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INTRODUCTION

By Alfred W. Pollard

I. MORE BAD QUARTOS

The writer of this book, Mr Peter Alexander, had the good fortune in his University days to come under the influence of an inspiring teacher, Dr John Smart, whose conservative instincts in literature made him as sceptical as to the truth of many statements about Shakespeare as if he had been a born revolutionary. At the time of his premature death Dr Smart had written some chapters of an introduction to the study of Shakespeare, the publication of which,[1] incomplete as they are, by the piety of Dr Macneile Dixon and Mr Alexander, seems to me a new landmark in Shakespeare scholarship. Mr Alexander, who succeeded Dr Smart in his lectureship at Glasgow, has not only helped to preserve his teacher's work, he has been continuing it, as Dr Smart on his death-bed bade him, and has amply justified his selection for the task. His papers in *The Times Literary Supplement* (9 October and 13 November 1924) on "2 *Henry VI* and the copy for *The Contention*" and "3 *Henry VI* and *Richard Duke of York*", showing that the quartos of 1594 and 1595 are memorial reconstructions of texts which must at least have closely approximated to those which we know as 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, started a corre-

[1] *Shakespeare; Truth and Tradition*, by John Semple Smart, with a memoir by W. Macneile Dixon (Edward Arnold and Co., 1928).

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spondence between us on 1–3 *Henry VI* and *Richard III*, with a view to a joint study of them as one of the "Shakespeare Problems" with which Professor Dover Wilson and I have committed ourselves to deal in this series. In the end the book has been written by Mr Alexander alone, under a fire of criticism from myself, and my task is reduced to writing this introduction.

I have a fellow-feeling with Mr Alexander because, just as nearly twenty years ago I protested (with unexpected success) against the continued acceptance of Malone's condemnation of all the early Shakespeare Quartos as "stolne and surreptitious" despite his clear recognition that in many cases they preserved good texts, from which the Folio of 1623 was in fact printed, so Mr Alexander's book is a protest against the continued acceptance of Malone's assertion (maintained despite his acknowledgment that it was formulated under a misunderstanding of Greene's attack in his *Groatsworth of Wit*) that Shakespeare began his career as a dramatist, not by writing original plays but by revising into the plays we now know as 2 and 3 *Henry VI* the versions published as *The First Part of the Contention* (1594) and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* (1595), attributed by Malone to Marlowe, Greene and Peele.

At the time Malone wrote his famous dissertation, there had been no general revival of interest in the Elizabethan drama as a whole, and the inclination to present the genius of Shakespeare as a literary miracle was at its height. It thus did not occur to Malone, or to his critics, that to hand over the work of the best-known playwrights of the day to be improved by a young actor, whose lack of education (in order

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to enhance the literary miracle) the builders of the theory were simultaneously exaggerating, was not a course which the sharers in any Elizabethan Company of players would lightly have thought of adopting. Unfortunately the sanity Malone displayed in marshalling his arguments has impressed students much more than their too frequent lack of connection with his ultimate conclusions; thus most present-day students, while yet young and uncritical, have learnt to believe that Shakespeare did as a fact pass some years "in the workshop" with the patching of old plays as his main employment. Without denying that he may have done some such jobs we may reasonably give sympathetic consideration to the supposition that before being called to improve other men's work he had some successes to his credit as sole or part author of one or more original plays.

As I have said, one of the most important features of Mr Alexander's book is his claim that *The First part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster*, printed by Thomas Creede for Thomas Millington in 1594 (after entry on the Stationers' Register on March 12) and *The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke as it was sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembrooke his seruants*, printed in 1595 by P. S. (Peter Short) for Thomas Millington, were just Bad Quartos of the plays we know as 2 and 3 *Henry VI*; so to Bad Quartos I must once more recur.

In the articles published in 1918 in *The Times Literary Supplement* on "The Stolne and Surreptitious Texts of Shakespeare" by Professor Dover Wilson and myself I think we made some contribution to their elucidation by contending that they could

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have been more easily produced by actors who had taken part in the plays than by a knavish publisher sending a shorthand writer to the theatre. We were also on the right track in thinking that the plague years, 1592–3, were a likely time at which such texts might have originated. But besides burdening our theory by taking over Fleay's supposition that when actors were about to start on a provincial tour the London texts would have been specially abridged for their use—a disputable proposition which Mr W. J. Lawrence promptly disputed, though I think the weight of opinion is against him—we were still so far hypnotized by the old idea of the wicked publisher that we took it for granted that it was for the sake of the money which could be obtained from a publisher that the bad texts were put together. I believe that for such texts the money would have been so small as to make their construction hardly worth while and that with such an origin some at least of the publishers concerned would have refused to touch them.

