessity for studying it in more detail. Furthermore Symons's description of Middleton's use of sex in his plays as "an occupation" illustrates his essential grasp of the motives of Middleton's characters. It is unfortunate that such works as L. C. Knight's Drama and

Society in the Age of Jonson (1937) had not yet appeared for he was well on the way to discovering Middleton's denunciation of the futile cycle imposed by his characters' materialistic values.

Another of Symons's main concerns was with Middleton's verse and its development. Given his concept of beauty, Symons was not particularly attracted to Middleton's verse: it was only "a native idiom" which he bent "to any shade of meaning, filling it with stuff alien to poetry". It was too closely akin to prose and had "few fine passages" (p. 67). But, Symons noted, at what seemed to be a late point in Middleton's career, "he became a remarkable dramatic poet" even though "he was not born to sing" (p. 80). The reason for this, he suggested, was his collaboration with Rowley who might have shown Middleton "the possibility of that passionate note, by which drama becomes not only drama but poetry" (p. 67). Using the evidence offered by Rowley's plays, Symons developed a full argument for Rowley's influence on Middleton in matters of "sincerity and nobility. . .moral sense" and "honesty of insight" (p. 71). In plays written during their collaboration "the whole range of subject suddenly lifts; a new, more real and more romantic world. . .is seen upon the stage; and, by some transformation which could hardly have been mere natural growth, Middleton finds himself to be a poet" (p. 73). Full and sensitive as this discussion is, here again more recent research has undermined it. In Symons's day it was believed that Middleton was born in 1570; accordingly his greatest plays would have been written when he was in his fifties. To Symons this seemed too old for the marked change in his style to be simply a matter of maturing artistic ability. However in 1931 Mark Eccles discovered that Middleton was in fact born in 1580, making his greatest plays products of his forties.<sup>1</sup> Thus there is probably no reason to search beyond Middleton's

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<sup>1</sup>See "Middleton's Birth and Education", Review of English Studies, VI (1931), 431-441.

own development to explain the change in his style.

Although Symons's essay was an important stage in study of Middleton and played a part in creating a continuing audience for the Mermaid text, unfortunately much of it can offer us little today. Modern research has led us to a deeper understanding of his comedies and to a simpler understanding of his poetic development. As I shall discuss below even its full study of Middleton's versification has been undermined by our awareness of the defects of the texts Symons used. Its main significance is as a stepping-stone for he was the first to seriously try to evaluate Middleton's comic viewpoint. As such it is an important illustration of Symons's sensitivity and insight as a literary critic. Furthermore that he wrote this study at all is a vindication of his impressionistic criticism. Because he personally felt that poetic drama should deal with spiritual depths, one might expect his essay to merely relate his distaste as Swinburne's had done; instead Symons struggled with Middleton's verse and viewpoint until he had surpassed his personal impressions of it and delved as deeply as he could at the time into its sources.

In the earlier part of the nineteenth century, eight of the ten plays in the Mermaid had been available in various collections, such as Dilke's Old English Drama and Scott's Ancient British Drama.<sup>1</sup> Only A Chaste Maid in Cheapside and A Fair Quarrel were not available outside the collected editions. The first nineteenth-century edition of his works was by Alexander Dyce (1840) and A. H. Bullen edited a limited edition in 1885-1886 which was dedicated to Swinburne. Ellis based his text on both these editions.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for full bibliographical details.

Although Dyce and Bullen were the best of nineteenth-century editors their texts have one serious drawback which affects Ellis's as well. Following editorial precedent established by the editors of the second edition of Dodsley<sup>1</sup> Dyce and Bullen both made many small changes in Middleton's verse to regulate the metre and line length. None of their changes affects the matter of the plays but they do substantially affect Middleton's style. Critics often remarked on his smooth fluency and Symons discussed it in detail; but it is possible that his swift, regular versification was his editors' rather than his own as a few brief examples will illustrate: in A Chaste Maid in Cheapside line 89 of Act IV, scene iii, reads "Sir you will gain the heart in my breast at first"; Dyce and Bullen dropped the "at"; in The Mayor of Queenborough, Act II, scene iii, line 189, the original line read "a kind of grief about these times of moon still" and Dyce and Bullen changed "about" to "'bout". The most drastic change is found in Women Beware Women. According to the original text, Middleton gave his heroine the name "Brancha" but from Dyce's time all editors changed it to "Bianca" with the remark that "the violation of metre which the . . . name occasions would alone be sufficient to prove it a misprint"<sup>2</sup>. However, as Charles Barber, the modern editor of Women Beware Women points out, the argument is circular because "the metrical criteria. . . are probably those of the editors rather than of Middleton. . . . The metrical argument for Bianca may well be sound: but before it is accepted we need a

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<sup>1</sup>See A Select Collection of Old Plays, second edition, [edited by Isaac Reed and Octavius Gilchrist] (1780), XI, 81.

<sup>2</sup>The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by Alexander Dyce, IV, 516.

complete analysis of Middleton's metrical habits, based, not on Dyce, but on the original editions".<sup>1</sup>

However, Ellis did improve on the work of his predecessors in his annotation. Middleton's plays contain many bawdy references which were obsolete by 1887. Where Dyce and Bullen had ignored them or treated them very cautiously by explaining them in Latin, Ellis went out of his way to explain them fully so that readers would understand the intended humour and appreciate the openness of Middleton's approach. In spite of its textual shortcomings Ellis's text is still the edition most readers turn to in order to read a selection of Middleton's plays for no new complete edition has appeared in the twentieth century. If Volume Two were more easily available Thomas Middleton would be one of the most important contributions of the Mermaid Series to Elizabethan and Jacobean studies.

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<sup>1</sup>Women Beware Women, edited by Charles Barber (1969), p. 119.

## CHAPTER FOUR

PART ONE -- PHILIP MASSINGER AND TWO PLAYS BY JOHN DAY, EDITED BY ARTHUR SYMONS

PART TWO -- NERO, EDITED BY HERBERT HORNE; TWO PLAYS BY N. FIELD, EDITED BY A. W. VERITY; JAMES SHIRLEY, INTRODUCED BY EDMUND GOSSE

Part One. I. Philip Massinger, edited by Arthur Symons.

Arthur Symons began editing Massinger's plays for the two volume Mermaid edition in 1886. Volume One was published in 1887 and contained The Duke of Milan, A New Way to Pay Old Debts, The Great Duke of Florence, The Maid of Honour, and The City Madam. Volume Two did not appear until 1889 and it contained The Roman Actor, The Fatal Dowry, The Guardian, The Virgin Martyr, and Believe as You List. Symons's introduction was among his earliest prose publications; to him it was "the best I have done yet".<sup>1</sup> Others shared this opinion and it still makes an important contribution to our appreciation of Massinger.

Massinger was one of the few dramatists who was popular throughout much of the nineteenth century. Since the first theatrical revival of A New Way to Pay Old Debts in 1779, audiences had been enjoying his obvious morality, extreme situations and characters, all of which were analogous to those of their own melodrama.<sup>2</sup> To readers his didacticism was the most important element of his drama. It was tirelessly pointed out by

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<sup>1</sup>PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, May 4, 1887.

<sup>2</sup>The stage history of A New Way to Pay Old Debts has been well documented by R. H. Ball in The Amazing Career of Sir Giles Overreach (1939).

William Gifford, Massinger's first nineteenth-century editor, in the notes to his 1805, 1813, and 1840 editions. In 1830 W. Harness found the plays so instructive that he edited them "for family reading, and the use of young persons, by the omission of objectionable passages" and by the inclusion of Gifford's remarks.<sup>1</sup>

Massinger's language also attracted both readers and audiences, especially those like Henry Hallam who did not approve of the "over charged" imagery of other dramatists.<sup>2</sup> In 1779 Monck Mason, still under the influence of neoclassical poetics, asserted that Massinger "surpasses. . .even Shakespeare himself" in "the general Harmony of his Numbers" and "easy Flow of natural yet elevated Diction".<sup>3</sup> Gifford also drew attention to "the purity and simplicity of his language";<sup>4</sup> and even Coleridge, who had many other complaints about Massinger's drama, felt that his language "is the nearest approach to the language of real life at all compatible with a fixed metre" and suggested that it was a "better model for dramatists in general to imitate than Shakespeare's".<sup>5</sup>

However, most nineteenth century enthusiasts did not go to the drama for language like that of real life. They searched instead for verse

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<sup>1</sup>The Plays of Philip Massinger, [edited by W. Harness], I (1830), title page.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe (1839), III, 612.

<sup>3</sup>The Dramatick Works of Philip Massinger, edited by John Monck Mason (1779), I, vi.

<sup>4</sup>The Plays of Philip Massinger, edited by William Gifford, second edition (1813), IV, 580.

<sup>5</sup>Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists, p. 244.

which was charged with passion; and here Massinger fell short. Lamb for example complained that he "had not the higher requisites of his art in anything like the degree in which they were possessed by Ford, Webster, Tourneur, Heywood, and others!"<sup>1</sup> He lacked "poetical enthusiasm"<sup>2</sup> and "never shakes or disturbs the mind" but "is read with composure and placid delight".<sup>3</sup> In 1845 Leigh Hunt isolated the defect in his verse which T. S. Eliot later was to describe as a "dissociation of sensibility". He noticed that the smooth regularity of Massinger's verse merged "passionate language into conventional" and marked the beginning of the "prosaical part of the corruption of dramatic style . . . which came to its head in Shirley".<sup>4</sup>

More demanding critics like Hazlitt and Coleridge also noted serious defects in his morality and characters. Massinger's characters discuss their emotions and morals at great length; these discussions appealed to readers in search of detachable moral instruction and audiences with melodramatic tastes. At the same time however **such** discussion implies a rhetorical distance from emotion making it hollow and, as Eliot has suggested, morality without real emotion to support it is meaningless.<sup>5</sup> Coleridge was the first to notice the hollowness in Massinger's characters: they had no "guiding point". In spite of their ready declarations of their feelings "you never know what they are about. In fact they have no character".

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<sup>1</sup>Lamb, II, 169.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 179.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 169.

<sup>4</sup>Imagination and Fancy, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup>"Philip Massinger" (1926), in his Elizabethan Dramatists, p. 144.

This was further complicated by Massinger's tendency to dwell on extreme emotions for theatrical effect; thus his characters were dominated by "unnaturally irrational passions and strange whims",<sup>1</sup> which seemed to have no foundation. Hazlitt shared this opinion. To him the characters' conflicts seemed to be "between the absurdity of the passion and the obstinacy with which it is persisted in".<sup>2</sup> Excepting Overreach who was "probably a fac-simile of some individual of the poet's actual acquaintance"<sup>3</sup> his other villains were unbelievable. They first appeared as "totally void of moral sense" but by the end of a play Massinger "is seized with a sudden qualm of conscience, and his villain is visited with a judicial remorse".<sup>4</sup>

During the mid-century little was added to these remarks and Massinger's plays continued to appeal to certain audiences and readers; but by the 1870's with the advent of a more realistic popular drama and a reaction against didacticism in art, Massinger's drama fell from favour. When critics took up his work again, there were few apologists. All seemed to agree about his main defects and tried to explain them. In 1875 A. W. Ward made the excellent point that his "genius. . . is essentially rhetorical"; that is, he was primarily interested in the language his

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<sup>1</sup>Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists, pp. 246-247.

<sup>2</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 266.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>4</sup>"The Duke of Milan", in his A View of the English Stage, Works, V, 290.

characters use rather than in their development.<sup>1</sup> He was also essentially a moralist but distorted morality by believing that life was controlled by absolute immutable moral forces such as fortitude, endurance, self-control, woman's self-sacrifice and was without areas of grey. When he engaged his characters in conflict over these forces he pictured them only in their most extreme and improbable form.<sup>2</sup>

Prompted partially by Ward's comments, the new realism in the theatre, as well as his own practical sensibility, Leslie Stephen devoted an essay to Massinger in 1877 which gave the decisive blow to Massinger's reputation. Although its ideas have been expanded by subsequent critics they are still sound. Symons and Swinburne relied heavily on his essay; Eliot has called it a "piece of formidable destructive analysis";<sup>3</sup> and it is still cited on the list of suggested reading in the New Mermaid edition of A New Way to Pay Old Debts. Stephen's basic complaint was that while Massinger was a moralizer, his view of life in fact distorted "the fundamental truths of human nature." After reading his plays we have "a sense that we have been . . . in an unnatural region, where . . . there is a marked absence of downright wholesome common sense". An unnatural world is acceptable if it magnifies "fundamental truths" but with Massinger "instead of a legitimate idealisation" of life there is "simply an abandonment of any basis in reality".<sup>4</sup> His characters were in need of "an occasional infusion of the

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<sup>1</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 291.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 289-290.

<sup>3</sup>"Philip Massinger", p. 134.

<sup>4</sup>"Hours in a Library, No. XVI. Massinger", Cornhill Magazine, XXXVI (October, 1877), p. 458. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

bracing air of common sense" (p. 449) and had a "curious convertibility" (p. 452) because he mistook "the change of mood produced by an elevated appeal to the feelings for a change of character" (p. 453). Unlike audiences, Stephen felt his most inadequate characters were his villains. Massinger did not appear to understand evil or villainy (p. 451); even *Overreach* was "a description of a wicked man from outside" and as such it was "unreasonable and preposterous" (p. 454). In Stephen's eyes his only admirable characters were his women for Massinger showed "a higher sense of . . . feminine dignity and purity than is common in the contemporary stage". For example sending Camiola to a convent in The Maid of Honour seemed to him at least a chivalrous and decent alternative to marriage with a hypocrite (pp. 456-457).

Like Hunt, Stephen noticed the decadent quality in Massinger's verse. Earlier, greater, dramatists had "so complete a mastery of their language that it is felt as a fibre which runs through and everywhere strengthens the harmony" of the verse. But Massinger's was "poetry differentiated by the smallest possible degree from prose"; that is, "rather florid prose" with a "stately step" (p. 448).

When Arthur Symons wrote his introduction to Philip Massinger he turned to Stephen's essay for suggestions, thinking it "the best I have ever seen".<sup>1</sup> He agreed with most of Stephen's ideas but adopted a serious tone in place of Stephen's condescendingly flippant one. For example he delved more earnestly into Massinger's morality. Agreeing that he had

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<sup>1</sup>PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, April 13, 1887.

"no conception of [vice or virtue] except in the abstract" he pointed out that Massinger concluded his plays by dealing out rewards and punishments; "but the good or bad person at the end of the play is not always the good or bad person of the beginning". Thus his world seemed like "a game of wild and inconsequent haphazard" where morality "is nerveless, and aimless in its general effect" or becomes "a co-partner of confusion, a disturbing distracting element of mischief" which negates his moral aim.<sup>1</sup> While these remarks are more precise than Stephen's suggestion that Massinger lacked "common sense", Stephen's idea was more apt. The haphazard reversals of Massinger's characters are distracting but their simplicity and naïveté makes their changes seem like childish pranks. The characters do seem to need to grow up and act more sensibly; they are not real enough to be disturbing.

He was also more interested in Massinger's verse than Stephen for to him it was the index to his art. He noted its similarity to prose; not only was it metrically prosaic but "the pitch of Massinger's verse is somewhat lower than the proper pitch of poetry" (p. xiv). He explained this by noting how in Massinger's works "there are scarcely a dozen lines of such intrinsic and unmistakable beauty that we are forced to pause and brood on them" (p. xv). His verse lacked "delicacy. . .rarity. . . splendour or strength of melody" (p. xiv). Symons explained his vague idea with illustrations. For example he noted that Massinger was incapable of some lines written by Dekker in their collaborative play, The Virgin Martyr; he also suggested how Massinger might have dealt with Vittoria

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<sup>1</sup>Philip Massinger, edited by Arthur Symons (1887-1889), I, xviii. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Accoramboni and how he would have elaborated on Ferdinand's line in The Duchess of Malfi, "Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young" by including "a long and elaborate piece of rhetoric" beginning "Stay, I feel/ A sudden alteration" (p. xvi). This comparative approach is extremely helpful in explaining the evasive inadequacies of Massinger's verse and was later developed most notably by T. S. Eliot when he elaborated upon how Massinger's verse "without being exactly corrupt, suffers from cerebral anaemia".<sup>1</sup>

The point on which Symons radically differed with Stephen was about his women. Except for Camiola in The Maid of Honour and Margaret in A New Way to Pay Old Debts they suffered even more than his men from his misconceptions about morality because he often unjustly exploited them. Symons objected strongly: "his bad women are incredible monsters of preposterous vice; his good women are brittle and tainted" (p. xxvi). They were "vulgar-minded to the core; weak and without stability; mere animals if they are not mere puppets". Furthermore in order to make his points, Massinger often used a "favourite situation" of having a queen or princess fall violently in love with someone she has never seen before; Symons called this a "wretched farce" which was "without passion, sincerity, or strength" (p. xxvii).

He also pointed out that Massinger's "aversion to a tragic end" was an unfortunate "concession to popular taste" which distorted his plays (p. xvii). He accordingly praised the one play which did have a "natural, powerful and significant" tragic ending, Believe as You List (p. xxiv).

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<sup>1</sup>"Philip Massinger", p. 141.

But this was a poor choice for here the audience has a right to expect a happy ending. In Massinger's version of the Roman Empire where great adulation is given kings and where Antiochus proves himself both the rightful king and a naturally noble one, the conclusion is unjust and distorting because for once Massinger's king deserves his title.

One of the strengths of Symons's introduction was that he did not concentrate solely on Massinger's shortcomings. He pointed out for example that Massinger could create believable characters if he avoided extremes. Particularly successful were those "whose predominant bent is towards a melancholy and great-hearted gravity, a calm and eloquent dignity, a self-sacrificing nobility of service, or lofty endurance of inevitable wrong" (pp. xxii-xxiii). Symons called attention to Antiochus of Believe as You List as one of his most successful characters because his "quiet constancy and. . .endurance. . .raise the poetry of the play to a height but seldom attained" (p. xxiii). He also tried to bring out interesting points about each of the plays in order to encourage prospective readers, admiring for example the "country freshness" and geniality of The Great Duke of Florence (p. xxix) and the passion and insight of The Duke of Milan. Symons generously thought the pathetic, naïve and immature Sforza had "more force and naturalness" than many of Massinger's characters and found "a frequent effect of fineness" in his "frenzies". He was also generous in his praise of The Guardian which he thought was "very fine and flexible in its rhythm, and very brisk in its action" and had "some exquisite country feeling". But Symons himself recognized that it also has "three or four of the most abominable characters and much of the vilest language in Massinger" (p. xxx). To most readers these characters overpower the "brisk" but poorly motivated

action and the very slight "country feeling". Severino for example is completely despicable as he first declares women should never be harmed and then in a stupid jealous rage cuts off the nose and stabs the arms of Calista; Iolante too is hateful in her wild lustful actions.

Symons's introduction which tried to go beyond Massinger's shortcomings and point out his most successful types of character, and poetry, and the strong points of his individual plays is one of the best introductions in the Mermaid Series and is still valuable to readers today. Leslie Stephen wrote Symons a "very flattering letter" of congratulation after its publication.<sup>1</sup> A. C. Swinburne however complained to Ellis that it presented "a generally inadequate and a radically unjust estimate of a great writer if not a great poet",<sup>2</sup> and in 1889 wrote his own essay on Massinger, in answer to Symons as well as to Stephen who must have upset Swinburne with his comments on the drama generally as "rubbish and some of it disgusting rubbish"<sup>3</sup> and on the obtuseness of those who enjoyed it. Swinburne in fact repeated many of Symons's ideas and shared Stephen's and Symons's low estimate of Massinger's verse; but instead of concentrating on language, which was his usual approach, Swinburne praised some of Massinger's characters and theatrics.

The main point on which Swinburne differed from Stephen was in his opinion about the characters' rapid conversions. He agreed that they were unrealistic but suggested that at the same time they were probably

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<sup>1</sup>PUL, ASC, Letter to Osborne, April 3, 1887.

<sup>2</sup>Letters, V, 183.

<sup>3</sup>Stephen, p. 442.

theatrically effective. Furthermore with religious conversions an audience must suspend its disbelief and accept "such monstrous miracles . . . as part of the stage business".<sup>1</sup> Swinburne also disagreed with Stephen's low estimate of Sir Giles Overreach. He was perhaps "too strongly and even coarsely coloured" (p. 202), but he was one of "the great original figures" of the English drama. Luke of The City Madam seemed even more "daring and original" and was drawn with "finer insight into the mystery of ingrained and incurable wickedness" (p. 203).

Swinburne added other positive remarks by generally praising what to him were Massinger's two finest plays: The Fatal Dowry and A Very Woman. The first illustrated what Symons had suggested were Massinger's strongest points: his "austere sympathy with self-denying courage or self-renouncing resolution" and his "calm command of earnest and impressive eloquence" (p. 200). But A Very Woman was "the flower of all his flock" and as Coleridge had said "one of the most perfect plays we have". Swinburne found its romance lovely and its humour "ripe and rich" (p. 207, Swinburne quotes Coleridge). The play deserves this praise for it is a serious and mature work of art; the characters for once are subject to realistic emotions and seem able to understand themselves objectively.

Swinburne could not overlook the many difficulties which his predecessors had isolated. For example, he noted that Massinger's "business-like" and "practical" verse lacked imagination, pathos and passion (p. 175). Massinger made this deficiency worse by trying to replace passion with

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<sup>1</sup>"Philip Massinger", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, p. 174. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

"the bombast and platitude of cheap classical rhetoric" which "chills and deadens" his poetry. To illustrate this point, Swinburne followed Symons's example and suggested an excellent comparison between Malefort's last declamation in The Unnatural Combat (V, ii) and any of Vindice's speeches. The atmosphere is similar but Malefort makes many classical allusions, including a reference to "blustering Boreas", to explain his emotional state. Swinburne's impression was that Massinger's verse was correct and probably "the most brilliant. . . exercise. . . which could be attempted in a foreign language by the most accomplished. . . scholar"; but Tourneur's verse recalls "the passion and the perfection, the fervour and the splendour and the harmony of Aeschylus himself" (p. 177).

Swinburne's essay, which Eliot has called "Swinburne's criticism at its best",<sup>1</sup> makes as valuable a contribution to Massinger studies as Symons's; because of its positive tone, mention of the theatrical potential of his plays and expansion of the comparative approach, it makes perhaps a more lasting contribution and must have increased still further the audience for the Mermaid Philip Massinger. Both Symons's and Swinburne's studies fall short only in their failure to consider in any depth the social comment offered by his comedies, The City Madam and A New Way to Pay Old Debts which today are considered to be the most important of his canon.

Because of Massinger's great popularity, his plays had been available to the reading public throughout the nineteenth century. The most easily accessible texts were the inexpensive acting editions of his plays. There were three main adaptations of A New Way to Pay Old Debts, as well as

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<sup>1</sup>"Philip Massinger", p. 134.

adaptations of The Duke of Milan, The Maid of Honour, The City Madam, The Fatal Dowry; and Paris's defence of the stage had been taken from Act I, scenes i and iii, of The Roman Actor to make up The Drama's Vindication. There were also numerous single editions and collections which included most of the plays in Symons's Philip Massinger.<sup>1</sup> There had been three complete editions of Massinger's plays published in the eighteenth century but William Gifford was the first to apply reasonably sound editorial principles to Massinger's text. His edition first appeared in 1805 and was revised in 1813 and again for a volume published in 1840. Gifford's edition was the standard nineteenth century text: it was used by W. Harness for his Family Library edition; by Hartley Coleridge for The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford (1840, second edition 1851); and with his own imaginative adaptations by Lieut. Col. F. Cunningham (1868). Cunningham was the first editor to include Believe as You List.