A new advance was made by Dr Greg, who first in an article on "Bad Quartos outside Shakespeare", contributed as "a preliminary investigation" to *The Library* in October 1919 and subsequently in 1923 in his *Two Elizabethan Stage Abridgements*: The Battle of Alcazar *and* Orlando Furioso, *an essay in critical bibliography*, published by the Clarendon Press and very kindly dedicated to the authors of the articles in *The Times Literary Supplement*, produced positive grounds for belief both that legitimate abridged texts were in use and, on the other hand, that texts made up by actors mainly from memory, but with occasional help from their "parts", almost certainly originated with actors stranded in the provinces and obliged to

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make up, as best they could, something popular to play. As Mr Alexander sets forth in his text, supplementary evidence came through the revival by Mr Crompton Rhodes[1] of the parallel case, originally adduced (though not followed up) by George Steevens, of the similar reconstruction of Sheridan's *School for Scandal* in the provinces and the publication of this stolen text in advance of the true one. That reconstruction from memory and actors' parts is at least an element in the origin of the Bad Quartos of Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *Henry V*, the *Merry Wives*, and *Hamlet* (1603) is now, if not generally, at least very widely accepted, and those who wish to believe in the honesty of publishers can plead that there is a considerable difference between sending a shorthand writer to a London theatre to take down what he could of the words spoken by the players, and buying a ready-made text from the men who had been playing it in the provinces.

As soon as Dr Greg had suggested that the Bad Quartos had been brought into existence by methods which were not confined to four plays, it became probable that the class would be further extended, and by his articles in *The Times Literary Supplement*, Mr Alexander (in another "preliminary investigation" here more fully worked out) made a good case for *The First Part of the Contention* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* having originated in the same way. His theory as stated in *The Times*

[1] In two articles in *The Times Literary Supplement* in September 1925. See also Mr Rhodes' paper, "Some Aspects of Sheridan Bibliography", read before the Bibliographical Society, 15 October 1928, and printed in *The Library*, 4th Series, IX, 233–61.

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Literary Supplement is already winning acceptance, and I think that his subsequent application of it to *The Taming of a Shrew*, though it rests on a much narrower basis, has no intrinsic improbability as soon as it is realized that a member of a company of stranded actors may very well have been not only a vamper, but a fluent one, who did not worry about piecing together fragments of passages for which it was easy for him to improvise substitutes.

For our present purpose *The Taming of a Shrew*, though it raises some of the same problems, may be put on one side. But *The First Part of the Contention* and *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* are crucial. If these, as Mr Alexander maintains, are simply memorial reconstructions of texts closely similar to those which have come down to us as 2 and 3 *Henry VI*, then not only Malone's arguments, but all subsequent deductions from their discrepancies, their borrowings from this or that author and their verbal resemblances to the work of Peele, Greene and Marlowe count for nothing, just as Malone's argument that in his *Groatsworth of Wit* Greene in his phrase "beautified with our feathers" was accusing Shakespeare of plagiarism now counts (or should count) for nothing, because it is clearly a misinterpretation.[1] All these arguments (from the texts of the *Contention* and *True Tragedy* where they differ from 2 and 3 *Henry VI*) are indeed the more absolutely dead of the two, because from Greene's invective we remain entitled to ask how he came to be so angry with Shakespeare in August 1592, whereas as regards parallels and reminiscences and quotations from other plays which had recently been acted there is no reason

[1] See pages 44–49.

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to ask how these got into memorial reconstructions. From the very nature of the case a vamped text would be likely to contain phrases and even lines from other plays in which its authors had lately been acting and we know that they got into the Bad Quarto of *Hamlet* and other piracies.

Thus, as regards authorship, if Mr Alexander is right, we must turn down the Quartos of 1594 and 1595 altogether and argue from the text of 2 and 3 *Henry VI* as it stands in the Folio and from nothing else, and with no prepossession whatever in favour of the theory that Shakespeare was in the habit of re-handling other men's plays. We must in fact start afresh.

II. SHAKESPEARE'S EARLIEST WORK

Just as Malone misapplied the phrase "stolne and surreptitious" despite his knowledge of the quality of the Good Quartos, and continued to maintain that Shakespeare had rehandled the work of Marlowe, Greene and Peele after abandoning his contention that Greene's attack in the *Groatsworth* involved a charge of plagiarism, so (as Mr Alexander notes) in dealing with the traditions as to Shakespeare's youth he threw over his own admirable exposition as to how such traditions should be tested. I agree with Dr Smart and Mr Alexander that, judged by Malone's principles, the best authenticated tradition is that reported by Aubrey (a humble follower of Herodotus in his readiness to put down all he heard) on the authority of the younger Beeston, whose father had been in Shakespeare's company, that before he came to London Shakespeare had been a schoolmaster. With a little more subtlety Malone might have