Pressed by time, Symons relied almost wholly on Gifford's text for his first volume, reproducing most of Gifford's emendations, but not without questioning some of them. He was able to produce Volume Two at a more leisurely pace and with the aid of S. W. Orson went back to original quartos for his text because as he noted in his preface:

Gifford's notions of textual fidelity were rather lax, notwithstanding his solemn protests to the contrary. Many of his alterations, indeed, are in themselves of little importance; but others, now for the first time corrected back again, are of really serious significance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See appendix for full bibliographical details.

<sup>2</sup>Philip Massinger, II, no page number.

Possibly because his first literary work was editing for the New Shakspeare Society, Symons was more scrupulous than any of Ellis's other editors; Brinsley Nicholson, editor of Volume One of Ben Jonson was the only other editor who chose to go back to original texts. Symons was probably more concerned with the textual standards of the Mermaid Series than Symonds, Swinburne, or Gosse; their lack of concern is illustrated by their failure to tell Symons of their discovery of a unique collection of Massinger's plays which had been corrected by the dramatist himself. The collection contained The Roman Actor, The Fatal Dowry, The Bondman, The Renegado, The Emperor of the East, The Maid of Honour and The Duke of Milan, and came from the Harbord Library in Norfolk. J. A. Symonds had bought it for his father in 1864<sup>1</sup> but in June, 1877, while preparing to move to Switzerland, he gave it to Edmund Gosse.<sup>2</sup> Five years later Gosse told Swinburne about the volume. After studying the corrections in the collection, Swinburne concluded that they were Massinger's own,<sup>3</sup> and mentioned this to A. H. Bullen who considered but never attempted editing a selection of Massinger's plays incorporating the corrections. Had Symons been told about this collection he could have been the first to use it and Philip Massinger would have made an important contribution to scholarship. But it was to be another thirty years before A. H. Cruickshank and W. W. Greg studied them fully.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See W. W. Greg, "More Massinger Corrections", in his Collected Papers, edited by J. C. Maxwell (1966), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>See Edmund Gosse, "Philip Massinger", in his Books on the Table (1921), pp. 154-155.

<sup>3</sup>See Swinburne, Letters, IV, 290-291.

<sup>4</sup>See A. H. Cruickshank, Philip Massinger (1920), Greg examined them in "More Massinger Corrections" and Cruickshank studied them and Greg's findings in "Massinger Corrections", The Library, IV (1924-1925), 175-179.

Symons and Orson faced their most difficult editorial problems with Believe as You List for they were unable to locate an original text. The play had not been printed in Massinger's day and Gifford thought that Warburton's cook had burned the manuscript. However, in 1844 the manuscript was given to T. Crofton Croker who was told that it had been Garrick's. Croker and F. W. Fairholt copied it out for a Percy Society Reprint in 1849 but due to its battered state and their own carelessness, they did a poor job. After publication J. P. Collier examined their work and although he was unable to study Massinger's manuscript he detected many misprints and made a number of intelligent emendations and suggestions about the reasons for Croker and Fairholt's errors. After the Percy Society Reprint was published the manuscript disappeared again until 1870 when it was included in a Sotheby's sale; but it was lost again and not relocated until 1907 when the British Museum bought it. During the fifty-eight years which had elapsed since Croker and Fairholt used it, the manuscript had become even more badly damaged and when C. S. Sisson edited it for the Malone Society in 1927 he found the task extremely difficult.

For their text Symons and Orson had to rely on Croker and Fairholt's faulty version, Collier's emendations, and a highly undependable version concocted by Cunningham who "boldly undertook to fill up out of his own head some of the gaps left in Croker's transcription",<sup>1</sup> and who also "had a passion for correcting what he considered to be faulty verse-lining".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Believe as You List, edited by J. Sisson (1927), p. xxvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. xxviii.

Sisson has called Symons and Orson's text "a perfunctory piece of work, and unnecessarily bowdlerized"<sup>1</sup> but this criticism is unjustified for, thanks to Collier's suggestions, Cunningham's guesses, and their own common sense, their work surpasses both Croker's and Cunningham's. All the faults in their text had their origins in the ones they were forced to rely on. For example in line seven of the prologue Croker had mistaken "scholar" for "stroller". Collier suggested the correct word which Sisson's text verifies, and Symons incorporated it. In Act II, scene i, line 724 Croker read "sounds" instead of "sons". It was Cunningham this time who guessed at "sons" and again Symons used it. In Act V, scene ii, line 2859 Croker added an extra phrase "without need or authority".<sup>2</sup> Although Cunningham used it, Symons saw that it was unnecessary and omitted it. I have been able to locate only one instance of bowdlerization. This is in Act II, scene ii, lines 1038-1041 where the Malone Society Reprint reads:

[Settinge] aside with reverence to  
 [thy place] the state thow liest, I am growne to this bulke  
 by beeing libde [sic] and my disabilitie  
 to deflowre thy sister

Croker omitted the last two lines, although as Sisson remarks "the original is perfectly clear".<sup>3</sup> Cunningham and Symons and Orson had to follow suit.

With the rest of the plays in the volume Symons and Orson generally tried to present a sounder text than Gifford's. Nevertheless they too

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. xxix.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

made many emendations which today appear unnecessary, such as those which corrected Massinger's metre. It is to their credit, however, that unlike their predecessors they always noted their emendations.

Although Swinburne complained that Symons's selection of plays was not "the best that might be made",<sup>1</sup> it was a much better selection than that found in his Thomas Middleton. With its balanced introduction and high textual standards Philip Massinger made and continues to make a valuable contribution. It is the collection many readers will turn to especially if they wish to read Believe as You List, along with a full selection of his other plays. A new complete edition has just appeared, but the editors Philip Edwards and Colin Gibson have made it inconvenient for readers by placing all the notes in one volume; and by transcribing Believe as You List in the almost unreadable way in which it appears in the manuscript.

## II. Two Plays by John Day, edited by Arthur Symons.

Symons also edited and introduced Humour Out of Breath and A Parliament of Bees by John Day included in Nero and Other Plays. Day was and still is a much underestimated dramatist. Before Symons's edition appeared his work had scarcely been noticed except by Lamb who included part of A Parliament of Bees in his "Garrick Extracts"<sup>2</sup> and by Bullen who edited his works in 1881. In his introduction Bullen noticed this neglect

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<sup>1</sup>Letters, V, 183.

<sup>2</sup>"The Garrick Extracts" were published in the Table Book in 1827 and were first included with the Specimens by H. G. Bohn in 1847. See Specimens, II, 267-272.

of Day and suggested that it was because of the unobtrusiveness of his merits: "his brightest work is of the thinnest texture" for he lacks the "robustness" of his contemporaries.<sup>1</sup> But Bullen praised the grace, "delightful diffuseness" (p. 24) and "silvery chime" of his verse (p. 27); and his female characters who have a "charming frankness of manner and a hearty detestation of whatever is mean and contemptible" (p. 19).

Symons's introduction which praised similar qualities is the most conventionally impressionistic essay of the Mermaid series. Through many metaphors, he tried to convey what he thought was the essence of Day's genius -- a pleasing, graceful and bright quality. From the "bloody and gloomy" country of Elizabethan drama Day's work is "a wayside rest, a noontide hour in the cool shadows of the woods".<sup>2</sup> Symons was attracted to Day's drama because it seemed to fit precisely the mould he wanted poetic drama to fit. Day created a dream world, "aloof and apart from the commonness of everyday doings" in which "figures come and go. . . aimlessly enough, yet to measure, always with happy effect. . . ever on the heels of some pleasing or exciting adventure" (p. 203). In his drama he seemed able to step "quite through the ugly surface of things, freeing us . . . of our never quite satisfied existence" and allowing people to talk the way "we should often like to talk" (p. 204). His verse suited this idealized world: he used "quite common words" but through their "fall and arrangement" achieved a sense of "delicate music" (p. 208).

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<sup>1</sup>The Works of John Day, edited by A. H. Bullen (1881), I, 5.

<sup>2</sup>The Parliament of Bees and Humour Out of Breath, edited by Arthur Symons, in Nero and Other Plays (1888), pp. 202-203. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

While in some ways Day's drama had achieved a goal of poetic drama, to Symons it ultimately fell short of the highest work because Day was incapable of delving into man's soul in order to "reveal anything new to us in our own hearts" (p. 205). He had to confine himself to the simplest characters and plots for he "has but a very slight insight into human nature. . .no power whatever to mould a coherent figure" and his plots were "of such fantastic and intricate slightness, that [they are] not to be grasped without coming to pieces" (p. 203). These are not damning words however for as Symons pointed out Day did not attempt what he could not do. Within the confines of his drama his characters are all realistic and pleasing: his females are "immensely likable" and even his villains have "a basis of honesty and rectitude, never intrusive, scarcely visible perhaps, . . .but there if we choose to look for it" (p. 205).

Symons thought Humour Out of Breath represented Day's "cheerful genius" at its best. The female character Florimel delighted Symons: "a creature of moods, bright, witty, full of high-spirits . . .a thoroughly English girl, perhaps the ideal of our favourite mettlesome breed" (p. 205). The scene between her and her page (III, i, Mermaid text p. 299) with its "intimate and subtle" realism seemed especially effective. This praise is well-deserved; like Kate in his Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green, Florimel seems founded in an everyday reality and represents the best aspect of Day's slight but effective touches.

Day's masque Parliament of Bees also showed his special talents. It was "an heroically comic picture of life. . .in all its strenuous littleness, its frail strength, its gigantic self-delusions" (p. 206); yet it was completely without bitterness. Its verse with the "smell and freshness of the country" and its "rhymes that gambol in pairs like lambs

or kids in spring" was perfectly suited to the story which was "honey-hearted and without a sting; touching at one point in the last speech of the poor neglected bee, the last limits of Day's capacity for pensive and tender pathos" (p. 207).

Symons's remarks on Day are the most sympathetic and helpful to appear to date. The main shortcoming of his introduction is its impressionism which today occasionally seems sentimental and distracting; to appreciate it as an analysis of the essence of Day's drama one must try to recapture the sincere enjoyment which prompted his remarks and overlook his sentimentality.

A. C. Swinburne wrote a later essay on Day, published in the Nineteenth Century in 1897, but he was unmoved by his gentle poetry and subtly realistic characters. He felt "John Day should never have written for the stage"<sup>1</sup> because his talents were not robust enough. Swinburne's treatment of Humour Out of Breath was particularly inadequate. He saw only hints of fancy and grace "in its pretty silly idleness or waywardness or incompetence" (p. 225) and thought "on the whole this play might not unjustly be described as Marston and water" (p. 227). Such a description is unjust however for Marston's tone is much more bitter and in subtle characterization Day excels Marston. While Swinburne seemed unable to respond to Day in this essay, he also wrote a poem on him which offered a more sensitive if more sentimental response in its suggestion that "Day was a full-blown flower in heaven" and that

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<sup>1</sup>"John Day", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, p. 213. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,  
 When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,  
 Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.<sup>1</sup>

Symons's text made and continues to make as valuable a contribution as his introduction. The only other editions available are J. O. Halliwell's edition of Humour Out of Breath done for the Percy Society in 1860 and limited to fifty copies; and A. H. Bullen's edition of Day's complete works limited to 150 copies. This edition is rarely seen today: most of it was bought by private subscribers; only seven copies went to libraries in England and only four to libraries in America.

Symons followed Bullen's text closely and had no hesitation in doing so for he respected his "reverence for these Texts" and his "deep devotion for the Drama and Lyrics of the Elizabethan age".<sup>2</sup> The text of The Parliament of Bees presented two main problems. The first was the disappearance of the earliest quarto. Bullen used the text of 1641 but in his "Garrick Extracts" Lamb had quoted from a quarto of 1607. Edmund Gosse told Bullen that he too had seen the earlier quarto in the British Museum Library but Bullen was unable to locate it, nor does the present British Museum catalogue record its existence. Bullen therefore assumed that either the quarto had been lost or that Lamb and Gosse were both mistaken and Lamb's text differed from his own because he had emended it. The second problem was the existence of an earlier manuscript version of the text which showed that Day had extensively revised the masque before

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<sup>1</sup>"John Day", "Sonnets on English Dramatic Poets", Works, V, 183.

<sup>2</sup>PUL, ASC, "An Elizabethan Shadow", typed manuscript, p. 2.

publication. Bullen collated the printed versions with the manuscript versions and gave all the manuscript variants in the notes. Symons's approach was to give in the footnotes only the variants "of distinct value and real interest"<sup>1</sup> and to incorporate them into the text if they corrected an error or if they made the metre more regular. He always noted these inclusions.

Humour Out of Breath presented no problems. There was only one quarto of 1608. Bullen presented a diplomatic reprint giving his suggested emendations in the text and putting the original readings into the footnotes. Such an approach is justifiable in a popular edition. Symons's most valuable improvement to Bullen's text was the addition of more explanatory notes and more precise stage directions. He assigned locations to the scenes of Humour Out of Breath and clarified some of the stage directions which Bullen had translated literally from Day's Latin.

Part Two. I. Nero, edited by Herbert Horne.

Like Day's two works, the anonymous play Nero had been neglected in the nineteenth century except for the inclusion of Petronius's speech on drama (III,iii, Mermaid text, pp. 44-45) in Lamb's Specimens<sup>2</sup> and of the whole play in the Old English Drama (1830) and in Bullen's Collection of Old English Plays (1882). Bullen praised Nero extravagantly, suggesting it was the first and last attempt of a young classical scholar who resembled Chapman "in his fine rhetorical power" but "had a far truer dramatic gift" for "he is never tiresome". He also thought his gorgeous imagination and his daring" were reminiscent of Marlowe.<sup>3</sup> Its verse had "exquisite finish", "suppleness and strength" (p.6) and "intense realism" (p.7); but the writer was most commendable

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<sup>1</sup>The Parliament of Bees, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup>Specimens, II, 181.

<sup>3</sup>The Tragedy of Nero, in A Collection of Old English Plays, edited by A. H. Bullen (1882) I, 9. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

for the "absence of extravagance (p.6) in many scenes where he could have indulged in extreme emotional outbursts.

Bullen's remarks were so generous that he seemed to be referring to another play; Herbert Horne who introduced the play for Nero and Other Plays was more realistic. He did not feel that the anonymous writer had potential as a dramatist.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he noted that a contemporary hand had written "indifferent" in one of the quarto texts and he agreed: "as a whole it is indifferent". Yet it was "far. . .from being worthless". It did have some "splendid" parts and the "peculiar value" of being enjoyable to read "and yet not sufficiently the work of a master to withhold from us the consideration of certain points that elsewhere we might be unwilling to criticise" (p.5). Fletcher and Shakespeare were the masters he had in mind and he proceeded to use Nero as the basis for a discussion of two general points which are only superficially suggested by the play. The first was a discussion of language. While on the one hand the language of the period was vigorous and lively, on the other he complained that Elizabethan writers often went overboard and marred "its beauty by a delight in conceits, scorning the severe restraint . . . of the Classics" (p.6). His second point was more complex: "how far it is needful that a historical drama should be satisfactory from the historical standpoint" (p.6). He used as his point of departure a comparison of Nero with Seutonius's account of Nero's life, noting that in a number of instances the play differed from Seutonius. Some of the differences he thought were acceptable because they gave the play more romantic interest or helped reveal character. Others however seemed to "insinuate. . .a sense that the matter proposed has only been partially mastered" (p.7). Particularly disappointing to Horne was the treatment of Nero's death which according to Seutonius had

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<sup>1</sup>Nero, edited by Herbert Horne, in Nero and Other Plays, p. 4. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

been moving and sensational; the author of Nero, however, left out most of the detail and circumstances of his death, thereby ignoring dramatic possibilities and neglecting the truth. From this unhappy failing, Horne drew the conclusion that while history and drama differ in their aims-- the one being to present truth and the other "to distinguish between what is transitory and what is abiding. . .for our warning and example" the fact that art is not always true to fact seemed "an insuperable objection" (p.9).

Horne was right in being disappointed in Nero: it is an awkward play with wooden characters. But the two general points he concentrated on are not at all central to our understanding of its faults. Furthermore by linking Fletcher and Shakespeare, who blind a reader to their faults by their "brillancy of imagination"(p.6), with a minor anonymous author we get the impression that he was using the introduction as a platform for finding fault with the drama in general. His complaints may be justified but to use such an inferior play as his starting point is to beg the question. Instead Horne should have dealt with the "masters" themselves where poetic diction often achieves more than the language of severe restraint and the alteration of historical fact can create situations more pointed and moving. Except for his excellent retelling of Seutonius's account of Nero's death, Horne's introduction is inadequate and even angers the reader by its condescending remarks on the drama in general. This is most unfortunate for the play has not attracted the attention of any subsequent critics; his remarks are the only ones readily available.

His text, however, was more valuable. He used Bullen's edition and also went back to the two original quarto texts and to a manuscript version of the play which was unknown to Bullen until after his volume had gone to press. Horne's method was to use the manuscript as an authority because "it appears to be. . .made for stage use" and because he thought it possible that "this transcript was made directly from the

author's own copy" (p. 4). Generally this method brought favourable results by offering corrections and improvements to the printed text; but occasionally he silently mixed manuscript with quarto readings in order to arrive at a reading he preferred. For example he combined the quarto's "one that in whispering o'reheard" with the manuscript's "one that this fellow whispering I o'erheard" to arrive at "one that in whispering I o'erheard" (IV, v, Mermaid text, p. 66). Horne's notes were often valuable for he identified many classical sources, characters, and described some of the action of the play. His text continues to be the most readily accessible text for Nero has not been re-edited in the twentieth century.

II. Two Plays by Nathaniel Field, edited by A. Wilson Verity.

Field's two extant plays, A Woman is A Weathercock and Amends for Ladies, edited by A. Wilson Verity are the final plays of Nero and Other Plays to consider. These plays aroused more attention in the nineteenth century than Day's or Nero. Parts of them were included in Lamb's "Garrick Extracts" and Thomas Campbell included a song from Amends for Ladies in his Specimens of the British Poets.<sup>1</sup> When John Payne Collier edited the plays in 1829 he asserted that Field was comparable to Massinger in his serious scenes and surpassed him in his comedy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Lamb, Specimens, II, 144-148 and Specimens of the British Poets (1819), III, 208.

<sup>2</sup>A Woman is a Weathercock, edited by John Payne Collier, [in a volume in the British Library bound together as English Plays] (1829), p. 3.

Amends for Ladies seemed to him the better play because of its "generally well chosen" language and its "varied" characters.<sup>1</sup> A. W. Ward also commented on Field in his History of English Dramatic Literature. He thought the plays were "characterized by a curious combination of recklessness and skilfulness" which reflected that Field knew both how to construct a play and how much freedom as "an acknowledged favourite" he would be allowed.<sup>2</sup> He was offended by the rhetorical invective against women in A Woman is a Weathercock but found Amends for Ladies a "healthy work", and as usual felt that the self-sacrificing action of one of its female characters was "touchingly exhibited" (p. 294). Ward objected only to Freesimple's roaring lesson (III, iv) and the character of the Roaring Girl because they offended propriety and good taste (p. 295).

Verity's introduction to the plays for the Mermaid Series added little to Ward's remarks. His general tone however was more appreciative and less prudish; he noted for example "the vivacity and verve of true, though somewhat boisterous comedy" in the plays. Both seemed to him to be "excellent" and clever in plot manipulation. He also found the characters "vigorous" though "occasionally eccentric".<sup>3</sup>

While Verity's introduction provided only the most minimal of remarks his text made an important contribution. Before the Mermaid volume was published Field's plays had been available only in Hazlitt's Select Collection of Old English Plays, and in Collier's edition. The latter is

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<sup>1</sup>Amends for Ladies, edited by John Payne Collier [English Plays], p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ward, II, 293. Subsequent references will be included in the text.

<sup>3</sup>A Woman is a Weathercock and Amends for Ladies, edited by A. Wilson Verity, in Nero and Other Plays, p. 336.

an extremely rare edition possibly because as Collier's own inscription on the flyleaf of the British Library's copy asserts: "This Vol was meant to be a continuation of Dodsleys Old Plays but the publishers could not afford to go on."<sup>1</sup> For his text Verity used Collier's and Hazlitt's work, occasionally emending where his predecessors had left errors uncorrected. His greatest textual contribution was the addition and clarification of stage directions. Field's were in Latin and occasionally abbreviated: Verity translated and filled them out. He also was not afraid of the many bawdy references in the plays and explained them in some detail. Although William Peery edited the plays for the University of Texas in 1950, the Mermaid text continues to be the most easily accessible edition of Field's two plays because Peery's text is not often found in libraries.

### III. James Shirley, introduced by Edmund Gosse.

Appreciation of Shirley requires different faculties from those possessed by most nineteenth-century Elizabethan enthusiasts for his drama has neither tragic intensity, profound passion or lyrical beauties. As the last dramatist in the Elizabethan tradition he used its conventions but lacked its depth. He had only two main apologists in the early part of the century -- Thomas Campbell and Alexander Dyce. They recognized that his poetry lacked "profound reflexion"<sup>2</sup> and that he was unable to "transfuse life" into his characters<sup>3</sup>; but they praised his "polished

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<sup>1</sup> [British Plays], edited by J. P. Collier (1828-1829), fly leaf.

<sup>2</sup> The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley, edited by William Gifford with additional notes and introduction by Alexander Dyce (1833), I, lxxv.

<sup>3</sup> Specimens of the British Poets, edited by Thomas Campbell (1819), I, 227.

and refined" language,<sup>1</sup> the "delicacy of his sentiments" and the way his characters behaved with decorum.<sup>2</sup> It also seemed to Dyce that his drama was "less offensive to correct taste" than that of his older contemporaries<sup>3</sup> because his "fine moral feeling" made him reject their "unhallowed" topics.<sup>4</sup>

Edmund Gosse was Shirley's main admirer in the late nineteenth century. Swinburne called Gosse a "cordial" and "capable advocate"<sup>5</sup>; indeed, Gosse seems to have felt a rapport with the reasonableness of Shirley's nature which helped Shirley avoid the "mere storm and excess"<sup>6</sup> of his contemporaries. He suggested that when Shirley imitated "the audacious rapture of Webster and Marlowe" he did so as he himself might: "with something of conscious humour" and "a purpose that is slightly comic" (p. xvii). His drama had none of the qualities Gosse disliked in the Elizabethan drama -- "violence. . . obscurity. . . prosodical licence" (p. xiii); and he thought the absence of oaths in his drama, called by the Master of Revels his "cleanly way of poetry", deserved special note (Gosse quotes the Master of Revels, p. xxi). He also praised the simple construction of Shirley's plays, suggesting that he would be "one of the easiest of the great playwrights to present to a modern audience" (p. xxx).

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 225.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 227.

<sup>3</sup>The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley, I, xxxix.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, lxiii.

<sup>5</sup>"James Shirley", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, p. 279.