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accepted this as enhancing the miracle that nevertheless he wrote his plays. But Malone was under the influence of Farmer, who, not content with destroying the theory of Shakespeare's "learning", denied him such moderate proficiency in Latin as other Stratford boys are known to have attained. If we can clear all the merely sensational gossip out of our heads so far as to permit ourselves to believe that the Stratford Grammar School was ordinarily efficient and that Shakespeare went to it, and in his teens was not extraordinarily dull, the "small Latin" with which Ben Jonson credits him should have included at least a little Virgil, a little Ovid, a little Plautus and a little Seneca, besides some study of such school books as the *Apothegmata* of Erasmus as translated by Udall, from which an illusive appearance of wide reading was easily won. Most of the playwrights of the 'eighties were University men, and it seems in accordance with human nature that a Stratford Grammar School man should think it necessary in competition with them to stretch his Latin as far as it would go rather than pose as the possessor of "native woodnotes wild", even as, when he turned to narrative poetry, he wrote on Venus and Adonis and on Lucrece rather than on English themes. On this view the plays which show the most classical influence, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, would be the real products of his workshop days, and despite verse tests or any other evidence of the kind I should like to see them assigned to the earliest possible dates. The dates can only be got back as early as I should like by supposing that the "old plays" which Professor Dover Wilson is driven by his analysis to believe that Shakespeare had before him

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when writing the two comedies, were his own early efforts or plays in which he had at least had a hand, and that *Titus and Vespasian* (Henslowe's *Tittus and Vespasia*), which on the evidence of the contemporary German version of *Titus Andronicus* Sir Edmund Chambers regards as a possible earlier version of it, was also, in whole or in part, from his own pen. Much against my will I have been converted to the opinion that the combined evidence of the inclusion of *Titus Andronicus* in the Folio of 1623 and its mention as Shakespeare's by Francis Meres in 1598 is not adequately met by admitting—fastidiously—that Shakespeare may have touched up the play here and there, or added a few lines of his own. Thus in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, other than the literary connoisseurship which I very largely distrust, I feel bound to work on the basis that the *Titus Andronicus*, which was produced at the Rose under Henslowe's auspices (with his note *ne*, interpreted as *new* or newly revised) by the Earl of Sussex's men on 24 January 1594, was in whole or part by Shakespeare. I think, moreover, that the play called by Henslowe *Tittus and Vespasia* produced (also at the Rose and also marked by Henslowe *ne*) on 15 April 1592 by the company whose patron, afterwards for a few months Earl of Derby, was then known as Lord Strange, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary should also, if it is to be accepted as an earlier version of *Andronicus*, be considered as in whole or part written by Shakespeare. From 15 April to 23 June 1592 it was performed altogether seven times, and though other plays were acted more often it had the highest average receipts of the season, Henslowe's share for each performance working out

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at the rate of £2. 8*s*. 6*d*., with £2. 3*s*. 6*d*. for Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* as the next best.[1] Thus there

[1] I am the more inclined to believe that despite the unhappiness of the title which Henslowe bestowed on the earlier of them, the two *Titus* plays are thus connected because on the title page of the (long lost) 1594 edition of *Titus Andronicus* printed and published by John Danter and duly entered on the Stationers' Register on 6 February 1594, i.e. during the few months in which the former Lord Strange bore the title of Earl of Derby, the play is said to have been "plaide by the Right Honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earle of Pembrooke and Earle of Sussex their seruants", and I feel bound to assume that the order in which the companies are named on this contemporary title page is correct. Before the entry of this edition we have no knowledge of Pembroke's men as playing except between October 1592 and some date in August 1593, i.e. five or six weeks before 28 September 1593 when Henslowe wrote to Alleyn that they had been back in town for some such time, destitute. They may have sold one copy of the play to Danter and another to Henslowe, or direct to Sussex's men who performed it under Henslowe's auspices on 24 January 1594. But if it was the earliest of the three mentioned on the title the performance by the Earl of Derby's men must have preceded this date and be referred to the time before Lord Strange succeeded to the Earldom. If so, to those who know Henslowe's carelessness as to titles it is unnecessary to assume that the company was at the same time possessed of one play called *Titus Andronicus* and another which he called *Tittus and Vespasia*.

Since opinions to this effect were expressed in this introduction as first written I have had the pleasure of reading a paper on "Shakespeare and *Titus Andronicus*" by Mr Austin K. Gray (*Studies in Philology*, published by the University of Carolina Press, XXV, 295–311). In this he shows that Meres was "in a favourable position" for knowing the authorship of *Titus* through his intimacy with Nashe, who (besides having books printed by its printer, John Danter, in 1592–3–4) was living in Danter's house. Mr Gray also adduces a striking series of parallels between *Titus* and both *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, and argues from them that the version of *Titus* performed as "new" on 23 January 1594, half-way between the entry of these two poems on the Stationers' Register

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