<sup>6</sup>James Shirley, introduced by Edmund Gosse (1888), p. xxix. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

His remarks on Shirley's individual plays were in a similar mildly appreciative vein. With The Brothers for example he noted "an agreeable absence of violence, a recurrence of honest and wholesome fancies and reflections, and a vein of poetry that is genuine if not very deep or rich" (p. xiii). However, the fact that he calls this play a tragedy when it is a comedy also testifies to a dullness so profound that, in Swinburne's words, it passed before "the reader's half-closed eyes in a long thin stream of indistinguishable figures and immemorable events".<sup>1</sup> Gosse's single important contribution to the study of Shirley was his discussion of St. Patrick for Ireland for, as he pointed out, "due attention has never been paid" to it. He described its action and called it "a failure, but. . .the. . . failure of a man of genius" (p. xxiv). While one is inclined to call it a rare success of a man of most ordinary talent, Gosse has rightly called attention to it. The supernatural terrors of its opening are thrilling and the character of Rodamont is genuinely amusing. It is extremely unfortunate that, after Gosse's praise, it was not included in the Mermaid.

Most of Gosse's remarks have limited value for readers today who are not particularly interested in agreeableness, refinement, or propriety. The aspects of his work which interest us today are his slick stage craft, sensational appeal and historical position but Gosse did not examine these. The blandly appreciative tone of this "pleasing little article"<sup>2</sup> does little to spark curiosity in any of Shirley's plays besides St. Patrick for Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup>"James Shirley", p. 278.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Nason, James Shirley Dramatist (1915), p. 433.

The case is otherwise with Swinburne's splendid essay. It has been called "intemperate"<sup>1</sup> and "ill-founded"<sup>2</sup> but one cannot help admiring its vigorous invective, especially if a reader experiences the same "stupefying fatigue and insuperable somnolence"<sup>3</sup> in reading Shirley's plays that Swinburne did. Swinburne disliked Shirley so intensely that when he heard that Bullen was going to edit his plays for Nimmo's Old English Drama Series, he wrote to tell him it would be a waste of his "precious time, labour, learning, and devotion" since "any honest hack" could do it. Shirley seemed to him the least important candidate for a scholarly edition especially when so many other dramatists such as Dekker, Marston and Chapman were still unavailable.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately Swinburne did not give this advice to Havelock Ellis; if it was unwise for a scholarly edition to appear it was probably equally unwise to waste time on a popular edition.

Swinburne agreed with Gosse that his plays were not as obscure or complex as those of some other dramatists; but this was a "negative commendation" for he was not capable of their faults. Nor was he capable of the excellences of other dramatists. Swinburne pointed out that a poet "must be judged by consideration of what he has accomplished, not of what he has avoided" (p. 279); praise of his plays for their lack of obscurity was empty unless they could be praised for some other virtue. To Swinburne, they couldn't: they are "mere shadows. . .of invertebrate and bloodless

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<sup>1</sup>The Cardinal, edited by Charles R. Forker (1964), p. lxii.

<sup>2</sup>Nason, p. 397.

<sup>3</sup>"James Shirley", p. 277. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>4</sup>Letters, V, 118.

fancy" which leave the reader with "a sense of tedious vanity and unprofitable promptitude of apparently copious but actually sterile invention" (p. 277). He disagreed with those who praised Shirley's morality because of his refined language. To him refraining from swearing did not constitute high morality; he was more concerned with the morality of Shirley's characters and situations. Swinburne found these often "partly diverting" and "partly shocking" and thought that his "infusion of a little morality" into a scene made "the whole affair immoral" (p. 300). But Swinburne did not pursue this point for ultimately Shirley's characters were too shallow for their immorality to be disturbing. Indeed they

do not exist; they have absolutely no principle of life, no reason for being, no germ of vitality whatever. It would be something if even they were bad; it would be something if even they were dull; but they were not bad, they are nothing; they are not dull, they are null. (p. 278)

Aside from recommending The Cardinal as the best of Shirley's plays, Swinburne's essay offers modern readers little help with appreciating his drama. His interest in the language and passion of drama was naturally thwarted by Shirley's work and he discussed few of the issues which interest us today. But his essay does offer an honest reaction to Shirley's drama which is refreshing after the exasperatingly non-committal remarks of Campbell, Dyce, or Gosse. Furthermore where kind praise of decorum and propriety arouses little interest, violent denunciation has the opposite effect. After reading Swinburne's angry essay, a reader naturally wishes to find out for himself if his comments are justified.

Edmund Gosse was not the "honest hack" who edited the six plays in James Shirley (The Witty Fair One, The Traitor, Hyde Park, The Lady of

Pleasure, The Cardinal, The Triumph of Peace): no indication is given as to who edited the plays. The editor followed the one complete edition begun by Gifford and finished by Dyce.<sup>1</sup> Its main drawback was their attempt to achieve metrical regularity, by adding or omitting words, or by expanding Shirley's contractions. "The result is a strictly formal cadence of the most monotonous kind" which loses "much of the flavour and raciness of the historical idiom". As we have seen with Middleton's text such "Procrustean operations"<sup>2</sup> can have serious critical consequences since evaluation of a poet's style must be based on the text available -- in this case Gifford's and Dyce's doctored edition. The anonymous editor of the Mermaid volume adopted all Gifford and Dyce's emendations except the blatantly unnecessary ones. But he also seemed to make many of his own "without giving any evidence of having consulted the original text".<sup>3</sup> Some of these emendations are important and alter the meaning of the text. For example in The Cardinal he changed "swift" to "shift" in "The affair will make him swift to kiss your Grace's hand" (I, ii, 85) and "art" to "heart" in "That shape I did usurp, great Sir, to give/ My Art more freedom" (V, ii, 249-250). These may be simple errors of transcription or printing rather than emendations; nevertheless their frequency indicates a haphazard approach to the text of Shirley's plays. The editor did make an important contribution in the notes to the text.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for the collections in which Shirley's plays appeared.

<sup>2</sup>The Cardinal, edited by Charles R. Foker (1964), p. xxviii.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. xxviii-xxix.

Those to Hyde Park which explain references to contemporary London and social customs are especially helpful.

The Mermaid edition of Shirley's plays was probably the least important volume of the series. His "null" characters and plots and his polished language aroused little attention in the 1880's and 1890's and arouse only slightly more today. Nor are Gosse's bland introduction and the careless work of the "honest hack" particularly noteworthy. However it still offers the most readily available selection of his plays for no collected edition has been published since Gifford and Dyce's and only Chabot, The Cardinal and The Traitor have appeared in modern editions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, EDITED BY J. ST. LOE STRACHEY

Criticism of Beaumont and Fletcher's drama has not changed much in detail since Lamb's Specimens was published. Although nineteenth-century critics agreed that Beaumont and Fletcher were "lyrical and descriptive poets of the first order",<sup>1</sup> most critics were unable to concentrate solely on their language because of the problems presented by the morality, characters and situations found in their drama. These are still major concerns; however what modern criticism has added to the study of Beaumont and Fletcher is a historical perspective enabling us to evaluate their work in relation to the moral and dramatic standards of their own day rather than in light of our own standards or in light of the achievement of their greater predecessors. Of all nineteenth-century critics only J. A. Symonds had something of this perspective.

A. W. Schlegel's remarks illustrate the view of most critics who compared Beaumont and Fletcher's work with earlier drama and used nineteenth-century standards. He complained that they lacked the "profound seriousness of mind"<sup>2</sup> necessary to produce romantic drama -- which he had defined as a pronouncement of "the spirit of the romantic poetry".<sup>3</sup> They could not achieve the "highest perfection" because they viewed their work as "a means to obtain brilliant results" rather than as "an inward devotion of the feeling and imagination".<sup>4</sup> This of course is the way they viewed their work; however

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<sup>1</sup>Hazlitt, Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup>Schlegel, A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, II, 293.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 98.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., II, 293.

the difference between Schlegel's point of view and the modern one is that we do not condemn their work but try to understand why they used the drama in this way and evaluate it according to their own aims. Schlegel's point was taken to its logical extreme by Leigh Hunt in his introduction to a selection of their work where he imputed his own values to them and asserted that they themselves must have come "to hate and abhor" and "wish. . .unsaid"<sup>1</sup> the less serious parts of their work which did not show the "diviner portion of spirit inherent in all true genius".<sup>2</sup>

Specific complaints about Beaumont and Fletcher's drama were all related to their sensational aims for in order to fulfil their aims they used extreme, often shocking, characters, situations and morality. Nineteenth-century objections to the latter were the most severe. Critics identified two basic types of immorality: their presentation of the "incurable vulgar side of human nature" over which they "throw no veil whatever";<sup>3</sup> and their approach to "the decomposition of the common affections, and the dissolution of the strict bonds of society, as an agreeable study and a careless pastime".<sup>4</sup> The first offended only the more prudish such as Henry Hallam who complained that few of their plays "can be so altered as to become tolerable at present on the stage" and that The Maid's Tragedy "cannot be called a tragedy for maids; indeed should hardly be read by any respectable woman".<sup>5</sup> The second type of immorality, however, was more serious and

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<sup>1</sup>Beaumont and Fletcher; or, the Finest Scenes, Lyrics, and Other Beauties of Those Two Poets, edited by Leigh Hunt (1855), pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>Schlegel, II, 296.

<sup>4</sup>Hazlitt, p. 250.

<sup>5</sup>Henry Hallam, Introduction to the Literature of Europe, III, 588-589.

while it too can be explained as a reflection of the theatrical taste of the times it was thought that Beaumont and Fletcher should have been above their times. That they were not showed that they had an "imperfect moral sensibility".<sup>1</sup> Coleridge offered the most often quoted description of this immorality as illustrated by their female characters. The women in their drama seemed to regard virtue as "a strange something that might be lost without the least fault on the part of the owner". To them chastity was "a material thing, not. . .an act or state of being"; furthermore "this mere thing [was] imaginary. . . .B. and F.'s Lucinas were clumsy fictions" and their other women had "the minds of strumpets".<sup>2</sup> In 1875 A. W. Ward offered a fuller explanation. He agreed with Coleridge about their women but also suggested that their morality seemed unconscious -- it was "presented as a matter of course, without any . . .appearance of hesitation". They were merely reflecting the spirit of their times and were "unvexed by doubts or difficulties".<sup>3</sup> Ward still condemned their times and their morality; but the assertion that it was unconscious implied that perhaps they were unable to be above their times and added a new sympathy to study of their drama.

Critics were only slightly less severe on their situations and characters. Lamb for example noted that Fletcher craved "unnatural and violent situations" for to him "nothing great could be produced in an ordinary way";<sup>4</sup> and Coleridge asserted that most of their plays were founded "on rapes" incest,

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<sup>1</sup>Lamb, II, 115.

<sup>2</sup>Coleridge, Lecture and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists, p. 287.

<sup>3</sup>Ward, A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 244.

<sup>4</sup>Lamb, II, 115.

and "mere lunacies".<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt pointed out that their characters reinforce these extreme situations by being presented "at first in too high a key";<sup>2</sup> and Coleridge objected to their presentation through description rather than action.<sup>3</sup> Their heroes especially seemed to be "strange self-trumpeters and tongue-bullies".<sup>4</sup> Today we would not argue with most of these observations, but we have taken our study further and seen that these apparent defects in their morality, characters and situations were essential to fulfilling their dramatic aims. Of all nineteenth-century critics only Symonds was able to appreciate this point.

There were few writers who admitted to unqualified admiration for Beaumont and Fletcher; those who did concentrated almost wholly on their language. Surprisingly the Rev. Alexander Dyce was sympathetic to their plays. For example where Lamb had objected to Cloe in The Faithful Shepherdess because female lewdness "at once shocks nature and morality"<sup>5</sup> for Dyce the play's "delicate and brilliant hues of fancy" balanced out such defects.<sup>6</sup> Valentinian too was praiseworthy for its "sustained loftiness of style". He disagreed with Coleridge that Lucina was a "clumsy fiction" finding her instead "remarkable for truth and delicacy of painting".<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Coleridge, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Hazlitt, p. 249.

<sup>3</sup>Coleridge, p. 288.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 272.

<sup>5</sup>Lamb, II, 102.

<sup>6</sup>The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by Alexander Dyce (1843-1846), I, xxxiii.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., I, lvii.

But Beaumont and Fletcher's greatest admirer was A. C. Swinburne whose first study of their works appeared in the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1875. According to Edmund Gosse he had intended to devote a whole book to their work;<sup>1</sup> but at the time of his death he had only written what probably was intended to be its first part, "The Earlier Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher", published in 1910. In the thirty-four years which had elapsed between his two studies Swinburne's enthusiasm had not diminished. Part of his attraction to Beaumont and Fletcher was, like Dyce's, founded on an appreciation of their language. But still more important was the rapport he seemed able to create with their work -- a rapport which was based on his intimate sympathy with what he termed their youthfulness. He did not think as Ward had that their morality was completely unconscious, but it was excusable because they were "above all things poets of youth";<sup>2</sup> and like rowdy young men, aimed in their work "to goad and stimulate by any vivid and violent means the interest of readers or spectators" (p. 66). It was impossible to imagine them "grey in the dignity of years, venerable with the authority of long life, and weighted with the wisdom of experience" (p. 76). Such a description could fit the Swinburne of Poems and Ballads, First Series and helps account for his rapport. He saw their work as very similar to his own early work: what appeared immoral was simply a product of a mischievous desire to shock. While he admitted that their characters were prone to "a wanton and exuberant licence of talk" and Fletcher especially was "liable to

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<sup>1</sup>See Contemporaries of Shakespeare, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>"Beaumont and Fletcher", in his Studies in Prose and Poetry (1894), p. 76. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

confuse the shades of right and wrong" (p. 68), he did not think these were serious problems. The world they created was unreal and their immoral conceptions have no bearing on human reality; the life of their drama is "not quite human life: for the interest excited is hardly in human nature".<sup>1</sup> To Swinburne their drama presented a "midday world of fearless boyish laughter and hardly bitter tears" (p. 71). Thus he could ignore or excuse their most difficult moral situations and, concentrating on their "perfect workmanship of lyrical jewellery" (p. 77), praise the "impulsive fashion" of the plays, and Fletcher's "exquisite facility and . . . swift light sureness of touch" which made his "radiant world charming, graceful and entertaining" (pp. 70-71).

While Swinburne's approach may be the best way to enjoy their verse without questioning the darker side of their drama, it also encouraged him to excuse extremely cruel situations such as that found in The Little French Lawyer. Here the "joyfulness" of "boyhood" seemed to Swinburne to redeem the "ruffianly insolence which derides the infirmity of a veteran hero in the public street" and the "lightness of touch" redeemed Lamira's attempt to cuckold her husband.<sup>2</sup> But the cruel treatment of Champernel who degenerates into a fool and Lamira's mocking enticements are insensitive, cynical and hardly excusable on any grounds. More seriously, Swinburne's idea about Beaumont and Fletcher's youthfulness distorts our understanding of their relationship to their society. They wrote for a decadent society for which the wholesomeness and idealism usually associated with youth was gone. Their consideration of human values in extreme terms and their lack of concern for moral reality or consistency was aimed to appeal to this society

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<sup>1</sup>"The Earlier Plays of Beaumont and Fletcher", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, p. 147. Subsequent references to this essay will be made in the footnotes.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

and was not an expression of youthfulness. Similarly his description of their world as unreal seems to imply that they were out of contact with their times, while in fact they were in perfect keeping with it.

Although he was most attracted to their verse, he did not ignore the genuine dramatic problems of their plays which earlier critics had concentrated on. For example, Amintor and Melantius of The Maid's Tragedy were "abject" and "absurd" and showed that the creation of a hero was beyond "the purely passionate and impulsive nature of their tragic genius". Ultimately the play was the first example of the decadent English theatre "in which all other considerations are subordinate to the imperious demands . . . of stage effect" and was not comparable to the great Jacobean tragedies.<sup>1</sup> He felt similarly about A King and No King. It had "much beautiful writing and much brilliant vivacity of charm"; but he also pointed out that "all serious study of character" and "moral evolution of conduct" had been "shamelessly sacrificed to the immediate effect of . . . sensation".<sup>2</sup> He reacted to the tragedies Fletcher wrote on his own in the same way. Valentinian and Bonduca were "brilliant even to splendour, ardent even to satiety" and he characterized the latter as "half lit up by the flame of the footlights and half by the radiance of a magnificent if uncertain day"; that is, theatrical and unreal.<sup>3</sup> However these defects did not dampen his

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-165.

enthusiasm for they were merely further indications of their boyish desires to "goad and stimulate".

One of the more important effects of Swinburne's first essay was the impetus it gave to the attempt to distinguish between their work. Indeed, he thought that Coleridge and others who maintained that such an attempt was impossible and futile, were either obtuse or had not read the plays (pp. 81-82). Beaumont's style seemed to Swinburne to be simple and severe (p. 63) and he had "the gifts of tragic pathos and passion, of tender power and broad strong humour" (p. 69). Fletcher on the other hand was more "lax, effusive, exuberant" (p. 63) and had a "more fiery. . .force of invention" and "a more aerial ease. . .of action" (p. 70).

These reflections had valuable and long lasting consequences; however, the same cannot be said for the rest of Swinburne's remarks. The suggestion that Beaumont and Fletcher's plays represent youthful impulses and that therefore their defects can be overlooked is misleading for it disregards their historical context. His ideas are based on a unique impression and sympathy rooted in his own early experience; as most readers would receive a different impression and would not share his sympathy with youthful irresponsibility, Swinburne's essays can offer little of value today. They are yet another series of notes by a poet on poets.

The first extensive attempt to distinguish between the work of Beaumont and Fletcher was F. G. Fleay's "On Metrical Tests as Applied to John Fletcher, Francis Beaumont, and Philip Massinger" (Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society, 1874). Nine years later G. C. Macaulay wrote a fuller study of their differences which Strachey relied upon for his introduction. In his study Macaulay also defended Beaumont and Fletcher against a charge made by Coleridge that they were "the most servile

jure divino royalists of the period".<sup>1</sup> Macaulay called this a "very superficial observation" since most of their sovereigns "are set up as objects of contempt and hatred".<sup>2</sup> Strachey considered this point as well.

However, before his introduction to the Mermaid volumes appeared J. A. Symonds's excellent essay, "Some Notes on Fletcher's 'Valentinian'" was published in the Fortnightly Review (1886). Symonds's approach was unique in its day. Unlike Dyce or Swinburne he did not concentrate on their verse; nor did he follow Hazlitt's or Coleridge's approach by applying his own standards and condemning their morality, characters, and situations. Instead he saw that what to others had appeared immoral and shocking was essential to their stage craft and dramatic aims. Symonds's main point was that Beaumont and Fletcher wrote heroic romances -- attractive tales "dramatically set forth by dialogue".<sup>3</sup> Accordingly they cultivated a rhetorical style which seemed operatic in technique. While Symonds's description of the characteristics of dramatic rhetoric started from the assumption that it was not "genuine dramatic poetry" (p. 221) he was more tolerant of it than any of his predecessors. He noted it was diffuse, explained plots "by declamation" rather than allowing them to evolve, was "careless of consistency and truth to nature" in characterization. But at the same time he thought that once "we have. . .yielded ourselves up to [its] control we shall acknowledge that their rhetoric possesses a real charm" (p. 219).

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<sup>1</sup>Coleridge, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Beaumont: A Critical Study (1883), p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>"Some Notes on Fletcher's 'Valentinian'", in his In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays (1893), p. 218. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Symonds pointed out that because they were dramatic rhetoricians they used all possible devices to amuse their audiences: "sudden and unaccountable conversions. . . inexplicable reconcilements. . . mere tricks to deceive . . . and . . . surprise" often "at the expense of ethical. . . fitness" and they invariably overdo moral situations for effect (pp. 221-222). It was these devices which led earlier critics to accuse Beaumont and Fletcher of having an imperfect moral sensibility; but Symonds's recognition of their dramatic function shifted the critical emphasis from condemnation to analysis. Furthermore Symonds suggested that these devices were effective in the theatre for such sensationalism can be spell-binding. An audience would be "fascinated" by their "rapidly changing lights and shadows of emotion" but "we, who only read" the plays "can but dimly see" their theatrical effectiveness (p. 223).

Symonds went on to point out that their rhetorical style was particularly well suited to one of their main concerns -- casuistry. Their discussions of honour, chastity, marriage, loyalty "are luminous and eminently interesting" (p. 223) and furthermore were attractive to their audiences who were interested in "casuistical questions and scruples of honour, analogous to those which their own lives yielded". Accordingly, he was able to explain the relation of their drama to their times more adequately than any of his predecessors by noting that their drama does not reflect life; the "sentiment and romance" of their plays was "beyond the scope" of their audiences' experiences. But Beaumont and Fletcher's drama does reflect "the plane of the audience's habitual attitude toward life" (p. 224). This is an extremely valuable distinction; earlier critics who had suggested that their plays reflect their times or the spirit of their times were considering only the morality of their situations and characters.

But as Symonds pointed out this morality was an aspect of their dramatic rhetoric. Symonds's view that their plays relate to the habits of mind of Jacobean society is far sounder and is the view most frequently put forward today.<sup>1</sup>

When Symonds considered Valentinian he pointed out both the achievements and shortcomings of Fletcher's dramatic rhetoric. The first half was successful as the Lucina and Valentinian episode is developed. Especially effective was the buildup to the seduction in Act II, scenes iv, v, vi, and the first scene following the seduction (III, i). All possible emotions were called on -- pathos, tragic passion, pity -- and verbally expressed in this "masterly example of his power to sustain a carefully prepared situation, and to prolong its interest by the gradual heightening of romantic incident" (p. 228). Symonds also pointed out that the presentation of a character at the height of emotion which Hazlitt had noticed was an effective theatrical device here. At the end of Act II Lucina is pleading for mercy; between Act II and Act III she is raped; and as Act III opens "her tone. . . is now changed to one of grave rebuke and fiery accusation" (p. 231). Through this device the audience's interest is kept at its peak.

However the shortcomings of Fletcher's dramatic rhetoric are visible after Lucina's death for "according to his own conception of the playwright's art" he had to fill out the rest of the play without allowing "the interest of the audience to cool (p. 235); thus he had to create new incidents using Maximus as his rhetorical tool, making him first vengeful then ambitious. But in this he "wantonly and cynically" exploited Maximus as a "mere machine"

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<sup>1</sup>See for example John F. Danby, "Beaumont and Fletcher: Jacobean Absolutists", in his Elizabethan and Jacobean Poets (1952), pp. 152-183.

and ultimately showed the essential weakness of a dramatic rhetorician by his sacrifice of "psychological coherence, probability, and the facts of history" to "a magnificent. . .series of effects" (p. 239).

Symonds's brief essay is one of his best and the best study of Beaumont and Fletcher to be written in the nineteenth century. He had a clear grasp of their dramatic aims and evaluated their drama accordingly; he detailed both the strong points and the shortcomings of their work and he examined Valentinian closely to illustrate his points. Although his general ideas and specific points have been pursued in more detail by subsequent critics, his sympathetic historical and theatrical perspective make his essay still valuable for readers today and must have helped to create a receptive audience for the Mermaid Beaumont and Fletcher.

To turn to Strachey's introduction to the Mermaid volumes is, unfortunately, to take a step backwards in time for he lacked his uncle's modern perspective. Ironically it was Symonds who had suggested to Ellis that Strachey should edit the volumes<sup>1</sup> because he knew Strachey was attracted to their verse. Indeed later in life Strachey recalled that as a young man he "devoured" The Faithful Shepherdess "as though it were an apricot flanked with clotted cream".<sup>2</sup> But it would have been better if Symonds himself had undertaken the work.

Strachey's attitude and approach, however, did differ in many important respects from that of his predecessors. He did not complain of their

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<sup>1</sup>See Symonds, Letters, III, 136.

<sup>2</sup>Strachey, "'The Faithful Shepherdess' and the Faithful Phoenix", Spectator, CXXX (June 23, 1923), p. 1042.

immorality or think of them as creating their own unreal world. In fact he linked them with contemporary royalty, but unfortunately in a directly specific way. He suggested that they were "representatives of the age when English manners and English literature were most affected by the life of the court"<sup>1</sup> and that their drama showed "the splendour, the miseries, the vices", and the pathos of court life (p. ix). In Fletcher's case he thought this knowledge of court life came from his father who might have taught him "that deep and inner knowledge" of the language and forms of court etiquette (p. xv). Strachey also suggested that some of the vivid sensationalism of his drama was derived from hearing his father's account of the melodramatic end of *Mary Queen of Scots* (pp. xvi-xvii). While the relationship of Beaumont and Fletcher's work to their times is important to keep in mind, Strachey's suggestions distort that relationship by making their drama seem to be literal transcriptions of court life.

The three most important points Strachey took up were distinguishing between the work of Beaumont and Fletcher, defending their politics and refuting Coleridge's charge that their *Lucinas* were "clumsy fictions". Strachey's attitude towards distinguishing between their work was casual: "As long as the verse lives, it matters comparatively little who was the singer" (p. xxv). Differentiating between them "is a pretty enough game to play at" (p. xviii) but because poets working together could easily influence each other's styles he was cautious. Following Macaulay he

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<sup>1</sup>Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by John St. Loe Strachey (1887), I, xi. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

explained Fletcher's characteristics and summed up by calling him "the poet of a wordly age" who chose spontaneity rather than "sustained excellence of consummate workmanship" and whose work always has "a true and delicate vein of lyric sweetness". Beaumont by contrast wrote many beautiful descriptive passages and had the rare "gifts of inspiration and of a deep creative poetic imagination" (p. xxii).

Strachey's defense of their politics was a more important discussion. He pointed out that because they wrote for the court, they could indeed be called royalists. But at the same time they were not, as Coleridge had suggested, servile upholders of the concept of divine right for the one idea of depth found in their drama is that an ideal king should not take advantage of his subjects. Strachey used the actions and attitudes of The Maid's Tragedy to illustrate this and reminded readers that Waller had to revise the play before it could be presented at the Court of Charles II. Although his description of the play is florid and emotional, Strachey's point is well taken.

His defense of Lucina was not as effective because like Dyce he did not completely understand Coleridge's remark. To Strachey she so nobly portrayed the ideal of a Roman matron that he thought Coleridge's "memory . . . had played him false" (p. xxxiv). However Coleridge was concerned with more than Lucina herself; he was referring to Fletcher's whole concept of chastity. Lucina is noble and consistent but only within Fletcher's small world. She cannot see chastity as a state of mind because Fletcher does not allow her to; the "clumsy fiction", then, is not Lucina but Fletcher's concept of chastity.

Although Strachey's introduction did not make as valuable and lasting a contribution as Symonds's essay, in his own day some of its points were

significant. His hints on distinguishing between the work of Beaumont and Fletcher were helpful and his defense of their politics was important. More important still was his sympathetic viewpoint which helped atone for the intolerance of earlier nineteenth-century critics. However a serious shortcoming of his introduction is his style. It often indulges in unnecessary descriptions and rhetorical devices such as saying "it is needless to relate how" and then relating precisely how. For modern readers this verbosity and circumlocution make his introduction annoying and severely limits its usefulness.

Because of Beaumont and Fletcher's popularity their plays had been available continuously since the first collected edition appeared in 1647. In the nineteenth century five editions were published. Two of these were reprints of G. Colman's edition of 1778; the others were Henry Weber's edition of 1812, George Darley's reprint of Weber's edition (1840) and Alexander Dyce's (1843-1846). Six of the plays in the Mermaid volume (Volume I: The Maid's Tragedy, Philaster, The Wild Goose Chase, Thierry and Theorodet, The Knight of the Burning Pestle; Volume II: A King and No King, Valentinian, The Faithful Shepherdess, Bonduca, The Spanish Curate) had been available in collections or separately.<sup>1</sup> Strachey relied on Dyce for his text, producing an edition of the same quality as the other Mermaid editors who did not go back to original quarto texts. Strachey also used Dyce's notes but unfortunately not with such happy results as his fellow editors. Where the others made the notes of their predecessors more concise by re-wording them, Strachey simply eliminated parts of them, making them, in many cases, less clear than Dyce's. When he made up his own notes defining difficult words he was similarly unlucky and often

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for bibliographical details.

neglected the context in which the word appeared. For example with the word "court-stale" in The Maid's Tragedy (II, ii, 98) Strachey used Dyce's definition of "stale" as "stalking horse"<sup>1</sup> and ignored "court" which changes the meaning of the word to "courtier no longer of use, out of date".<sup>2</sup> These shortcomings make Strachey's notes the most inadequate of any in the Mermaid volumes. Nevertheless his text is still serviceable. Since Strachey's day no such complete selection has appeared and of the three modern collected editions only one has been completed and none of them are as convenient to use as the Mermaid. The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, edited by Arnold Glover and A. R. Waller (1905-1912) is in ten volumes, unmodernized, and has few notes; only four of the twelve projected volumes of The Works of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, edited by A. H. Bullen (1904-1912), were completed; and Fredson Bowers has completed only three volumes of his unmodernized The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon (1966- ).

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<sup>1</sup>The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by Alexander Dyce, VIII, 161.

<sup>2</sup>The Maid's Tragedy, edited by Howard Norland (1968), p. 42.

## CHAPTER SIX

THOMAS DEKKER, EDITED BY ERNEST RHYS

The work of Thomas Dekker lent itself particularly well to most of the nineteenth-century approaches to the drama. For those in search of lyric verse, Dekker has many lovely songs and descriptions in his plays; for those looking for simple, passionate or pathetic scenes or scenes of realistic low life, there are such scenes throughout his drama; for those needing moral lessons, there is much detachable preaching in The Honest Whore or Old Fortunatus; and for those who were interested in a dramatist's life, Dekker's prose offered them material in plenty. However each of these separate approaches distorts his work; appreciation of his drama as a whole is only possible if one studies the elements of his work together and in the context of the theatrical conventions he relied upon. Of all nineteenth-century critics only Symonds and Ernest Rhys, editor of the Mermaid Thomas Dekker (which contained both parts of The Honest Whore, The Shoemaker's Holiday, Old Fortunatus, and The Witch of Edmonton) adequately stressed Dekker's dramatic achievement.

Lamb's remarks on Dekker initiated three of the approaches to his plays. Using the word "poetry" in the broad sense of "passion", Lamb thought Dekker "had poetry enough for anything".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly he praised the minor romantic interlude in Old Fortunatus where Orleans in his frenzy over Agripyne (III, i) seemed to talk "'pure Biron and Romeo'. . . is almost as poetical as they, quite as philosophical, only a little madder".<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lamb, Specimens, II, 179.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 229.

Most subsequent critics repeated his praise and, by isolating this atypical scene, misrepresented the play. Secondly, he indicated how The Honest Whore offered moral lessons. Some of it was "offensively crowded" with "strong lines against the harlot's profession"; but Bellafront's speech in Part II (IV, i, Mermaid text pp. 255-256) where she describes her life as a whore, was more effective. Thirdly he used autobiographical material to suggest that Dekker spoke out so strongly against vice because he himself was a "worn-out sinner".<sup>1</sup>

Hazlitt used similar approaches. He focused on "gentle-hearted"<sup>2</sup> Dekker's expression of the "simple uncompounded elements of nature and passion",<sup>3</sup> which was found especially in The Honest Whore. To him the play had "all the romance of private life, all the pathos of bearing up against silent grief, all the tenderness of concealed affection" and "the simplicity of prose with the graces of poetry".<sup>4</sup> Orlando Friscobaldo was his favourite character. In a statement which epitomizes his approach to literature as a guide pointing out his favourite portions, he declared, "Old honest Decker's Signior Orlando Friscobaldo I shall never forget! I became only of late acquainted with this. . .worthy character; but the bargain between us is, I trust, for life."<sup>5</sup> Like Lamb's statement on Orleans in Old Fortunatus this became the classic remark on The Honest Whore.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., I, 236.

<sup>2</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

Their views were repeated in the introduction to the first collected edition of Dekker's work (1873) which gave further impetus to the fragmented approach by calling attention to another separate element of his work -- his realism. The introduction quoted an anonymous article on The Witch of Edmonton which had praised the play as "a picture of human life",<sup>1</sup> and described The Shoemaker's Holiday as a "historical picture of manners" with "all the charm of a Waverly novel".<sup>2</sup> It was not until the following year when J. A. Symonds reviewed this edition, that the disparate elements of Dekker's drama finally were drawn together.

He considered The Shoemaker's Holiday, The Honest Whore and Old Fortunatus in some detail, recounting their plots and praising the aspects his predecessors had isolated. But he also made the invaluable point that each represented a different kind of comic convention. Accordingly Dekker's most important artistic achievement lay not in his pathos, verse of "silvery purity" or "single scenes of delicate beauty"<sup>3</sup> but in the way he had used comic conventions. The Shoemaker's Holiday was an example of realistic comedy, presenting a slice of city life "with. . .fulness of vitality and truth to nature", which at the same time included a highly idealized character - Simon Eyre. He was, however, "no mere humour; but a real man, full of genial kindness, merriment, and content". This ability to make an idealization appear real was, Symonds noted, Dekker's unique contribution to realistic comedy (p. 136). The Honest Whore represented his contribution to "the comedy of moral purpose", the smallest class of English comedy of which Massinger was the "prince". Here again, Symonds noted,

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<sup>1</sup>"Analytic Essays on the Old English Dramatists. No. VIII. The Witch of Edmonton. -- Ford, Dekker, and Rowley", Blackwood's Magazine, VI (January, 1820), p. 409.

<sup>2</sup>The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker (1873), I, xiii.

<sup>3</sup>"The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker", Academy, V (February 7, 1874), p. 136.

Dekker had added his own ingredient--a special realism in some scenes and in the characters Bellafront, Matheo, and Friscobaldo (p. 137). Symonds recognized that the third play, Old Fortunatus, was essentially an allegory but again pointed out that Dekker seemed able to give "flesh and blood reality. . .to abstractions" (p. 136). Symonds's appreciation of Dekker's dramatic achievement must have made readers eager for an easily accessible collection of Dekker's plays so that they could read the plays for themselves. It also illustrates once again the modernity of his approach to the Elizabethan drama. Study of Dekker today starts as Symonds did, with an understanding of the dramatic conventions he used and evaluates his achievement within those conventions.

In 1875 A. W. Ward offered support of Symonds's view by pointing out that while Lamb was a "sure. . .guide to individual passages of exceptional beauty" his "general estimates are not. . .equally trustworthy".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly he noted that Lamb's estimate of Dekker's "poetry" applied only to some of his scenes. However he did not have Symonds's sympathy or understanding of Dekker's drama as a whole and suggested that the realism of his work put much of it "outside the range of what our age can bring itself to enjoy".<sup>2</sup>

Swinburne was one who did not find it easy to enjoy Dekker. As might be expected he concentrated on Dekker's verse and his occasional moving scenes; however unlike Lamb he could not ignore the many other ingredients in his drama. Accordingly he found Dekker "of all English poets. . .perhaps the most difficult to classify".<sup>3</sup> "Poet" is the operative word and explains

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<sup>1</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature, II, 39.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, 50-51.

<sup>3</sup>"Thomas Dekker", in his The Age of Shakespeare, p. 60. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

his difficulty. Swinburne was most interested in Dekker's "poetic gifts": his "native music and . . . inborn invention", his imagination which was "as delicate and strong" as Shakespeare's and his "divine gift of tenderness" (p. 61). But he was unable to reconcile these attributes with his use of the characters, moralizing, allegory, and bawdry of dramatic convention. Because Dekker fell back on conventions, Swinburne concluded that he lacked "the one great gift of seriousness, of noble ambition, of self-confidence rooted in self-respect" that a successful poet must have (p. 62). In short Dekker "was a failure" (p. 61). His typical creation -- a combination morality play-variety show -- illustrated his "besetting sin of laxity" and a "want of seriousness and steadiness" (p. 66). His muse was simply "the most shiftless and shameless of slovens or of sluts" (p. 88). Swinburne's appreciation of only Dekker's musical and tender qualities and his insistence that all other aspects of his work were indicative of bad workmanship gave him a highly distorted view of his drama. It made him praise certain scenes and Dekker's language and at the same time made it "difficult" for him "to abstain from intemperate language" (p. 80) with other parts of his plays. Indeed, he often did not abstain; and his essay reels from extreme adulation to extreme anger.

Swinburne's remarks on the plays included in the Mermaid volume have some value because each play had qualities he could appreciate. For example he found The Shoemaker's Holiday fresh and pleasant; but at the same time he ignored Dekker's aim to idealize working people and was consequently disappointed in it because it showed "few or no signs of the author's higher poetic abilities". Simon Eyre did not amuse him and he thought that the "more serious and romantic" subplot was too lightly handled (p. 63).

Similarly, with Old Fortunatus, Swinburne, like Lamb, praised Orleans and aspects of its verse; but, unable to appreciate the play's allegorical nature, thought it showed the typical marks of Dekker's "idle, shambling, shifty way of writing" (p. 66). His remarks on The Honest Whore were more adequate. To him the unity of the various plots of Part I was a "rare example of dexterous and happy simplicity in composition" and he praised particular scenes: Act I, scene i, was "effective and impressive" (p. 73) and Act I, scene iii, where the Duke lies to Infelice was "one of the most fascinating in any play of the period" (p. 74). With Part II Swinburne outdid Hazlitt in praise of Orlando Friscobaldo finding him as true to life, in a different way, as De Flores. However he was not as enthusiastic about Part II as a whole because "the more poetic or romantic quality of his genius had already begun to fade out when this second part of his finest poem was written" (p. 78). Again "poem" is the operative word, illustrating that Swinburne overlooked the essential point Symonds had made -- that it was a "comedy of moral purpose" and that therefore its lyrical or romantic qualities were of secondary importance. The one play included in the Mermaid volume which Swinburne had a more balanced view of was The Witch of Edmonton, which he had discussed briefly in his earlier essay on Ford. He recognized its artistic form, calling it a "protest of the stage against the horrors and brutalities of vulgar superstition", and also noted its "beauty and importance both on poetical and social grounds".<sup>1</sup> Such an appreciation is rare in Swinburne's criticism; it is unfortunate that he did not elaborate on these points.

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<sup>1</sup>John Ford", in his Essays and Studies, p. 300.

On the whole Swinburne's essay on Dekker is another which tells us more about Swinburne's taste than Dekker's plays; as a study of Dekker its imbalance and intemperate language make it inadequate and distorted. Ernest Rhys's essay for the Mermaid Series far surpasses it, as indeed it surpasses all nineteenth-century studies in sympathy and comprehensiveness.

Some of Rhys's introduction employed the autobiographical approach initiated by Lamb -- relating Dekker's life through discussion of his prose works and suggesting for example that the feeling behind Orlando Frisco-baldo might have been based on Dekker's own unhappy experience with his daughter. As if in deference to Swinburne he repeated the assertion that "he never attained the serious conception of himself" required in order to produce work "proportionate to his genius"<sup>1</sup>; but Rhys had a much higher opinion of Dekker because he appreciated "the breath of simple humanity" and the "sense of brightness and human encouragement" in his work. Furthermore Rhys found an "artistic sincerity" in the "outspoken truth" and "homely realism" of his "picture of life as he saw it" (p. xlv) which Swinburne had not noticed.

*The* Rhys concentrated on A Shoemaker's Holiday and Old Fortunatus: the first seemed to represent his "realistic method" and the second his "romantic spirit" (p. xix). The Shoemaker's Holiday particularly appealed to him because of its "ready democratic sympathy" as "it realizes with admirable vividness certain simpler types of character, of which the people . . . was formed" (p. xvii). He also appreciated its "pure joy" (p. xviii); and "overflowing good humour" (p. xvii). Following Symonds rather than

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Dekker, edited by Ernest Rhys (1887), p. xliii. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Swinburne, Rhys tried to have a whole view of the play: he noted that Dekker's aim was to idealize the craftsman's life and show it "merging. . . in the citizen's", particularly through the character of Simon Eyre; and also recognized the dramatic function of the conventional "low-comedy" characters Firk and Sybil who act as foils to Rose and Lacy and represent the "healthy lusty" side of life (p. xvii).

Unfortunately Rhys's remarks on Old Fortunatus were not as effective because he did not appreciate the allegorical aim of the whole drama in its present form but instead discussed its original intention to dramatize a fantastic legend and the similarity of some of its language to Tamburlaine. Accordingly he suggested that it was designed to appeal to the audience's "sense of wonder and adventure" (p. xx). But he also pointed out that the masque of virtue and vice "upset the right moral tension of the play" (xxii) which was to show the supremacy of fortune. This complaint is fair; although modern apologists assert that the distortion is not great,<sup>1</sup> the conclusion is startling and the victory of Virtue over Vice is hollow because of the power Fortune has already shown over both. Secondly Rhys was the first to note that the Orleans episode is "insufficiently related to the. . .plot". Although he noted that it was "an intrusion which has resulted so delightfully in itself", (p. xxiii) his remark serves to point out the distorting nature of much earlier criticism of Dekker.

Similarly Rhys's introduction as a whole seemed to put the conventional nineteenth-century approaches to Dekker's drama firmly in their place. His essay does not seem as modern an evaluation of Dekker's drama as Symonds's

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<sup>1</sup>See for example James H. Conover, Thomas Dekker: An Analysis of Dramatic Structure (1969), p. 80; and George Price, Thomas Dekker (1969), p. 45.

because he did not stress Dekker's use of theatrical convention, but Rhys's other points and his view of Dekker's drama as a whole made an important contribution to study of his work. Today the value of Rhys's introduction is slightly more limited primarily because of its sentimentality of tone in such suggestions as "his picture of life" was "unequaled . . . for its living spirit of tears and laughter" (p. xlv). Likewise as George Price points out his view of The Shoemaker's Holiday as a picture of real life approached "both the play and society in a sentimental mood".<sup>1</sup> But Rhys's sincere enjoyment of Dekker's drama and his deep sympathy with his democratic ideals do much to negate that mood and make his study still a reliable introduction to Dekker's work.

Rhys's text also made a valuable contribution. Before it was published Dekker's collected plays were available only in Pearson's meagerly annotated, uncorrected diplomatic reprint and in a few collections: The Witch of Edmonton was included in all editions of Ford; The Honest Whore was in Dyce's edition of Middleton as well as in the third edition of Dodsley (1825-1827) and Scott's Ancient British Drama (1810); Old Fortunatus had been published in Dilke's Old English Plays (1814-1815); and A Shoemaker's Holiday had been edited in 1886 in Germany by Karl Warnke and Ludwig Proescholdt.<sup>2</sup> Rhys used Pearson's text for Old Fortunatus but for the others he relied on one of these alternative

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<sup>1</sup>Price, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>See appendix for complete bibliographical details.

editions because as Warnke and Proescholdt pointed out Pearson's text "cannot stand the test to which we are used to submit a good edition of an author".<sup>1</sup> Thus he used Warnke and Proescholdt's excellent text for The Shoemaker's Holiday and elaborated and corrected their notes whenever necessary. For The Honest Whore he used Dyce's text and for The Witch of Edmonton he used Dyce and Gifford's. With both these plays Rhys usually followed his predecessors, although he occasionally restored original readings if he found their emendations unnecessary. He also used their notes, but added a number of his own where necessary. Rhys's most important editorial work was with Old Fortunatus for he made his own act and scene divisions and wrote his own full notes to explain the people and places mentioned in the text.

Until F. Bowers's edition appeared (1953-1961) Rhys's text was the best and most easily accessible text of five of Dekker's best plays. Although single editions of some of the plays have appeared recently, it is still a convenient and well-annotated selection.

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<sup>1</sup>The Shoemaker's Holiday, edited by Karle Warnke and Ludwig Proescholdt (1886), p. viii.

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<sup>1</sup>[T. J. Searle], "Art. II. The Works of Ben Jonson, folio, 1616", Retrospective Review, I (1820), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Jonas Barish (1963), p. 2.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

BEN JONSON, INTRODUCED BY C. H. HERFORD, EDITED BY BRINSLEY NICHOLSON

There were few critics in the nineteenth century who could have introduced Ben Jonson's plays with any degree of sympathy because the temper of his drama was out of keeping with dominant tastes. Luckily Havelock Ellis found a sympathetic writer in C. H. Herford who as one of the first of a new generation of scholars of English literature agreed with the assertion made in 1820 that "in order to be praised he must be understood; and. . . to be understood he must be studied".<sup>1</sup> He approached Jonson dispassionately with few pre-conceptions about drama, and attempted to appreciate his language, dramatic aims and fulfillment of those aims.

It was precisely these things which earlier critics with the exception of William Gifford and A. W. Ward had been unable to do; Jonson was attacked on all fronts. The object of attack in the eighteenth century had been Jonson's personality. As Jonas Barish points out, because Jonson and Shakespeare had been linked since the Restoration, writers wishing to show Shakespeare in the best light often did so by abusing Jonson. They searched in his writings for evidence of malignity towards Shakespeare and "charged him. . .with plagiarism, with scurvy attacks on his fellow players, with a want of decency and decorum".<sup>2</sup> Robert Shiells even went so far as

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<sup>1</sup>[T. J. Searle], "Art. II. The Works of Ben Jonson, folio, 1616", Retrospective Review, I (1820), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>Ben Jonson: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by Jonas Barish (1963), p. 2.

forgery and in his 1753 edition of Drummond's Conversations included in Cibber's Lives of the Poets he claimed that Drummond called Jonson "as surly, ill-natured, proud and disagreeable, as Shakespear, with ten times his merit was gentle, good-natured, easy and amiable".<sup>1</sup> This edition of the Conversations was read for the next fifty years. Such remarks were firmly repudiated as "a medly of malice and stupidity"<sup>2</sup> by William Gifford in his 1816 edition of Jonson's works, but they were replaced by a more far-reaching attack on his language, characters, and artistic aims.

Most nineteenth-century critics who concentrated on the language of the drama, and evaluated it according to its verse and passion -- its "poetry" in Lamb's widest sense--found Jonson's comedy disappointing. It does not have scenes of detachable passion or beauty and as Eliot points out Jonson's poetry is "of the surface", arousing "no swarms of inarticulate feelings",<sup>3</sup> which can be experienced by those reading for the sake of the verse. Schlegel set the tone for criticism of Jonson's language by calling him "a critical poet"<sup>4</sup> who had failed to see that "in the chemical retort of the critic, what is most valuable, the fugacious living spirit of a poem, evaporates". Jonson lacked "soul"; "that nameless something" best described as "a certain mental music of imagery and intonation, which cannot be produced by the accurate observation of a difficult measure".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Ben Johnson [sic]", in The Lives of the Poets, edited by T. Cibber (1753), I, 241.

<sup>2</sup>The Works of Ben Jonson, edited by William Gifford (1816), I, cvi.

<sup>3</sup>"Ben Jonson" (1919), in his Elizabethan Essays, p. 68.

<sup>4</sup>Schlegel, A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, II, 283.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 283.

There was also simply much in Jonson's drama which did not appeal to nineteenth-century tastes. For example most readers did not like his learning; it impeded his spontaneity and seemed to be used in a pedantic way. They did not like the arrogant tone of some of his satire; and most objected to his realistic grossness. While Shakespeare's had an "exquisite purity of imagination",<sup>1</sup> Jonson's plays showed such an unacceptable level of coarseness that in Ben Jonson (1886) J. A. Symonds would not transcribe the opening scene of The Alchemist because "modern readers of a popular book can hardly be expected to stomach [its] realistically coarse abuse".<sup>2</sup> Nor did readers enjoy Jonson's type of comedy. In the nineteenth century comedy was defined as "a type of drama the chief object of which. . . is to amuse".<sup>3</sup> But Sir Philip Sidney's definition of comedy is more applicable to Jonson's: "Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which [the dramatist] representeth in the most ridiculous and scornfull sort that may be; so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one".<sup>4</sup> Such an aim did not appeal to nineteenth-century readers. Jonson's scorn was particularly objectionable for readers thought "sympathy is necessary to complete humour"<sup>5</sup> and wanted "a kindly appreciation of the ludicrous".<sup>6</sup> Many echoed Hazlitt's complaint that his drama lacked "that

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<sup>1</sup>Coleridge, Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists, p. 250.

<sup>2</sup>Ben Jonson (1886), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>"Comedy", Encyclopaedia Britannica, eleventh edition (1910-1911), VI, 759.

<sup>4</sup>"An Apologie For Poetrie [1563]", in English Literary Criticism: The Renaissance, edited by O. B. Hardison (1967), p. 121.

<sup>5</sup>David Hannay, "Humour", Encyclopaedia Britannica, eleventh edition (1910-1911), XIII, 890. In this section he is considering "humour" apart from the sense in which Jonson used it.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 891.

genial spirit of enjoyment and finer fancy, which constitute the essence of poetry and of wit",<sup>1</sup> because it was based "on things that provoke pity or disgust".<sup>2</sup>

A further objection to Jonson's drama was his method of characterization. Because of his dramatic aim to show the defects of his times in extreme form and his "humours" method, Jonson's characters are rarely presented as developing psychological beings and have a life only within the plots of his plays. This was a major defect to a critic such as Coleridge for whom character along with passion and language were the essential ingredients of drama but plot was of little importance. Coleridge complained that Jonson's characters were "too often not characters, but derangements" for "he not poetically, but painfully exaggerates every trait; that is, not by the drollery of the circumstances, but by the excess of the originating feeling".<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, excepting the fragmentary Sad Shepherd none of Jonson's plays had any characters "with whom you can morally sympathize"<sup>4</sup> and Volpone in particular offered "strongest proof, how impossible it is to keep up any pleasurable interest in a tale in which there is no goodness of heart in any of the prominent characters".<sup>5</sup> This latter remark offers a good illustration of the difference between nineteenth-century tastes and our own. Except for Swinburne's praise of

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<sup>1</sup>Lectures on the English Comic Writers, Works, VI, 41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>3</sup>Coleridge, p. 252.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

Volpone's "sublimity of cynic scorn"<sup>1</sup> all critics echoed Coleridge's distaste finding "the spectacle. . .too grisly".<sup>2</sup> Yet today the play is one of our favourites; the most recent revival of Volpone at the National Theatre (London, 1977) was enormously successful. The spectacle may be grisly but our cynicism does not deny its truth or humour; indeed, modern readers and audiences approaching the play for the first time often admire Volpone and Mosca and are distressed by Jonson's harsh justice.

Only Lamb, Gifford, and A. W. Ward defended Jonson. Lamb's remarks however avoided the central issues; for example he included Lovell's discussion of love from Act III, scene ii of The New Inn "to show the poetical fancy and elegance of mind of the supposed rugged old bard" and also suggested that "a thousand beautiful passages" could be extracted from the masques.<sup>3</sup> While Lamb had little to say about Jonson's typical work, Gifford did appreciate some of its more important aspects. As a neo-classic he did not start from the same assumptions as his romantic contemporaries. For example, unlike Coleridge, Gifford thought that Jonson's characters were "delineated with a breadth and vigour as well as truth that display a master hand" and that they showed his "extensive and profound" understanding of human nature.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore Gifford was able to grasp something of the overall patterns of his plays, pointing out that his greatest merit "consists in the felicity with which he combines a certain number of personages, distinct from one another, into a well ordered and regular plot".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A Study of Ben Jonson (1889), p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Symonds, Ben Jonson (1886), p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> Lamb, I, 170.

<sup>4</sup> The Works of Ben Jonson, I, ccxiii.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., I, ccxvi-ccxvii.

Nearly sixty years later A. W. Ward expressed a similar sympathy for Jonson. His basic attitudes were similar to his contemporaries<sup>1</sup>: he called attention to the lyrical portions of his masques, praised the pastoral fragment The Sad Shepherd and noted that his tragedies lacked "the presence of that superhuman light which flashes into sudden clearness . . . the hill-tops and the valleys, the jutting crags and the cavernous recesses of human nature".<sup>1</sup> But he praised other aspects of his work: his noble concept of the lofty purpose of his art (p. 598); his genuine and critical scholarship (p. 596); and suggested that his work was not solely the result of acquired powers but was "informed by gifts of original genius" (p. 598). His most important point however concerned Jonson's characterization which to Ward as to Gifford was his greatest strength. First he pointed out that in comedy it is the extremes of character which are often the most successful and that in appreciating this Jonson "was guided by his extraordinary gift of humour", meaning his idea of the comic; accordingly, "unless Jonson's humour is thoroughly appreciated, he will be inadequately criticized". Secondly Ward objected to labelling the characters as mere types for they are carefully distinguished from each other (p. 599) and he attacked those who complained that Jonson failed to exhibit characters in the process of development in his plays -- that "he is deficient in analytical power". Such a charge was "inadmissible" and indeed perhaps could not "with justice be brought against a dramatist at all." Jonson, he suggested, accounted for his characters and showed them in action "within the limits" he himself devised. He went on, "I am not aware why a dramatist should be asked to 'dig

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<sup>1</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature (1875), I, 545. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

deeper back' than this. What I want in a play is to understand the real nature as well as to see the external features of a character; its 'genesis' . . .I am content to divine" (pp. 601-602). This point is extremely important and in making it Ward was striking out at almost all of Jonson's detractors, as well as at one of the main nineteenth-century assumptions about drama. However it went as unheeded as Gifford's remarks for many years.

J. A. Symonds's Ben Jonson (1886) offers an interesting illustration of the distance between nineteenth- and twentieth-century tastes. Symonds was a perceptive and intelligent critic: he isolated many of the finer details of Jonson's language, characterization, and aim. But because of the bias of the times he saw them as faults; whereas today we are attracted to them. He also had an awareness of the theatrical dimension of Jonson's plays:

Perpetual movement, bright costume, and the vivacity of actors can touch a stiff mechanic thing with liveliness. None of Jonson's pieces suffer from deficiency of business; and his personages are so sharply defined that they offer opportunities to able players. Regarded as forms to be filled with. . .life and individuality, even these mechanic puppets may have moved mirth.<sup>1</sup>

Had Symonds kept this idea continually in mind his bias might have been less of an impediment to his discussion for as recent revivals of Bartholomew Fair (Arts Theatre, Cambridge, 1977) and Volpone have shown, on stage his plays can be completely satisfying.

Symonds analyzed many of the most important points about Jonson's art, but gave his discussion of each a negative slant. For example he noted that Jonson "held the . . .writers. . .of antiquity in solution in

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<sup>1</sup>Ben Jonson (1886), p. 56. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

his spacious memory. He . . . fused them in his own mind, poured them plastically forth into the mould of thought". However when references to the classics appeared in his plays, Symonds called it "looting from classical treasuries" and "wholesale and indiscriminate translation" (pp. 52-53), implying that his use of the classics was a fault. He applied this objection to The Alchemist where he pointed out that much of Mammon's day dreams of what he would do with his wealth "is borrowed from the Augustan Histories" and was "incongruous with his quality of a City Knight" (p. 105). To Symonds this was a defect; but incongruity and the resulting breach of decorum were important comic devices in Jonson's drama. For us today the comedy of Mammon's day dreams is derived from their very incongruity.

Jonson's learning as a whole was similarly objectionable; it was so "vast and indiscriminate" (p. 59) that one had "to learn . . . a new language" in order to appreciate his plays (p. 52). Jonson's pre-occupation with his learning meant that there was nothing in his plays "which patient criticism may not extract" for "the wand of the enchanter has not passed over them" (p. 61). In an essay written in the same year, appended to a selection of Jonson's works, Symonds was more specific about this lack of enchantment. He found "sound sense" and "robust logic" in Jonson's verse instead of "imagination" and "fancy": "much to impress us with the sense of power and sterling wisdom, little to fascinate us by vague unexpected charm or subtle beauty".<sup>1</sup> While he has here isolated

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<sup>1</sup>The Dramatic Works and Lyrics of Ben Jonson, introduced by John Addington Symonds (1886), p. xxxiii.

some of the main qualities of Jonson's work, his tone implies that these are faults. However, appreciation of these qualities is a matter of changing tastes; many readers today are attracted to Jonson's work for the very qualities which in 1886 were almost unanimously thought to be defects.

Symonds tried to explain how Jonson could have been a product of the same Renaissance that produced Shakespeare. Later, in his Essays Speculative and Suggestive he was to call him a "hybrid"<sup>1</sup>; here he explained that Jonson's genius was "originally of the romantic order", but was "overlaid and diverted from its spontaneous bias by a scholar's education, and by definite theories of the poet's task, deliberately adopted. . . in middle life" (p. 7). His evidence for this assertion was Jonson's early and later work; and Symonds focused his discussion particularly on The New Inn and the fragment The Sad Shepherd. Unlike others, Symonds did not find The New Inn a dotage. Rather, he asserted that it was "one of Jonson's best comedies" because in it he was "attempt[ing] something in the romantic mood" (p. 177). Concentrating on Lovel's discussion of love which Lamb had extracted, he asserted that Lovel was "the type of the chivalrous lover. . .modified by philosophic and humanistic culture" (p. 182) and his speeches on love seemed to Symonds to be "some of the finest poetry which survives from the Jacobean age of our drama". They had a "fervid intellectual passion" and "an enthusiasm for spiritual beauty which we are surprised to find still burning in the aged poet's brain" (p. 178).<sup>2</sup> Symonds also dwelt on the fragment The Sad Shepherd

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<sup>1</sup>"On the Application of Evolutionary Principles to Art and Literature", in his Essays Speculative and Suggestive (1890), I, 56.

<sup>2</sup>Lovel's definition of the spiritual source of sexual love was particularly important to him for it was very like his own explanation of the idea behind Plato's Phaedrus, a work which as a young man he had

because surprisingly he felt it "illustrates Jonson's qualities at their best" showing "powerful brain-work" in its plot construction, "sharply-indented character-delineation", "judiciously. . .applied" erudition and "genuine though thin" poetry. Furthermore it "would act well" (pp. 192-193). Although these assertions about a fragment of only three acts are difficult to support they exemplify the distortions made possible by Symonds's bias.

Ben Jonson is an excellent illustration of the prevailing taste in the nineteenth century which impeded appreciation of Jonson's drama. It shows that some readers did grasp Jonson's comic techniques and dramatic aims but also that they did not find them attractive. Accordingly it is a good guide to nineteenth-century taste; but for modern readers it loads the scales too heavily against Jonson to allow room for independent judgment or to offer suggestions for interpretation.

A. C. Swinburne's essays on Jonson first published in 1888 and collected into book form in 1889 followed his predecessors in most details. His most important contribution lay in his more sympathetic tone, his admiration for certain aspects of his work and a more specific evaluation of what to Swinburne and his contemporaries were defects. Swinburne's sympathy came from his admiration of Jonson as the greatest Giant of literature who might have become a God "were it possible. . .to become divine by dint of ambition and devotion".<sup>1</sup> Perhaps because there was "a scholar inside Swinburne"<sup>2</sup> he also admired Jonson's learning. To him

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discovered offered some justification for his own homosexual feelings. See "Plato's 'Phaedrus'", Pall Mall Gazette, VIII (September 5, 1868), 11-12 and Phyllis Grosskurth, John Addington Symonds (1964), p. 34.

<sup>1</sup>A Study of Ben Jonson, p. 4. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Geoffrey Faber, Jowett: a Portrait with Background. (1957), p. 372.

it enriched his drama and he reminded Symonds and others that we would "lose. . .much of solid and precious metal" if Jonson had not been so learned (p. 8).

To Swinburne most of Jonson's "gravest and most serious defects" (p. 7) were a by-product of his comic aim to be a satirist and realist in order to denounce the follies of the time. These were "crowning and damning" artistic roles (p. 9). To Swinburne they were crowning because of their noble, corrective aim which Swinburne genuinely admired; but damning because realism made Jonson immolate "on the altar of accuracy all eloquence, all passion, and all inspiration incompatible with direct and prosaic reproduction of. . .plausible dialogue" (pp. 12-13) and his satire was often motivated by "scorn and indignation" -- "a sterile. . .diet" for dramatic poetry (p. 39). Swinburne did not disapprove of satire but to him Jonson often treated his topics too seriously, so that his comedy was "not in the. . .deepest sense delightful". Specifically this was because there was "an undertone of sarcasm" in his satire making his wit "cruel, contemptuous, intolerant" (p. 51). Thus his characters could not provoke "loving laughter" and to Swinburne as to his readers it was impossible to "laugh heartily or long where all chance of sympathy or cordiality is inconceivable" (p. 29).

Swinburne was also more specific than his predecessors in analyzing why his verse was unappealing. The main element it lacked was "singing power" -- "the note of apparently spontaneous, inevitable, irrepressible and impeccable music" (pp. 4-5). To Jonson "the grace, the charm, the magic of poetry" was of less concern than "the weight of matter, the solidity of meaning, the significance and purpose of the thing. . .presented"

(p. 6). But there were three more specific faults. The most serious was stiffness. His verse was not, as had been suggested, "rugged": Donne could be called "rugged" but "Jonson is stiff. And if ruggedness. . . is a damaging blemish, stiffness is a destructive infirmity" (p. 99). A corresponding fault was the use of inversions which added to the stiffness of his verse. To Swinburne "there is no surer test of the born lyric poet" than knowing when to use an inversion (p. 69). His third objection was more vague and less easy for us to appreciate: Jonson seemed to lack good taste. This could be seen in the "grotesque if not gross" details he included in his drama (p. 49). Like poetic ability, taste was instinctive; no amount of education could provide it (p. 114).

His most unusual views concerned Volpone and The Staple of News. As pointed out earlier, he had a higher opinion than most of Volpone because he appreciated his wickedness. Like De Flores or Flamineo he was a "superb sinner" whose "genius. . . courage. . . and. . . intensity of contemptuous enjoyment" gave him an "imperious fascination" (p. 30), and gave the play "a touch of something like imagination, a savour of something like romance" (p. 35). Where almost all critics thought Epicoeene was Jonson's third greatest play, Swinburne thought A Staple of News represented "the consummate and incomparable power of its author" (p. 74) and earned him "the prophetic title of Vates" (p. 77). It has been suggested by Howard Norland that Swinburne held this unusually high opinion of A Staple of News because it was the only one of Jonson's satires which he could appreciate. Having received harsh treatment from journalists as a young man, Swinburne did not ask for sympathy to be shown these Jacobean journalists but delighted in the play's "scorn and indignation".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See the introduction to A Study of Ben Jonson, edited by Howard Norland (1969), xxii-xxiii. The reviews of Swinburne's early work have been conveniently collected into Swinburne: The Critical Heritage, edited by Clyde K. Hyder (1970), pp. 22-48.

Taken together, Swinburne's and Symonds's essays with their detailed objections to Jonson's art are a full illustration of the nineteenth-century approach to Jonson and, more broadly, of the shortcomings of nineteenth-century poetics when applied in criticism to a writer of a different tradition. They are also a landmark, for the next important study to appear was C. H. Herford's introduction to the Mermaid Series's Ben Jonson which was a turning point in study and appreciation of Jonson. Herford had great sympathy for Jonson. As a scholar he had studied the intellectual background of the English Renaissance and approached Jonson from a much different angle than the earlier Elizabethan enthusiasts. He saw Jonson as a partaker in great Renaissance traditions rather than as an alien among singers; and asserted that it was wrong to contrast Jonson "with the 'romantic' Elizabethans" for "in some respects he was rather ultra-Elizabethan, pursuing artistic effects cognate to theirs with a more conscious purpose and a more powerful will".<sup>1</sup> Although in his Mermaid introduction Herford had not yet achieved the full appreciation he showed in his later work, in many respects he offered the new interpretation of Jonson's plays which led to the sympathy felt for them in the twentieth century.

Herford's starting point for evaluating Jonson was an analysis of his dramatic aim and achievement. Rarely using the word "poetry" or the term "poetic drama" to describe Jonson's work, he stressed Jonson's originality and stand "as an innovator in dramatic art".<sup>2</sup> Like all his

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<sup>1</sup>Ben Jonson, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson (1925-1952), I, 121.

<sup>2</sup>Ben Jonson, introduced by C. H. Herford, vol. I edited by Brinsley Nicholson (1890), I, xiv, Herford's italics. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

predecessors Herford compared Jonson to Shakespeare; however his basis for comparison was not the degree of lyricism in their plays, a comparison in which Jonson fared poorly. Instead Herford compared their innovation and theory. Here Jonson stood out. Compared with Shakespeare's single attempt at criticism of contemporary life, Love's Labour's Lost, which was "eccentric and wayward in its dramatic construction" (p. xv) and "hopelessly fantastic and unreal" (p. xii), Jonson's drama had "more sustained comic power" and Every Man in His Humour not only offered a criticism of life but also a criticism of the contemporary drama (p. xvii).

Because he appreciated Jonson's dramatic aims, Herford held unusual views of Every Man out of His Humour, The Poetaster, and Cynthia's Revels. Where Swinburne had called them "magnificent mistakes" and registered the "irritation and vexation of a disappointed and bewildered reader",<sup>1</sup> Herford found them "more attractive" than some of his others to "the student of Jonson's art" because of their presentation of his artistic theories (pp. xxiv-xxv). His opinion of other plays was correspondingly low. Volpone and Epicoene both "failed to entirely realise the Jonsonian ideal of comedy, as an 'imitation of life'; the one through the archaism, the other through the triviality of its central motives" (pp. xliii-xliv). The Alchemist was a greater play because the nature of the subject allowed his learning and realism to "run riot without injury to the art-quality of his work" (p. xlv) but he suggested Jonson himself probably did not think highly of it because it made its primary appeal through the topical subject of alchemy and was "a concession of the poet to the satirist" (p. xlv).

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<sup>1</sup>A Study of Ben Jonson, pp. 14-15.

Herford praised the general qualities of Jonson's art, often finding that the attributes others disparaged were in fact praiseworthy. For example he pointed out that Jonson's realism was controlled by a "moral sanity" which was surpassed by none and equal to Shakespeare's. Unlike Dekker or Greene who sang "fitfully out of the moral squalor of their lives" Jonson had "no trace of the weakling" in him: "if he trod the mire it was with open eyes, cool head, and unstained heart". He used the "least flattering" details of life "without. . .compromising the austere enthusiasm of the scholar", for he combined the "plastic touch of the born artist" with "the lofty aloofness of a didactic mind". Similarly where Swinburne had complained of the scorn of Jonson's satire, Herford noted three tones: angry "sarcasm and invective", reserved "serene disdain" and a deeper "sorrowful indignation" (pp. xi-xii). To Herford the last rather than the first "brings us to the very heart of Jonson's moral nature" for it was his noblest emotion and was felt in the "grave and deep music" occasionally found in his verse (pp. xii-xiii). This use of the word "music" here illustrates a new response to Jonson's verse. It was not Swinburne's "singing power"; Jonson's music went beyond such lyricism. Jonson was able "to achieve higher things in poetry than men far more. . . 'poetical' than he" through what Herford called his "sublimity" and "grace". "Sublimity" Herford defined as "the spontaneous expression of a man of grand habit of mind occupied with a naturally great and moving subject" and "grace" as "the gentleness of strength" (p. xlvii). These are indeed the qualities of some of Jonson's finest verse; that Herford uses the terms "music", "sublimity", and "grace", which were usually reserved for the Gods of literature, to describe Jonson's verse indicates

the advent of an aesthetic sensibility radically different from that which had dominated most of the nineteenth century.

There were two important areas in which Herford still held to accepted opinions: his idea of Jonson's sense of humour and of his characterization. Fully conscious of the varieties of comedy found in the Elizabethan drama—"the humour of practical jokes. . . .the humour of accident. . . .the humour of absurdity" -- Herford contrasted the "Shakespearian and Jonsonian types of comedy" in the character of Falstaff and Bobadill. To Herford the first was "the soul of humour" but the second was "like most of Jonson's 'humours', without humour in the modern sense"; that is, lacking "genial delight" (pp. xvi-xvii). Similarly Herford complained of "Jonson's habitual neglect of the psychological groundwork of character" (p. xlii) and that he knew character development "only as the rude buffeting of a man out of his more dangerous idiosyncrasies" (p. xliii). It was reserved for later criticism to take up Ward's point that the characters are satisfactory within the confines of a play and are in harmony with Jonson's dramatic aims.

Herford's introduction inaugurated a new approach to Jonson's art and a new kind of Elizabethan criticism. As sane and restrained as Jonson himself, Herford was prepared to study Jonson's drama in detail and offer a considered understanding of it on its own merits in relation to its own purpose rather than present his impression of how it fit his opinion about the nature of art. Its importance as a study of Jonson was recognized in its own day. The reviewer for the Bookman noted it was "able and broad minded" and did "full justice to the magnificent

intellectual force of Jonson's genius".<sup>1</sup> In retrospect we see his introduction as a stepping stone to his greater Ben Jonson but its contribution -- a revolutionary stand on Jonson -- and the implications of its approach when applied to the whole field of English literature can not be over-emphasized. For readers today his introduction offers a sympathetic and considered evaluation which is still a reliable introduction to Jonson.

The text for the Mermaid edition of Jonson was prepared by an enthusiastic amateur, Brinsley Nicholson. Had he lived to complete his work, the Mermaid text would have made as valuable a contribution as its introduction. As it stands, however, only the plays in Volume One (Every Man in His Humour, Every Man out of His Humour, The Poetaster) benefited from his editing. For the plays of Volume Two (Bartholomew Fair, Cynthia's Revels, Sejanus) and Volume Three (The Alchemist, Volpone, Epicoene) William Gifford's text was used.

Although there had been five complete editions of Jonson's plays published in the nineteenth century (Gifford's, 1816 and 1846; B. W. Proctor's, 1838; Cunningham's revision of Gifford's, 1872 and 1875)<sup>2</sup> a new edition was needed because since Jonson's supervision of the 1616 folio virtually no editorial work had been done on the text. Editors either reprinted the folio or relied on an edition derived from it. Gifford's text

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<sup>1</sup>"Ben Jonson", Bookman, VI (September, 1893), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup>There had also been two volumes of selections containing his three greatest comedies published in 1885 and 1886 and The Alchemist, Every Man in His Humour, Epicoene, and Volpone had been available separately or in other collections. See appendix for bibliographical details.

for example relied on P. Whalley's text of 1756, which was not free from errors. Cunningham's revision of Gifford's text was a set back rather than an improvement for as Swinburne remarked, all Gifford's "misreadings" were allowed to "stand not merely uncorrected but unremarked". Only some of them were referred to in an appendix. Such a method "to put it. . . mildly" was "provocative of strong language".<sup>1</sup> Swinburne felt that a completely new edition which gave all variant readings was essential for a proper understanding of Jonson's art.

Such an edition is what Nicholson set out to achieve. He was the first editor to collate the standard folio of 1616 with the folio of 1640; he discovered that the latter corrected many errors of the earlier folio and used fuller punctuation. He concluded that it was printed from a corrected copy of the 1616 text and, because the corrections were "occasionally [made] in a manner not to be accounted for by the care and pains of any. . .press reader", suggested that some of them "must have been made, and others. . .were probably made by the author".<sup>2</sup> This is just wishful thinking for as Herford and Simpson point out the idea "can hardly be accepted";<sup>3</sup> nevertheless such wishfulness does not diminish Nicholson's standing as an eager student of Jonson's text.

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<sup>1</sup>Swinburne, A Study of Ben Jonson, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Nicholson, "Ben Jonson's Folios and the Bibliographers", Notes and Queries, Fourth Series, V (June 18, 1870), pp. 573-574.

<sup>3</sup>Ben Jonson, edited by C. H. Herford and Percy and Evelyn Simpson, IX, 91.

Nicholson's method was to collate the quarto texts with the folios of 1616 and 1640, using the latter as the most authoritative. However, because of a royal decree Jonson himself had expurgated his characters' oaths, Nicholson reverted to the oaths found in the earliest text, especially where they "were natural to the character, or where their want clearly detracted from the life and naturalness of the scene". Thus Nicholson hoped the "scenes might represent, as they were meant to do, the persons and manners of the time".<sup>1</sup> For the same reason he retained the elided words such as "'em" for "them" and "ha'" for "have" although Gifford had silently filled them out. Nicholson also attempted to follow Jonson's full punctuation because it indicated "the way in which his speeches were to be uttered". Gifford's practice of simplifying it or substituting exclamation points for question marks "spoilt the exact force or meaning" of the words.<sup>2</sup> Nicholson did use Gifford's stage directions and scene and act divisions because Jonson used many more divisions than was "consonant with our English stage usage"; however Nicholson also noted where Jonson's stage divisions had been.<sup>3</sup>

Generally the text Nicholson produced was much sounder than Gifford's and his annotation was much fuller. The main fault of his text is his arrangement of Every Man Out of His Humour. There were three different endings: the original which addressed the queen and concluded

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<sup>1</sup>Ben Jonson, introduced by C. H. Herford and edited by Brinsley Nicholson, I, lxix.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, lxx-lxxi.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., I, lxxii.

with a conversation between Macilente, Cordatus, and Mitis; the second which cancelled the first and concluded with a long address by Macilente to the audience; and the folio ending which had part of Macilente's speech and the conversation. Gifford's arrangement was to conclude with the dialogue, then give the address to the queen as an epilogue and put Macilente's long speech into a footnote. Herford and Simpson print the folio version and give the alternative endings afterwards. Nicholson however first printed the whole of Macilente's speech, then the address to the queen and then the conversation. Because each ending effectively concludes the action of the play and because Nicholson did not note the sources of those endings, his arrangement is very confusing.

When one turns to Volumes Two and Three of the Mermaid, the excellence of Nicholson's text becomes immediately apparent. They follow Gifford's text in all details. Accordingly, Jonson's diminished oaths were retained as were the silent expurgations and replacement of vaguely bawdy words with dashes. The elided words are written out; the punctuation takes on quite a different character; and most seriously for the general reader the explanatory notes almost disappear. These shortcomings are very unfortunate. If Nicholson had lived to complete his edition of Jonson, it would be second, as a collection, only to Herford and Simpson's edition. Unfortunately we have only Volume One as a monument to Nicholson's earnest work.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

PART ONE: GEORGE CHAPMAN, EDITED BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS

PART TWO: ROBERT GREENE, EDITED BY THOMAS DICKINSON

PART ONE -- George Chapman, edited by William Lyon Phelps

Critics today are by no means unanimous in their estimation of George Chapman's drama; critical accounts, in Nicholas Brooke's words, are "bewilderingly varied".<sup>1</sup> Some find him a philosophic poet not a dramatist; some a dramatist not a poet; some find his verse obscure; some feel it is clear; some think he presents Christian ideals; others stoic ideals. Every critic writing on Chapman can present full, complex evidence in support of his point of view. In each case, however, the critic only arrived at his understanding after careful study of the reasonably sound texts now available.

The situation was somewhat different in the nineteenth century when critics read without the background of twentieth-century scholars and without the benefit of a clear text. The first modern collected editions did not appear until the 1870's, but one was a diplomatic reprint and the other too careless and poorly annotated to offer readers much assistance in understanding his plays. Because most readers did not have the tools necessary to unravel Chapman's difficulties there were only two approaches to his tragedy. Agreeing that his comedies were good drama but his tragedies were not, critics either praised his language because of the passion animating it, or condemned it because of its difficulty.

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<sup>1</sup>Chapman, Bussy D'Ambois, edited by Nicholas Brooke (1964), p. xxvi.

Lamb was the main proponent of the first view for to him Chapman seemed the epitome of the romantic poet as a "wild irregular genius". His verse was full of "passion (the all in all in poetry)" which could atone for the difficulties of his language and make "his readers glow, weep, tremble, take any affection which he pleases".<sup>1</sup> Lamb's main followers were Hazlitt, who added praise of Chapman's tragic character Bussy D'Ambois because of his "nobleness and lofty spirit",<sup>2</sup> and Swinburne. The other attitude was put forward by those more conscious of the dramatic form of Chapman's work. They received their main support from Dryden who had been enthralled with Bussy D'Ambois on stage but when reading it discovered

I had been cozened with a jelly, nothing but a cold, dull mass. . . a dwarfish thought, dressed up in gigantic words, repetition in abundance, looseness of expression, and gross hyperboles; the sense of one line expanded prodigiously into ten; and, to sum up all, uncorrect English, and a hideous mingle of false poetry and true nonsense; or, at best, a scantling of wit, which lay gasping for life, and groaning beneath a heap of rubbish.<sup>3</sup>

Critics like Henry Southern (1821) who held to this view found Chapman "repulsive and often even incomprehensible", and complained that most of his characters were unrealistic and that he could only create one type of tragic character.<sup>4</sup> The main proponents of this view were Symonds and unfortunately the Mermaid editor W. L. Phelps. Significantly although they quoted Dryden, they failed to account for his enjoyment of Bussy

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<sup>1</sup>Specimens, I, 198.

<sup>2</sup>Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup>Dedication to The Spanish Friar, in John Dryden, edited by George Saintsbury (1904), II, 114.

<sup>4</sup>[Henry Southern], "Art. IX. Bussy D'Ambois. . . A Tragedy of Alphonsus", Retrospective Review, IV (1821), pp. 336-337.

D'Ambois on stage, thus overlooking some of the essentials of the visual points made in Chapman's drama and his sensational appeal.

J. A. Symonds's review of Pearson's diplomatic reprint was the first full evaluation of Chapman's drama. Although he grudgingly agreed with the admirers of Chapman's language that there were "pearls of poetry scattered freely up and down [his] plays"<sup>1</sup> he thought his tragedy would be read only by "true lovers of art", who are not "rebuffed by his clumsiness, dryness, unreadableness, and bombast". But for the general reader, Chapman was "of all Elizabethan dramatists . . . the least attractive at first sight" (p. 321).

He focused on what he saw as the three main shortcomings of his tragedies: deficient plot construction, unrealistic characters, and unequal language. His plots were faulty because he was "singularly clumsy" in managing motives; and they seemed to have "no action or progression whatsoever" (p. 321). His one type of tragic hero who was represented by Bussy and Byron was "dazzling" but inconsistent. They were heroes "after his own heart" but their high ideals usually degenerate and they die "pouring forth. . . frothy praise" of themselves (p. 322). But Chapman's most serious shortcoming was his language; unable to distinguish between "poetry and rhetoric, passion and bombast" he filled his plays with long "passages of philosophical reflection or political speculation" when their "very life. . . ought to be action" (p. 321). Most critics would agree with Symonds's evaluation as it relates to the Byron plays and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois. Bussy D'Ambois however does have many apologists; there are admittedly many long digressive speeches but also much visual and sensational appeal and the action moves swiftly through Bussy's rise and fall. It is unfortunate that Symonds did not apply his appreciation of theatrical potential to Bussy D'Ambois.

A. C. Swinburne would have agreed with Symonds about Chapman's shortcomings; but like Lamb he was mainly concerned with Chapman's language. Swinburne was

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<sup>1</sup>"Chapman's Dramatic Works", Academy, IV (September 1, 1873), p. 322. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Chapman's most ardent nineteenth-century admirer. Indeed, as Gosse pointed out, his "unwearied battle on behalf of Chapman's claims" was the main reason Chapman was re-established in a "prominent position. . .in the history of Elizabethan literature".<sup>1</sup> Swinburne's study was written to be appended to R. H. Shepherd's edition of Chapman which appeared in 1874 and 1875 as a result of Swinburne's attempt to raise the general estimate of Chapman and make his works more readily accessible. Some five years earlier he had told the publisher John Hotten that it was "a discredit to our literature" that Chapman's works were still uncollected especially when "so many less worthy Elizabethans" had been reprinted.<sup>2</sup> Hotten agreed to publish an edition and asked Swinburne to introduce it, but Hotten lost interest until John Pearson asked to use Swinburne's essay to introduce his diplomatic reprint. This spurred Hotten into getting Shepherd's edition ready for the press, but he died in 1873 before it could be published. Andrew Chatto bought Hotten's firm and finally published Shepherd's text with Swinburne's essay included in Volume Two.

Like Symonds, Swinburne knew that Chapman's drama "would appeal only to a limited and particular class of students",<sup>3</sup> and indeed throughout his essay his reference to readers of Chapman's plays as "students" indicates his awareness of Chapman's esoteric appeal. Thinking of himself as a student as well he did not attempt to explain any of Chapman's difficulties, or as Eliot puts it, to "penetrate to [his] heart and marrow".<sup>4</sup> Rather he expected readers to grapple with Chapman as he had. Accordingly his essay offers the record of his own often exhilarating experience with Chapman and assurances that others who approach Chapman as he did will be similarly rewarded.

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<sup>1</sup>The Life of Algernon Swinburne (1917), p. 221.

<sup>2</sup>Swinburne, Letters, II, 192.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, 193.

<sup>4</sup>"Imperfect Critics", in his The Sacred Wood, p. 22.

Swinburne did not underestimate the difficulties of Chapman's work. Repeatedly he tells the reader of Chapman's chaotic jargon, where "grammar, metre, sense, sound, coherence, and relevancy are hurled together on a heap of jarring and hurtling ruins"<sup>1</sup> and notes his "fury" at being unable to understand what Chapman is "incompetent to express"(p.24). But he appealed to Swinburne's love of grandeur and passion. His imagery of seas and storms, his assertions of heroic individuality, and rebellion against conventional authority thrilled Swinburne; he continually assured the reader that in struggling with Chapman one would discover "fresh treasures of fine thought and high expression embedded among dense layers of. . .rocky strata of thick and turgid verse" (p.96). Moreover, he was convinced that Chapman deserved attention for the "blemishes of his genius bear manifestly more likeness . . .to the overstrained muscles of an athlete than to the withered limbs of a weakling" (p.16). Swinburne's admiration and frustration are both conveyed through what he says as well as through his use of powerful, grand images, as above where he referred to the density and rockiness of Chapman's verse and compared his genius to over-strained muscles.

Because Swinburne was most concerned with Chapman's language and passion apart from the dramatic form of his work, when considering Chapman's defects he concentrated on aspects of his poetic consciousness rather than on his theatrical shortcomings. He found three main qualities which gave readers difficulties. The first was Chapman's love of philosophy and speculation and his concentration on them in his poetry. Using a wilderness image where Chapman is the explorer he described his philosophy as "apt to lose its way among the brakes of digression and jungles of paradox" for his mind "can never resist the lure of any quaint or perverse illustration which may start across its path from some obscure corner". He was more tempted by "the rough and barren byways of incongruous allusion, of unseasonable reflection, or preposterous and grotesque symbolism" than by the more clearly marked "highway of art" (p. 16). A second reason for difficulty with Chapman was

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<sup>1</sup>"George Chapman", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, p. 21.

his own assertion that "plainness. . . were the plain way to barbarism" (Chapman's words quoted, p. 20). Without knowing this and the fact that he wrote only for "those searching spirits whom learning hath made noble" (Chapman's words quoted, p. 22) a reader might not know that he devised his confusing poems on purpose "with malice aforethought" (p. 21).

Swinburne's most important and controversial suggestion to explain a reader's difficulties with Chapman was that Chapman was obscure; and that his obscurity was a result of artistic and intellectual incompetence: "the natural product of turbid forces and confused ideas; of a feeble and clouded or of a vigorous but unfixed and chaotic intellect" (p. 25). To Swinburne he was guilty of "random thinking" and "random writing" and failed to provide "any one central point" as a basis of organization for his many ideas. Modern critics, aided by scholarly texts and research into his thought, take issue with Swinburne and assert that Chapman is not obscure, merely difficult.<sup>1</sup> However such apologies seem to me to be merely word-juggling. Chapman has thrown many unconnected ideas into his plays. When a reader must rely upon long footnotes to explain them and their relationship to each other, then the charge of obscurity is justified.

Swinburne did touch on some aspects of Chapman's work as theatre. Like his predecessors he noted that his comedies were better drama, but he discussed them only briefly because he was more interested in the "greater and. . . faultier" genius found in the tragedies (p. 74). All of them were deficient in plot and character development; he pointed out with justification that his characterization was so slack that "it is hard at first to determine whether the author meant to excite the sympathies or antipathies of his audience for a good or for a bad character" (pp. 74-75). But, heeding Dryden's enjoyment of Bussy D'Ambois on stage, Swinburne asserted that it was Chapman's one tragedy which was stage-worthy. "The terrible and splendid" (p. 72) terms which Dryden had used to describe it in fact did not apply to Bussy D'Ambois so much as to his other plays. Bussy D'Ambois showed his finest qualities -- energy,

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<sup>1</sup>See for example Bussy D'Ambois, edited by Robert J. Lordi (1964), p. xxi.

vigour, "Interludes of grave and tender harmony" mixed with those of "majestic and massive harmony" and throughout one was aware of a "gigantic" "power of hand" moving "these puppets about the board" (pp. 74-75). Such is the conclusion a modern critic might come to; Swinburne was the first critic since D'urfey revised the play in the 1690's to speak on its behalf. But the rest of the plays were inferior theatrical achievements; in The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois for example Chapman had overstrained his ability "in the strong effort. . .to soar in an atmosphere too thin or in a sea too stormy" for his talent (p. 87). The Conspiracy of Charles Duke of Byron and The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron were still less successful with their "endless repetition" and "no progress" (p. 79). Yet Swinburne noted that for a reader they were "a wholly great and harmonious work of genius" offering a "satisfied sense of severe delight" (p. 78).

Swinburne's record of his experience with Chapman made an extremely important contribution because by communicating what Eliot calls Chapman's "dignity and mass",<sup>1</sup> it asserted the importance of studying his plays and the satisfaction a student might have in doing so. It was not many years before Chapman was the subject of extensive scholarly exploration. Today the most appealing aspect of Swinburne's essay is its honesty. While his grand images always assure the reader that struggling with Chapman is worthwhile, he freely delved into his own "splendid and terrible" arsenal to express a frustration similar to what most students experience. That Swinburne persevered when he had only the poorest of texts to use and moreover was often exhilarated by his struggle, is encouraging. He offers little on Chapman as a dramatist but generous assurance of an exciting poetic adventure. Few modern studies can compete with it on those grounds.

When William Lyon Phelps edited and introduced the Mermaid volume George Chapman (containing All Fools, Bussy D'Ambois, The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, The Conspiracy of Charles, Duke of Byron, The Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron) he wasted an opportunity for making an important contribution to Elizabethan studies.

<sup>1</sup>"Imperfect Critics: Swinburne as Critic", in his The Sacred Wood, p. 22.

He neither presented the sort of text readers had been waiting for; nor did he use his academic training to elucidate Chapman's text. Furthermore he held a low opinion of Chapman. To him Swinburne had "greatly overrated" his drama;<sup>1</sup> and he filled his essay with uninviting phrases such as "painfully weak", "of no value", and "absolutely worthless". Phelps had not been Havelock Ellis's choice as editor. Ellis in fact had planned to introduce the volume himself for he "specially wished to do full justice"<sup>2</sup> to Chapman; and he had arranged for Brinsley Nicholson to edit the text. But when Unwin took over the Mermaid series he asked neither to work on George Chapman. Nicholson's work was lost after his death in 1892 and Ellis did not write his essay until the 1930's.

Phelps asserted that his job was to "judge" Chapman "by those qualities essential to successful dramatic work" (pp. 24-25); but his essay repeatedly disappoints the reader by passing over the theatrical potential of Chapman's plays. Phelps revealed that he was unable to imagine the action of Chapman's plays by confessing that he had "to keep a finger on the list of dramatis personae" as he read (pp. 26-27). Accordingly he found it "almost incomprehensible" that Dryden could have enjoyed a performance of Bussy D'Ambois (p. 17). Rather than explain the possible source of his enjoyment, Phelps used Dryden's strong words to describe its essential qualities and suggested that it was "difficult. . .to swallow a guffaw" at some of the more sensational elements such as the introduction of the supernatural (p. 18). Phelps's main complaint was that Chapman's plays were formless, that his characterization was weak and that he lacked "the glory of Marlowe," the freshness of Heywood, the joyousness of Dekker" -- in short, that he was Chapman and not someone else (p. 26).

Surprisingly, given the basis on which he was evaluating Chapman's drama, Phelps preferred the two Byron plays. They seemed to have "distinctly less rubbish" (p. 19), frequent scenes where "the clouds and mists" cleared from Chapman's intellect, and in Byron Phelps found "one of the most striking figures of the

<sup>1</sup>George Chapman, edited by W. L. Phelps (1895), p. 24. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

<sup>2</sup>Ellis, "George Chapman", in his From Marlowe to Shaw, edited by John Gawsworth (1950), p. 43.

Elizabethan drama" (p. 20). Nor did Phelps find his comedies better theatre than his tragedies. To him they were "slipshod and slovenly" (The Gentleman Usher, p. 13), aimless (Monsieur D'Olive, p. 13) or worthless (The Blind Beggar of Alexandria, p. 11, An Humorous Day's Mirth, May Day, pp. 21-22). Only All Fools had a "real plot" albeit an "artificial" and "over-subtle" one; and was the only one which he felt was "adapted for the stage" (p. 12).<sup>1</sup>

Phelp's only sympathetic remarks concerned Chapman's language and the philosophic ideas he put into his plays. He did not find Lamb's "passion" in his verse; indeed "his tragedies often suggest premeditated fury" rather than sincere passion (p. 27). Instead, the main quality of Chapman's verse seemed to be reflection. Although too often this "genius for meditation" (p.26) led to "infinite verbosity" and "caused much needless suffering to patient readers" (p.25), when the "clouds and mists that commonly envelope" him (p.20) are lifted, his verse has a "deep-sea quality, now a succession of rolling swells, and now infinitely calm" (p.28).

Phelp's introduction was hardly what one might hope for from an academic who had assumed "as a labour of love the task of editing Chapman" (p.24). It did nothing to take advantage of the enthusiasm Swinburne's study must have aroused; but instead perpetuated the prejudices about Chapman's work, offered no reassessment of his plays and does not encourage a reader to take them up. Nor is his text particularly inviting. Phelps aimed to present a more "comfortably readable" text (p. 5) than Shepherd's had been. As Swinburne had complained, Shepherd had done little to correct any of the blatant misprints and confusions in the text; he did not satisfy "the patent and crying want of intelligible stage directions"<sup>2</sup> and allowed "the almost fatal impediment" of the original text's mispunctuation to stand.<sup>3</sup> Phelps did modernize spelling, provide stage directions, lists of characters and corrected some of the punctuation. However, because he prepared his text

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<sup>1</sup>It may have been this opinion which prompted its revival at Harvard in 1909. See Thomas Marc Parrott, Letter to the editor concerning a performance of All Fools, Nation, LXXX (April 22, 1909), 406-407.

<sup>2</sup>Swinburne, Letters, II, 306.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, II, 344.

in America, at some distance from the original texts, he was forced to rely on Pearson's reprint and Shepherd's text. The latter has been found by Chapman's modern editor, Allan Holaday, to be so faulty as to be almost worthless. Furthermore its very foundation is unsound because he failed to collate the quarto texts and thus did not notice that some of them had been corrected, probably by Chapman himself.<sup>1</sup> For example with Bussy D'Ambois Shepherd used a corrected quarto of 1642 but, unaware that it was corrected, introduced many readings from the uncorrected text of 1607 and added many of his own emendations as well. Because of this Shepherd's text is "quite unreliable",<sup>2</sup> and Phelps's text accordingly is in no way authoritative. He attempted wherever possible to restore original readings which he could reconstruct from Pearson's reprint but he had to rely largely on guesswork. However, for the average reader the most serious shortcomings of Phelps's text is his scanty annotation. He has more notes than Shepherd but most of the difficult words and complicated syntax are left for the reader to untangle. The deficiencies of Phelps's text and of his superficial introduction make this volume of the Mermaid Series one of the least valuable; it was the one volume of the series which Unwin and Scribner did not reprint when they revamped the series in 1903.

If Unwin had pursued Ellis's original plan and had him and Brinsley Nicholson be responsible for George Chapman the result would have been much different. We have seen how careful Nicholson was with Jonson's text and can assume that he would have bestowed the same care on Chapman's. At the same time Ellis's introduction would have initiated a new approach to Chapman because of his emphasis on writers' personalities and the views

<sup>1</sup>See The Plays of George Chapman: The Comedies, edited by Allan Holaday (1970), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>The Plays and Poems of George Chapman: The Tragedies, edited by Thomas Marc Parrott (1910), p. 623.

of life contained in literature. Ellis admired and identified with Chapman seeing in him "a man of 'absolute and full' soul. . .who was ever seeking to enlarge the discipline of a fine culture in the direction of moral freedom and dignity". He was "the typical ethical representative" of an age to which Ellis longed to return.<sup>1</sup> This concentration on Chapman's personality and his ideas was precisely the direction study was to take in the early part of the twentieth century. However Ellis did not write his essay in the 1890's when his view would have made an important impact; he did not get to it until the 1930's but by then the details of Chapman's life, ideas and intellectual environment had become the object of much scholarly research which far surpassed Ellis's ideas in accuracy and depth. Accordingly when his essay finally appeared great portions of it were devoted to relating and discussing the findings of others. He condescendingly left some research "to the idle children who play about in the suburbs of literature" (p. 65) and freely used some of the suggestions of others to his own purposes.<sup>2</sup> But he felt obliged to defer to the scholars; and inevitably, the weight of their work smothers the freshness of his own.

It is possible however to see the direction his study might have taken in the 1890's. To Ellis Chapman's personality was more interesting than his poetry or drama (p. 94). It was the key to understanding his work because,

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<sup>1</sup>Ellis, Affirmations (1898), pp. 44-45.

<sup>2</sup>For example he used Eliot's phrase "fundamental release of restraint" to suggest that with early drama one is "conscious of a background of accepted order" but in Chapman's drama it is lacking because of this release (p. 79). Eliot however used the phrase to explain "the reason for the sanguinary character of much Elizabethan drama". "Seneca in Elizabethan Translation" (1927), in his Elizabethan Dramatists, p. 33.

as his uniform tragic heroes showed, "he never learnt to think in any character but his own" (quoted, p. 41). His heroes were a demonstration of his ideal of life, which he expressed "under the form of the word Virtue". His "virtue" was not "the colourless patterns of convention" but "virile and unfettered energy" combined with individual personal morality (p. 89). The characters in his plays represented this ideal, being "superior to social conventions and to accepted moral laws" because they made their own. One of Ellis's favourite examples of such behaviour was in The Gentleman Usher (V, ii) where "the Prince and Margaret espouse each other without help of Church or priest" and affirm "a higher moral order in the world than the world allows" (p. 57). The scene also interested him as an anthropologist because their use of a scarf to tie themselves together was similar to an Indian custom (p. 58).

Ellis stressed that Chapman's ideals were essentially masculine. This along with the unfavourable view of women usually presented in his drama and the possibility that he might have been Shakespeare's "rival poet" led Ellis to suggest that he was possibly a homosexual. He did so warily at first, noting that "we have no apparent ground for assuming that Chapman shared Marlowe's homosexual interest" but he added in a footnote "it is best to say 'apparent' ground since Chapman could not have been without interest in homosexuality, in that age and environment" (p. 63). It was a "sexually ambiguous age" and he could be "more or less closely" linked with "various figures who are known, in that connection" (p. 85). The straightforwardness of Ellis's remarks would have been welcomed in the 1890's and even in 1934, but his suggestion implied that Marlowe and Chapman were scientifically investigating homosexuality and neglected Elizabethan customs of friendship and the platonic idealism animating them.

Unlike Swinburne Ellis found the main reasons for Chapman's obscurity in his personality. His obscurity was not a result of "difficulties of articulation" but was caused by his deep and impetuous emotion and "the paradoxical character of his mind". He could see "the two opposite poles of truth, extremely and one-sidedly" but was unable to harmonize them and was possibly even unaware "that they need to be harmonised". Another reason for his obscurity was that he had absorbed ideas unsystematically "here and there" while not being himself an "original thinker"; such "amateurist efforts of an artist to be a philosopher seem always to tend to a disastrous obscurity" (pp. 82-83).

Ellis was more cautious than his predecessors in approaching Chapman's plays for he remembered Dryden's pleasure in seeing Bussy D'Ambois and rightly maintained that "it is difficult, and even impossible, to estimate the actual dramatic effectiveness of a play one has never seen" (p. 76). Similarly he suggested that in "the verbal energy and exalted sententious spirit" of the tragedies and in the vigour and "fine sense for situation" of the comedies "there lies a dramatic force not easily suspected by the mere reader"; and he objected strongly to Phelps and others who evaluated the plays only with a reader's eye (p. 77). Unfortunately, he did not live up to the promise he held out, for he did not consider the theatrical potential of the plays. He was, however, much more sympathetic to them than his predecessors had been. He found something admirable in each of the comedies and praised Bussy D'Ambois as a "man after Chapman's own soul" (p. 59). He thought that the other tragedies lacked its energy and seemed to a reader "deficient. . .in dramatic effectiveness", but at the same time noted their "exalted majesty" and suggested that hidden in them was some inexplicable but "real effectiveness" which a reader misses (pp. 61-62).

Ellis's essay extends to over fifty pages and considers almost every point which scholars had explored up to 1934. As such it does offer today's reader a summary of thought along with much "mellow judgment"<sup>1</sup>; nevertheless the day was almost past when a man of letters and extremely wide interests could safely venture into the world of such detailed scholarship for his essay often seems rambling and superficial as it tries to take up one point after another of every aspect of Chapman's thought and life. The essay Ellis might have written in the 1890's would have made an important contribution as the introduction to George Chapman through its consideration of his personality, ideals, friendships and sympathetic evaluation of his plays. Today it still could have been a helpful introduction to readers who may be taken aback by the layers of research which seem to suggest that formidable systems of thought must be mastered before one can enjoy Chapman. As it stands, however, Ellis's essay has limited usefulness.

PART TWO -- Robert Greene, edited by Thomas Dickinson

Although Phelps's George Chapman presents a disappointing view of American scholarship at the turn of the century, Thomas Dickinson's Robert Greene represents the most promising trends. Throughout most of the nineteenth century critics felt as Swinburne: that Greene's plays "have no particular claim to record among the trophies of our incomparable drama: they belong. . . to the historic province of antiquarian curiosity".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>F. S. Boas, "A Study of Chapman", The Observer, August 12, 1934, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Swinburne, "Christopher Marlowe in Relation to Greene, Peele and Lodge", in his Contemporaries of Shakespeare, pp. 4-5.

Accordingly, again as Swinburne suggested, Greene's plays needed to be evaluated by a scholar rather than a literary critic, so that the relation of his drama to his predecessors, contemporaries, and immediate successors and his contribution to the development of the drama could be properly understood. Dickinson was the scholar for the task.

Nineteenth-century readers were slow in acquiring an interest in Greene's drama because their concern was centered on his semi-autobiographical prose works; these presented a formidable stumbling block to appreciation of his drama. Greene's story of his unhappy life and his disparagement of Shakespeare were repeatedly used against him. He was seen as a prototype of men who "infested the town" in the Elizabethan period. They were "dissipated in their manners, licentious in their morals, and vindictive in their resentments".<sup>1</sup> While Greene's "wit, humour [and] fancy"<sup>2</sup> did not go entirely unnoticed most writers found it impossible to gain a balanced view of his drama. Alexander Dyce for example devoted most of his introduction to Greene's drama to long extracts from Greene's prose which showed that he was one of the "Muses' sons whose vices. . .conducted [him] to shame and sorrow".<sup>3</sup> Because of his dissipated life and being "more than careless about religion"<sup>4</sup> Dyce seemed able to be only guardedly appreciative of his plays:

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<sup>1</sup>Nathan Drake, Shakespeare and His Times (1817), I, 485.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I, 488.

<sup>3</sup>The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Robert Greene and George Peele, edited by Alexander Dyce, second edition (1861), p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

if. . .Greene fails to exhibit character with force and discrimination . . .has much. . .fustian and. . .meanness. . .and if his blank-verse is so monotonous as to pall upon the ear; it must be allowed. . .that he not unfrequently writes with elegance and spirit, and that in some scenes he makes a near approach to simplicity and nature.<sup>1</sup>

J. A. Symonds seems to have been the first to try to put forward a balanced view of Greene in his 1867 article for the Pall Mall Gazette. He suggested that many of the derogatory ideas about Greene might be untrustworthy because they came from "Puritan adversaries" and he referred to Greene's own prose as "curious confessions". Although he was primarily concerned with the facts surrounding Greene's career he made three important points about his drama which provided the starting point for subsequent criticism; first, that he had great skill in "telling a story" and an "inexhaustible" and entertaining "variety of incidents". Secondly he thought Greene generally avoided the euphuism and bombast of the drama of his day through his freshness and simplicity; and thirdly he seemed to create a "sweet sisterhood" of female characters "in whom the innocence of a country life, pure love, and maternity are sketched with delicate and feeling touches". Symonds also reflected that it was "not a little curious" that Greene who was supposedly "dissolute and drunken. . .should have been the first of our dramatic authors to feel and represent the charms of maiden modesty".<sup>2</sup> Today, we see Greene's women as stereo-typed Patient Griseldas and evidence of the way he expected women to respond to men, but given nineteenth-century pre-conceptions about women, Symonds's

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>"Elizabethan Dramatists. No. III, -- Greene", Pall Mall Gazette, VI (September 4, 1867), p. 11.

remarks offered one of the first apologies for Greene. Unfortunately when Symonds revised his essay for Shakspeare's Predecessors he heavily weighted his remarks towards the usual view of Greene as deserving "almost unmitigated reprobation" for being "profligate" and "bad-hearted"<sup>1</sup> thus undoing the positive influence of his earlier ideas and impeding the reader's objective judgment.

Credit for the most balanced nineteenth-century appreciation of Greene goes to A. W. Ward who concluded his account of Greene's life with Nash's question: "Why should Art answer for the infirmities of manners?"<sup>2</sup> Likewise he concluded his evaluation of Greene's work by asserting that the errors of his life "should not affect the judgment of posterity upon his genius as a dramatist" and by pointing out that justice was not usually done to Greene whose merits have been "much underestimated" (p. 225). Ward did not touch on Greene's historical significance in any detailed way but seemed genuinely to enjoy his drama. For example, he praised Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay for its "delightful air of country freshness" (p. 218), James the Fourth for its neat construction and "the fine character" of Ida (p. 221), and generally admired the "freedom and lightness" of his work (p. 225).

Ward's high opinion of Greene's drama and tolerant view of his life finally sparked the interest his work deserved. Between 1881 and 1886 Alexander Grosart's fifteen volume edition of his complete works appeared;

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<sup>1</sup>Shakspeare's Predecessors (1884), p. 545.

<sup>2</sup>A History of English Dramatic Literature (1875), I, 217. Ward's italics. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

in 1903 two essays on Greene were included with Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay in C. M. Gayley's Representative English Comedies; and two years later Churton Collins's edition of Greene's plays and poems was published. The two essays on Greene in Gayley's volume made by far the most important contribution to our appreciation of Greene. Neither Collins, nor Grosart, nor the author of the main memoir in Grosart's edition, Nicholas Storojenko, made any innovative remarks although they were all appreciative of his works and regretful about his life. The major essay in Gayley's work by G. E. Woodberry offered a considered evaluation of Greene's contribution to the development of Elizabethan comedy. Woodberry put forth the usual view of Greene's life and noted the freshness of his writing. But he went further than his predecessors in analysing Greene's main contribution to the drama. He suggested that Greene followed the dramatic trends of his day and in so doing "his individual excellence lay not in originality. . . but in treatment. . . of the genre".<sup>1</sup> To Woodberry the key to Greene's contribution was his refinement of the drama. In his plays one could see "the advancing movement of the drama in moral intention, in higher characterization. . . in humour of more body and intellect" (p. 394). Greene was "checked by his good taste" and aimed "for effects less violent, less sensational" than those found in the drama of his contemporaries. Woodberry also found his refinement in his lyrical style, his topics, and his women who, he pointed out, followed the Renaissance convention but with "refining. . . English touches" (p. 390).

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<sup>1</sup>G. E. Woodberry, "Robert Greene: His Place in Comedy", in Representative English Comedies, edited by C. M. Gayley (1903-1936), I, 389. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Gayley's own essay provided the evidence for Woodberry's assertion by briefly surveying Greene's major plays, pointing out how Greene's ability developed and how he seemed to burlesque some of the conventions. For example, he suggested Alphonsus was a burlesque of Tamburlaine and pointed out how its "crude employment of mythological lore, the creaking mechanism of the plot, the subordination of vital to spectacular qualities betray an inexperience not manifest in Greene's other" work.<sup>1</sup> A Looking-Glass for London and England however was better; its plot, characterization, humour and use of the classics were all more subtle (p. 405). Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay was yet another advance because of the "ease and invention" of its story telling (p. 414) and its "idyllic, spectacular, amusing" scenes which were "so ordered that movement shall be continuous and interest unflagging" (p. 428). James the Fourth represented Greene's highest achievement. Its moral atmosphere and characters were mature and its plot "more skilfully manipulated" (p. 417).

Woodberry's and Gayley's essays together far surpassed their predecessors' for a considered estimate of Greene's development and place in his times. But Thomas Dickinson's essay for the Mermaid volume surpasses theirs. He was the first writer to clearly point out the relationships of Greene's works to that of his predecessors, contemporaries and successors, thus firmly placing him within the Elizabethan tradition; he

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<sup>1</sup>Introduction to Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, edited by C. M. Gayley, in Representative English Comedies, I, 404. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

was the first to look closely at Greene's own development; and he was the first to suggest that Greene's autobiographical prose needs to be viewed sceptically. Others had thought it might be sensationalized but saw no reason to doubt its basic truth. Dickinson, however, pointed out that his pamphlets were written with the "thrifty purpose to turn even his sins to pence",<sup>1</sup> and more importantly that at the time he was writing "art was not yet strong enough to command a popular hearing without the assistance of a didactive motive". Accordingly the value of the biographical facts in his prose "is discounted" (p. xvi) and readers are "not justified in accepting it all without question" for the "bland shamelessness" found in Greene's prose "is itself one of the best signs of health" (p. xvii).

Once Dickinson had applied "the calmer mood of a later age" (p. ix) to Greene's life and career and cleared the air of prejudices against him, he was able to evaluate sympathetically his contribution to the development of the drama as well as his personal artistic development and achievement. Dickinson first described the community of artistic feeling in Greene's time during which there was "the utmost possible play and interplay of influence" of dramatists on each other (p. xxix). He pointed out that dramatists responded to four main influences: the popularity of Tamburlaine, of Dr. Faustus, of The Spanish Tragedy and of the chronicle plays. Most popular dramatists imitated these plays and used their details and devices. Greene was no exception; indeed Dickinson felt his "most striking characteristic" was "his ability immediately to adapt himself to the changing literary demands of the hour" (p. xxvi). Accordingly Dickinson saw

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Greene, edited by Thomas Dickinson [1909], p. ix. Subsequent references will be made in the text.

Orlando Furioso as a response both to Tamburlaine and The Spanish Tragedy; Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay as a "reflex from Dr. Faustus" and James the Fourth as capitalizing on the popularity of chronicle plays (p. xxxii). But in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and James the Fourth he also found that Greene had gone beyond imitation and had acquired a unique style and vision. The first made substantial advances in dramatic technique. Greene used the many devices and conventions available to dramatists but he adapted "the adverse expedients of a heterogeneous dramaturgy" to a single end (p. lix). He was also an excellent plotter and in Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay was able to weave the plots together successfully. Furthermore the play as a whole made an "enduring contribution" through "the introduction of realism onto a stage that was essentially romantic". By this Dickinson meant that Greene created a low life that was neither "artificial pastoral" nor the "boorish clownage of the interludes"; instead he had taken "experiences of everyday life" and beautified them with "a mature and chastened art" (p. lxiv).

But James the Fourth was the finest example of Greene's technical maturity and artistic vision. The play has unity of action and its plot develops with "masterly directness and economy" (p. xli). It also presented characters of more depth than those of any of his earlier plays. More importantly, however, it represented to Dickinson the highest expression of "the sweetening and mellowing touch of a dignified and manly philosophy" (p. xliv). In "casting off the turgid eloquence" of his earlier work Greene seemed to attain "at the end to an art of contemplative repose and genial humanity" (p. lxii). This to Dickinson was the most important element of Greene's art and one of his greatest contributions for out of "the essential comedy of his outlook on life. . .his loving

insight into human nature in its familiar aspects. . .his beautiful philosophy of the eternal verities" came Shakespeare's romantic comedy "and the realism of joy of domestic drama" (p. lxv).

Dickinson's introduction is the longest and most scholarly of the Mermaid series -- fifty-eight closely printed pages which consider the details of all the plays attributed to Greene, the accuracy of information about Greene and the indebtedness of his work to his predecessors. This was exactly what was needed in 1909 for no one before Dickinson had been able to view Greene's semi-autobiographical prose in relation to its didactic purpose and no one before had so clearly described the literary atmosphere in which Greene worked. More recent critics, Una Ellis-Fermor and E. C. Pettet have both referred to Dickinson's work favourably and developed his ideas;<sup>1</sup> today readers can still use his introduction with complete trust and come away from it cognizant of Greene's historical importance and his unique artistic achievement. This last volume of the Mermaid Series seems to have brought the series full circle. Opening and closing with the earliest Elizabethan dramatists the series moved out of the hands of the men of letters into those of the scholars, thus setting into motion the tradition of fine enthusiastic scholarship which we enjoy today.

Before the Mermaid appeared most of the plays included in the volume (Alphonsus, A Looking-Glass for London and England, Orlando Furioso,

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<sup>1</sup>See E. C. Pettet, "The Comedies of Greene", in his Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition (1949), p. 66; and Una Ellis-Fermor, "Marlowe and Greene: A Note on their Relations as Dramatic Artists", in Studies in Honor of T. W. Baldwin, edited by Don Cameron Allen (1958), p. 137.

Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, James the Fourth, and George-a-Greene) had been fairly widely available. There had been four collected editions published (Dyce's, 1831 and 1861; Grosart's, 1881-1886; and Collins's, 1905) and Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay had been reprinted separately and in collections. The other plays had also been available, but less widely.<sup>1</sup> When Dickinson prepared his edition of Greene he used all the collected editions. For Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay he also used Gayley's edition and an edition done by A. W. Ward in 1866; and for James the Fourth he used J. M. Manly's edition included in Specimens of Pre-Shaksperian Drama (1897).<sup>2</sup> Although it is the oldest and does not have an exhaustive textual apparatus, Dyce's edition was the most reliable. Collins had criticized it for being modernized and because he felt Dyce had not been thorough in his collation<sup>3</sup> but W. W. Greg has found it better than Collins's. For example with A Looking-Glass for London and England he felt "Dyce is the only modern editor whose work on the text possesses any value as a whole".<sup>4</sup> When J. Le Gay Brereton reviewed Collins's work for the Beiblatt zur Anglia he found many problems with it that "convict him of extreme carelessness and amazing inconsistency".<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix for complete bibliographical details.

<sup>2</sup>Marlowe Tragical History of Dr. Faustus Greene Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, edited by A. W. Ward (1866), James the Fourth in Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperian Drama, edited by J. M. Manly (1897), II, 327-417.

<sup>3</sup>The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene, edited by J. C. Collins (1905), I, ix.

<sup>4</sup>A Looking-Glass for London and England, edited by W. W. Greg (1932), p. ix.

<sup>5</sup>J. Le Gay Brereton, "Notes on Greene", reprinted in his Elizabethan Drama, Notes and Studies (1909), p. 16.

Dickinson too found the edition disappointing and felt that "Collins does not belong at the head of [the] list" of scholars who had worked on Greene's text (p. xxxviii).

Of the plays in the volume, Orlando Furioso and James the Fourth presented special problems. Besides the printed quarto of Orlando Furioso there is also an imperfect manuscript of Orlando's part in the Alleyn papers at Dulwich College. Dyce and Grosart gave the variant manuscript readings in the notes; Collins gave the whole of the manuscript in the notes; but Dickinson used it to emend the text and ultimately adopted many of its readings simply, it seems, because he preferred them. To his credit, however, he noted most of such emendations. James the Fourth gave editors difficulties because, according to one of the play's modern editors, Norman Sanders, the quarto is "badly printed and littered with errors of every kind: misreadings, wrong spelling, mispunctuation, turned letters, mis-spacing, and some wild attempts to make sense of the French-language sections of the text".<sup>1</sup> Sanders found that while Grosart's and Collins's texts were careless, Dyce's showed his "usually sound judgment";<sup>2</sup> and W. W. Greg has found that the other text Dickinson used, Manly's, was slightly superior because he occasionally suggested better emendations than Dyce's.<sup>3</sup> Dickinson followed both Dyce and Manly and produced a text of high quality

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<sup>1</sup>The Scottish History of James the Fourth, edited by Norman Sanders (1970), p. lvii.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. ix.

<sup>3</sup>Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements: The Battle of Alcazar and Orlando Furioso, edited by W. W. Greg (1923), p. 132.

One of the best aspects of Dickinson's edition was his full annotation. He used the notes of all his predecessors, including their helpful ones describing the stage business of the plays, and added many explanatory ones of his own.

Dickinson's edition made and continues to make a valuable contribution for it is the most reliable and easily accessible selection of Greene's plays. Although Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and James the Fourth have appeared in separate modern editions and some of the others have been published in facsimile reprints, no new complete edition of Greene's plays has appeared since the Mermaid.

## CONCLUSION

Through the course of this thesis I have tried to show how each volume of the Mermaid Series related to the ideas and attitudes about the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama which prevailed in the nineteenth century. I have also tried to show what each of the editors contributed to the climate of opinion concerning the drama and I have evaluated briefly each text.

As we have seen, the groundwork for the series was laid through the writings of A. C. Swinburne and J. A. Symonds. They revolutionized attitudes towards the drama and at the same time helped to create a wide audience eager for a reliable, unexpurgated and inexpensive edition of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists. As we have discovered, the work of Swinburne and Symonds differed somewhat. Although Swinburne's ideas were seized upon and spread by others, his work was mainly for the more rarified enthusiasts who would learn as much about Swinburne as the dramatists from his writing. J. A. Symonds, on the other hand, wished very much to popularize the drama. His many essays over the years on Ford. Fletcher, Dekker, his Shakspeare's Predecessors, his adoration of Marlowe and his tireless insistence on the integrity of a play as a whole work of art intended for the theatre all aimed to stimulate an interest in the drama which ultimately could be satisfied only by texts of the plays themselves.

It was fortuitous that the idea for the series came to Havelock Ellis when he was in need of employment and before his career had taken shape. He was therefore willing to spend time on the thankless task of being general editor. As his career as a researcher into sex developed, his work on the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama proved to be of minor importance to him; nevertheless he would be gratified to know that so many people came to appreciate the drama as a result of his efforts.

As I have suggested, the work of the other people connected with the series varies in importance. Some of them--Strachey, Verity, Phelps, Gosse, Horne and Nicholson--put forward few critical ideas of significance but instead made their contributions to study of the drama by seeing their volumes through the press. The increased availability of the texts of Beaumont and Fletcher, Heywood, Field, Chapman, Shirley, Nero and a corrected Every Man in His Humour, Every Man out of His Humour and The Poetaster either supported the ideas of others such as Symonds, Swinburne or Herford or gave many more readers the opportunity to make their own observations. However other editors, notably Rhys and Symons, made contributions through their critical introductions as well as through their texts. The Massinger and Dekker volumes which offer both new attitudes and the supporting evidence are among the best in the series.

That the academic approach to the drama which we now use today first appeared under the umbrella of the Mermaid Series is witness to the vitality and significance of what Havelock Ellis began. C. H. Herford's introduction to Ben Jonson which tried to judge Jonson in relation to his own aims rather than in relation to preconceived notions and Dickinson's Robert Greene which offers a sound text and a considered judgment of Greene's artistic development are symbolic gateways from the nineteenth-century approach to the twentieth. The Mermaid Series eagerly embraced the latter and prepared the way for the former. Because of this we enjoy today a remarkably rich appreciation of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

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## APPENDIX

## PART A

Other nineteenth-century editors of the plays included in the Mermaid volumes available before the publication of the series, excluding stage adaptations.

Beaumont and Fletcher

## Collected editions:

The Dramatic Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by G. Colman, 3 vols (London, 1811: reprint of edition of 1778).

The Dramatic Works of Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by P. Whalley and G. Colman, 4 vols (London, 1811).

The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by Henry Weber, 14 vols (Edinburgh, 1812).

The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by Alexander Dyce, 11 vols (London: Moxon, 1843-1846).

## Individual Plays:

Bonduca:

The British Drama, 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1804), I, 132-162.

The Modern British Drama [edited by W. Scott], 5 vols (London: William Miller, 1811), I, 146-175.

A King and No King:

The Modern British Drama, op. cit., I, 33-63.

The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 264-291.

A Knight of the Burning Pestle:

The Works of the British Dramatists, op. cit., pp. 291-315.

Burlesque Plays and Poems, edited by Henry Morley (London: Routledge, 1885), pp. 17-75.

The Maid's Tragedy:

The British Drama, op. cit., I, 1-28.

The Modern British Drama, op. cit., I, 64-92.

- Philaster:
- The British Drama, op. cit., I, 29-54.
  - The Modern British Drama, op. cit., I, 119-145.
  - The British Drama, 2 vols (London: Jones, 1824-1826), II, 1141-1162.
  - The Works of the British Dramatists, op. cit., pp. 240-264.

Thierry and Theorodet: The Modern British Drama, op. cit., I, 93-118.

George Chapman

Collected editions:

The Comedies and Tragedies of George Chapman, 3 vols (London: John Pearson, 1873). Diplomatic reprint.

The Works of George Chapman, edited by R. H. Shepherd, volume two introduced by A. C. Swinburne, 3 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1874-1875).

Individual Plays:

All Fools: The Ancient British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), II, 37-64.

A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier], third edition, 12 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), IV, 99-182.

Bussy D'Ambois: Old English Plays, [edited by C. W. Dilke], 6 vols (London: John Martin, 1814-1815), II, 223-342.

John Day

Collected editions:

The Works of John Day, edited by A. H. Bullen, 2 vols (London: Chiswick Press, privately printed, 1881).

Individual Plays:

Humour Out of Breath: edited by J. O. Halliwell, Percy Society Reprint (London: Percy Society, 1860).

Thomas Dekker

## Collected editions:

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker, 5 vols (London: John Pearson, 1873). Diplomatic reprint.

## Individual Plays:

The Honest Whore:

(written in collaboration with Middleton)

The Ancient British Drama, edited by W. Scott, 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), I, 518-595.

A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier], 12 vols, third edition (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), III, 211-425.

The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by Alexander Dyce, 5 vols (London: Lumley, 1840), III, 3-244.

Old Fortunatus:

Old English Plays, [edited by C. W. Dilke], 6 vols (London: John Martin, 1814-1815), III, 101-221.

Shoemaker's Holiday

edited by Karle Warne and Ludwig Proescholdt (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1886).

The Witch of Edmonton:

(written in collaboration with Ford)

The Dramatic Works of John Ford, edited by Henry Weber, 2 vols (Edinburgh 1811), II, 399-477.

The Dramatic Works, edited by William Gifford, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1827), II, 439-558.

The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford, edited by Hartley Coleridge (London: Moxon, 1840), pp. 185-208.

The Works of John Ford, edited by W. Gifford, revised by Alexander Dyce, 3 vols (London: Toovey, 1869), III, 171-276.

Nathaniel FieldAmends for Ladies:

edited by J. P. Collier (London: Septimus Prowett, 1829).

A Select Collection of Old English Plays, edited by [Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, John Payne Collier], W. C. Hazlitt, fourth edition, 15 vols (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874-1876), XI, 87-172.

A Woman is a Weathercock:

edited by John Payne Collier (London: Septimus Prowett, 1829).

A Select Collection of Old English Plays, op. cit., XI, 1-86.

John Ford

## Collected editions:

The Dramatic Works of John Ford, edited by Henry Weber, 2 vols (Edinburgh: 1811).

The Dramatic Works, edited by William Gifford, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1827).

The Dramatic Works of John Ford, The Family Library Series, 2 vols (London: Murray, 1831). Heavily expurgated.

The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford, edited by Hartley Coleridge (London: Moxon, 1840).

The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford, edited by Hartley Coleridge, second edition (London: Moxon, 1851).

The Works of John Ford, edited by William Gifford, revised by Alexander Dyce, 3 vols (London: Toovey, 1869).

## Individual Plays:

The Broken Heart

Modern British Drama, [edited by Walter Scott], 5 vols (London: William Miller, 1811), I, 258-285.

The Old English Drama (London: Thomas White, 1830). Six pence pamphlet series.

'Tis Pity She's a Whore:

The Old English Drama, op. cit.

Robert Greene

## Collected editions:

The Dramatic Works of Robert Greene, edited by Alexander Dyce, 2 vols (London: Pickering, 1831).

The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Robert Greene and George Peele, edited by Alexander Dyce, second edition (London: Routledge, Warne and Routledge, 1861).

The Life and Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Robert Greene, edited by Alexander Grosart, 15 vols (London: Privately printed for the Huth Library, 1881-1886).

The Plays and Poems of Robert Greene, edited by John Churton Collins, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

## Individual Plays:

Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay: A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier], third edition, 12 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), VIII, 163-240.

Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 76-96.

Marlowe Tragical History of Dr. Faustus Greene Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, edited by A. W. Ward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1866), pp. 47-100.

Representative English Comedies, edited by J. M. Gayley, 4 vols (New York and London: Macmillan, 1903-1936), I, 395-511.

George-a-Greene:

The Ancient British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), I, 440-458.

James IV:

Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperian Drama, edited by J. M. Manley, 3 vols (London: Ginn, 1897), II, 327-417.

A Looking-Glass for London and England:

The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge, [edited by Edmund Gosse], 4 vols (Glasgow: Privately printed for the Hunterian Club, 1883), IV, plays individually numbered.

Orlando Furioso:

edited by W. W. Greg, Malone Society reprint (Oxford: Malone Society, 1907).

Thomas Heywood

## Collected editions:

The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood, 6 vols (London: Pearson, 1874).  
Diplomatic reprint.

## Individual Plays:

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- The Fair Maid of the West: (both parts) edited by John Payne Collier (London: printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1850).
- The Rape of Lucrece: The Old English Drama [edited by Charles Baldwyn], (London, 1824-1825), number IV.
- A Woman Killed with Kindness: The Ancient British Drama [edited by W. Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), II, 431-457.
- A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier], third edition, 12 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), VII, 216-291.
- The Royal King, and Loyal Subject. A Woman Killed with Kindness, edited by John Payne Collier (London: printed for the Shakespeare Society, 1850), pp. 93-168.
- Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 484-502.

Ben Jonson

## Collected editions:

- The Dramatic Works of Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher, edited by P. Whalley and G. Colman, 4 vols (London, 1811).
- The Works of Ben Jonson, edited by W. Gifford, 9 vols (London, 1816).
- The Works of Ben Jonson, with a memoir by Barry Cornwall [B. W. Proctor] (London, 1838).
- The Works of Ben Jonson with a memoir by W. Gifford (London: Moxon, 1846).  
This was Gifford's nine volumes condensed into one with no notes.

The Works of Ben Jonson, edited by W. Gifford, revised by Lieut. Col. Francis Cunningham, 3 vols (London: Hotten, [1872]).

The Works of Ben Jonson, edited by W. Gifford, revised by Lieut. Col. Francis Cunningham, second edition, 9 vols (London: Bickers, 1875).

Selections:

Plays and Poems, introduced by Henry Morley, Morley's Universal Library (London: Routledge, 1885). Contains The Alchemist, Volpone, The Silent Woman.

The Dramatic Works and Lyrics of Ben Jonson, edited by J. A. Symonds, The Camelot Classics Series (London: Walter Scott, 1886). Contains The Silent Woman, The Alchemist, Volpone, Bartholomew Fair and poems.

Individual Plays:

The Alchemist:

The Modern British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 5 vols (London: William Miller, 1811), III, 67-105.

The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 142-179.

Everyman in his Humour:

The Modern British Drama, op. cit., III, 1-29.

The Works of the British Dramatists, op. cit., pp. 209-236.

edited by Henry B. Wheatley (London: Longmans, Green, 1877).

Epiocene:

The Old English Drama, (London: Thomas White, 1830). Sixpence pamphlet series.

The Works of the British Dramatists, op. cit., pp. 179-208.

Famous Elizabethan Plays, edited by H. M. Fitzgibbon (London: W. H. Allen, 1890), pp. 173-272 ("Expurgated and Adapted for Modern Readers").

Volpone:

The Modern British Drama, op. cit., III, 30-66.

The Old English Drama, op. cit.

Christopher Marlowe

## Collected editions:

The Works of Christopher Marlowe, [edited by George Robinson], 3 vols  
(London: Pickering, 1826).

The Works of Christopher Marlowe, edited by Alexander Dyce, 3 vols  
(London: Pickering, 1850).

The Works of Christopher Marlowe, edited by Alexander Dyce, second  
edition (London: Moxon, 1858).

The Works of Christopher Marlowe, edited by Lieut. Col. Francis Cunningham  
(London: Crocker, 1870).

The Works of Christopher Marlowe, edited by A. H. Bullen, 3 vols  
(London: Nimmo, 1885).

## Individual Plays:

Dr. Faustus:

Old English Plays, [edited by C. W. Dilke],  
6 vols (London: John Martin, 1814-1815), I,  
1-88.

Marlowe Tragical History of Dr. Faustus  
Greene Honourable History of Friar Bacon  
and Friar Bungay, edited by A. W. Ward  
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1866).

The Works of the British Dramatists, edited  
by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870),  
pp. 127-139.

Marlowe's Faustus Goethe's Faust, introduced  
by Henry Morley, Morley's Universal Library  
(London: Routledge, 1883).

edited by William Wagner, London Series of  
English Classics (London: Longman's, 1877).

Edward II:

The Ancient British Drama, [edited by W.  
Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810),  
I, 157-192.

A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by  
Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne  
Collier], 12 vols, third edition (London:  
Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), II, 305-405.

The Works of the British Dramatists, op. cit.,  
pp. 100-127.

edited by F. G. Fleay, Collins' School and College Classics (London: Collins, 1877).

edited by O. W. Tancock, Old English Drama Select Plays, Clarendon Press Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879).

Jew of Malta:

A Select Collection of Old Plays, op. cit., VIII, 241-327.

Philip Massinger

Collected editions:

The Plays of Philip Massinger, edited by William Gifford, 4 vols (London: 1805).

The Plays of Philip Massinger, edited by William Gifford, second edition, 4 vols (London, 1813).

The Plays of Philip Massinger, introduced by W. Gifford, adapted for family reading by the omission of objectionable passages [by W. Harness], 3 vols (London: Murray, 1830).

The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford, edited by Hartley Coleridge (London: Moxon, 1840).

The Dramatic Works of Massinger and Ford, edited by Hartley Coleridge, second edition (London: Moxon, 1851).

The Plays of Philip Massinger, edited by Lieut. Col. F. Cunningham (London: Crocker, 1868).

Individual Plays:

The Duke of Milan:

The London Stage (London, 1825), II. Pamphlet series

The British Drama, Dicks' Standard Plays, 12 vols (London: John Dicks, 1864-1872), VI. Reissued 1874.

The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J.S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 411-434.

A New Way to Pay Old Debts:

The British Drama, 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1804), II, 60-86.

Sharpe's British Theatre (London: 1805), XV. Pamphlet series

- The British Theatre, edited by E. S. Ingham, 25 vols (London; 1808), V.
- The Modern British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 5 vols (London: William Miller, 1811), III, 157-185.
- The British Drama, 2 vols (London: Jones, 1824-1826), I, 441-446.
- The British Drama, Dicks' Standard Plays, op. cit., II. Reissued 1883.
- The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie, op. cit., pp. 435-459.
- The Maid of Honour:  
Cumberland's British Theatre (London: 1829), XXIX. Pamphlet series
- The British Drama, Dicks' Standard Plays, op. cit., IV. Reissued 1877.
- The City Madam:  
Cumberland's British Theatre, op. cit., XXIV.
- The Fatal Dowry:  
The British Drama, 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1804), I, 77-104.
- The Modern British Drama, op. cit., I, 230-257.  
(London: John Burns, 1844).
- The Virgin Martyr:  
The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie, op. cit., pp. 386-410.
- Believe as You List:  
edited by T. Croker (London: for the Percy Society, 1849). Diplomatic reprint.
- Thomas Middleton:  
Collected editions:
- The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by Alexander Dyce, 5 vols (London: Lumley, 1840).
- The Works of Thomas Middleton, edited by A. H. Bullen, 8 vols (London: Nimmo, 1885-1886).
- Individual Plays:
- The Changeling:  
Old English Plays, [edited by C. W. Dilke], 6 vols (London: John Martin, 1814-1815), IV, 219-324.

- The Mayor of Queenborough: Ancient British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), III, 266-296.
- The Roaring Girl: A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier], third edition, 12 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), XI, 99-184.
- The Spanish Gipsy: Ancient British Drama, op. cit., II, 325-362.
- A Trick to Catch the Old One: A Select Collection of Old Plays, op. cit., VI, 1-111.
- The Widow: Old English Plays, op. cit., IV, 115-128.
- The Witch: Old English Plays, op. cit., V, 129-224.
- Henry Porter
- Two Angry Women of Abington: Ancient British Drama, op. cit., III, 478-507.
- Two Angry Women of Abington: edited by Alexander Dyce, Percy Society Reprint (London: Percy Society, 1841).
- Two Angry Women of Abington: A Select Collection of Old English Plays, edited by [Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, John Payne Collier], W. C. Hazlitt, fourth edition, 15 vols (London: Reeves and Turner, 1874-1876), VIII, 261-383.
- James Shirley
- Collected editions:
- The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley, edited by William Gifford, with additional notes and introduction by Alexander Dyce, 6 vols (London: Murray, 1833).
- Individual Plays:
- The Traitor: The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 502-528.

Cyril Tourneur

## Collected editions:

The Plays and Poems of Cyril Tourneur, edited by John Churton Collins,  
2 vols (London: Chatto and Windus, 1878).

## Individual Plays:

The Revenger's Tragedy:

The Ancient British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), II, 100-131.

A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier] Third edition, 12 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827), IV, 281-370.

John Webster

## Collected editions:

The Works of John Webster, edited by Alexander Dyce, 4 vols (London: Pickering, 1830).

The Works of John Webster, edited by Alexander Dyce, second edition (London: Moxon, 1857).

The Dramatic Works of John Webster, edited by W. C. Hazlitt, 4 vols (London: 1857).

## Individual Plays:

The Duchess of Malfi:

The Ancient British Drama, [edited by W. Scott], 3 vols (London: William Miller, 1810), III, 508-543.

The Works of the British Dramatists, edited by J. S. Keltie (Edinburgh: Nimmo, 1870), pp. 316-345.

The British Drama, Dicks' Standard Plays (London: John Dicks, [1887]).

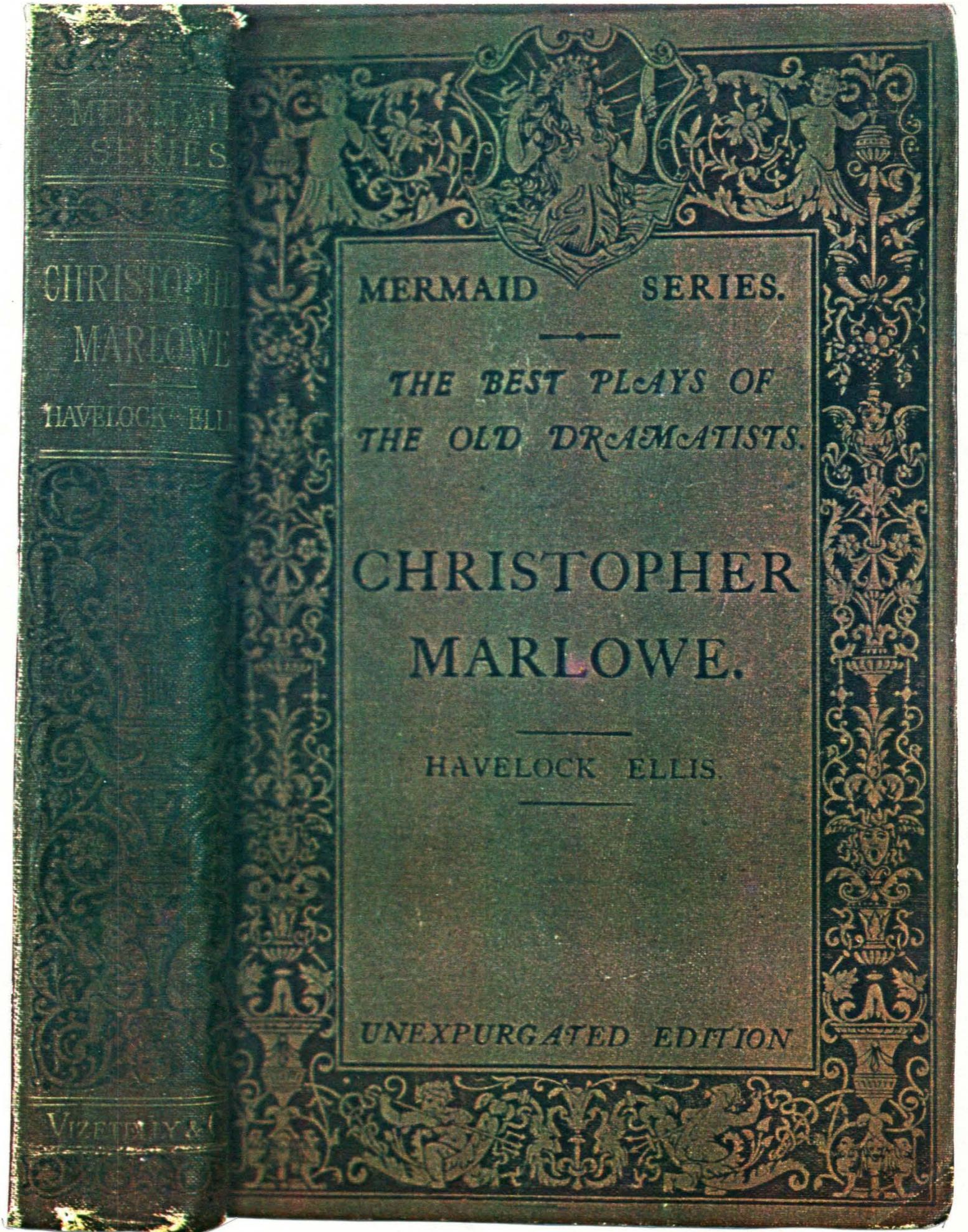
The White Devil:

The Ancient British Drama, op. cit., III, 1-46.

A Select Collection of Old Plays, edited by Isaac Reed, Octavius Gilchrist, [John Payne Collier], third edition, 12 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825-1827); VI, 203-226.

APPENDIX PART B

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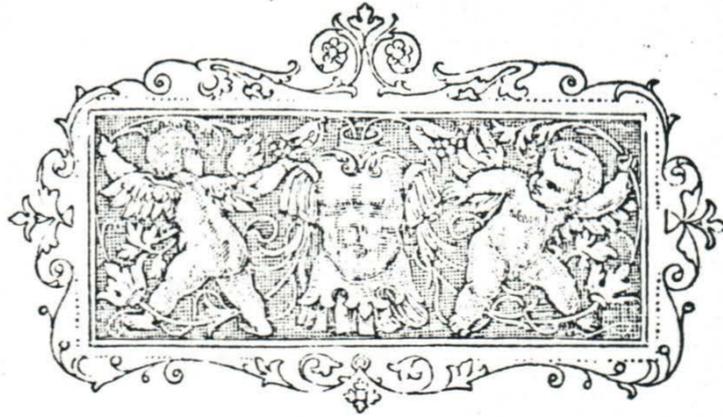
"I lie and dream of your full MERMAID wine." - *Beaumont.*

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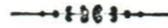


LONDON:  
VIZETELLY & CO., 42, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1887.



*TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT.*



*IN TWO PARTS.*



Mar.

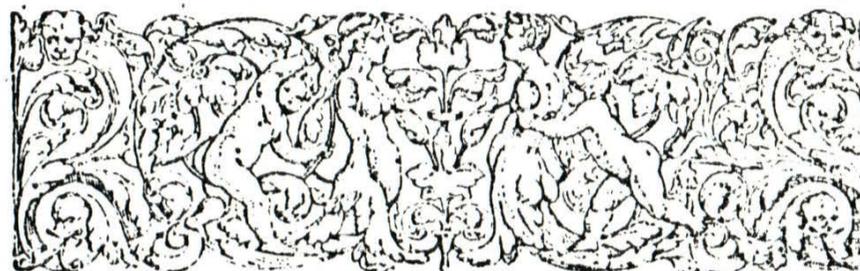
B

*DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.*

MYCETES, King of Persia.  
 COSROE, his Brother.  
 ORTYGIUS, }  
 CENEUS, } Persian Lords and Captains.  
 MEANDER, }  
 MENAPHON, }  
 THERIDAMAS, }  
 TAMBURLAINE, a Scythian Shepherd.  
 TECHELLES, }  
 USUMCASANE, } his Followers.  
 BAJAZETH, Emperor of the Turks.  
 KING of ARABIA.  
 KING of FEZ.  
 KING of MOROCCO.  
 KING of ARGIER (Algiers).  
 SOLDAN of EGYPT.  
 GOVERNOR of DAMASCUS.  
 AGYDAS, }  
 MAGNETES, } Median Lords.  
 CAPOLIN, an Egyptian Captain.  
 PHILEMUS, a Messenger.

ZENOCRATE, Daughter of the Soldan of Egypt.  
 ANIPPE, her Maid.  
 ZABINA, Wife of Bajazeth.  
 EBEEA, her Maid.  
 Virgins of Damascus.

No list of the characters is given in the early editions ; the omission is frequent in plays of this period.



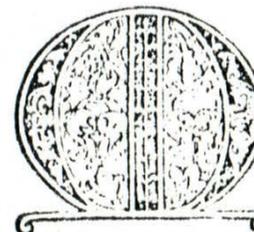
*TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT.*

*PART THE FIRST.*

ACT THE FIRST.

SCENE I.

*Enter MYCETES, COSROE, MEANDER, THERIDAMAS,  
 ORTYGIUS, CENEUS, MENAPHON, with others.*

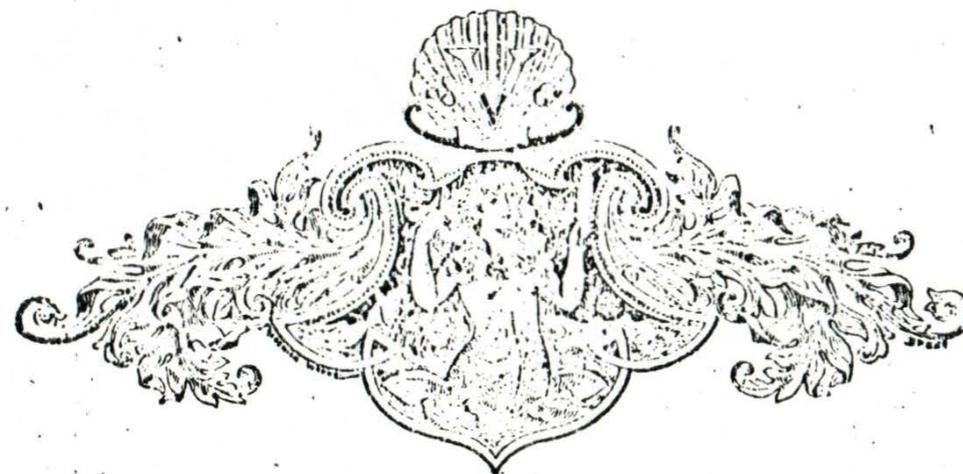


MYCETES. Brother Cosroe, I find myself  
 aggrieved,  
 Yet insufficient to express the same ;  
 For it requires a great and thundering  
 speech :

Good brother, tell the cause unto my lords ;  
 I know you have a better wit than I.

*Cos.* Unhappy Persia, that in former age  
 Hast been the seat of mighty conquerors,  
 That, in their prowess and their policies,  
 Have triumphed over Afric and the bounds  
 Of Europe, where the sun scarce dares appear  
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"I lie and dream of your full MERMAID wine."  
*Master Francis Beaumont to Ben Jonson.*

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