

William Shakespeare, Richard III

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and on Shakespeare's deployment of these associations in his characterization of Claudius and old Hamlet.

The book is helpfully and properly expository. It is, however, sometimes less than enabling to its readers in some of its procedures and omissions. At times the brief notes appended to each chapter are unhelpful in revealing sources, and the absence of bibliographies severely hinders the book's effectiveness for the undergraduate audience at which it is predominantly aimed. Pincombe's disclaimer that 'the five authors are all well served by modern bibliographies, after all' (p. x) might at least have been amplified with references to these resources, which are nowhere listed. There is the occasional banality, particularly in the opening sentence of each chapter: '*Dr Faustus* is without question one of the great Elizabethan plays' (p. 160) is unarguable, but barely enlightening. More seriously, there are some notable absences. Humanism is not here political. It is connected to a specifically English poetics in Puttenham's *Arte of English Poesie* but the connections between the poetic, religious, and national polis are beyond the remit of Pincombe's study. The political aspects of *The Shepheardes Calender*, for example, are marginalized: rather than alluding to the marriage negotiations between the queen and the duc d'Alençon, the relations between Hobbinol, Rosalind, and Colin are an encoded reference to the poet's desire to break with youthful Cambridge and with Harvey as his tutor in *humanitas*. While Harvey is an extremely valuable focus for the study, more substantial readings of familiar texts in the light of the thorough aeration of definitions, concepts, and contexts would have been an asset. Readers of *Elizabethan Humanism* may wish for a different allocation of background and foreground in Pincombe's next work.

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE. **Richard III.** Edited by JOHN JOWETT. Pp. x+414 (World's Classics). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Paper, £6.99.

The latest title in the Oxford Shakespeare (single-volume edition), competitively priced for the World's Classics series (now with 'durable sewn binding for lasting use', a distinct improvement on previous, already disintegrating, volumes), is *The Tragedy of King Richard III*, as the first quarto (1597) describes it. Earlier volumes in this series have brought us editors commendably allowed to differ from some notorious editorial decisions in the one-volume Oxford *Complete Works* (1998), such as not renaming Falstaff as Oldcastle. But John Jowett, one of the editorial quartet who produced the volume, affirms his loyalty to the parent issue by renaming the Folio's *2 Henry VI* as *The Contention*, and *3 Henry VI* as *Richard Duke of York*, while at one point referring readers to '*History of Lear*, 13.31'—that is, the 1608 quarto. These titles will be completely puzzling to anyone unfamiliar with the one-volume edition.

Jowett follows the *Complete Works* again in preferring a 'theatrical' to an 'authorial' text, aligning himself with the elevation of the theatre in recent years and the parallel attempt to devalue the author. In his discussion of the textual relationships between the quartos and the Folio (the most valuable section of his introduction), Jowett summarizes the case for regarding Q1 as being 'based on a reconstruction of the play put together by the actors of the Lord Chamberlain's Men', as argued by several scholars from D. L. Patrick in 1936 to Peter Davison in 1996, and finally endorses it, having registered some objections (pp. 123–7). Yet he also argues that the Folio text derives from an authorial document via a scribal copy (p. 120), for the Folio stage directions agree with the quarto in several details describing actual stage business which would be

unlikely to survive memorial transmission. (But he fails to note that the Folio's updating of verb forms, such as 'spitteth' to 'spits', or 'readeth' to 'reads', suggests that the Folio scribe may have modernized Shakespeare's English, for such spellings only became dominant in the seventeenth century.) Jowett seems to distance himself from extreme positions, in which 'performance is all that counts', and where Q1 *Hamlet* is preferred to Shakespeare's authentic text (p. 129), but he bases his edition on Q1 since it 'has high theatrical authority', while at the same time claiming that it 'largely retains authorial texture' (p. 130). This is an attempt to have the best of both worlds, but Jowett then has to list the 'unignorable disadvantages in selecting Q1 as control text', including omissions of lines, which can be explained as 'mistakes in the printing house', various kinds of erroneous readings, which prove that 'the text has deteriorated in the process of transmission' (and which are here remedied by adopting 'readings found in F'), and so on (pp. 130–2). An air of special pleading hangs over this discussion. At all events, Jowett's choice of Q1 as copy-text results in the shortest edition of *Richard III* in recent years. John Dover Wilson's New Cambridge edition (1954) includes 3,528 verse lines (I omit the prose passages in I. iv); the late Antony Hammond's Arden edition (1981) ran out at 3,535 lines; Janis Lull's new New Cambridge (1999), based on the Folio text, printed 3,552 lines; Gary Taylor's edition for the Oxford *Complete Works* (1988) reduced the play to 3,400 lines; while Jowett only admits 3,339 lines. Fortunately, in an appendix (pp. 359–65) Jowett prints 159 lines he has omitted from the Folio, bringing his total to 3,498—still more than fifty lines shorter than Lull's text. Readers must see for themselves what has been left out, and whether they miss it or not. The preference for 'theatrical' texts is a recent fashion which may prove ephemeral. Cutting a text for performance was always a theatrical decision affected by non-literary factors, such as the playing time and the number of available actors, which authors must have endured unwillingly. I would prefer editors to print the full authorial text and to record their hypotheses as to the form it might have taken once submitted to the exigencies of theatrical adaptation. After all, Q1 would still need extensive cutting, which makes it only relatively more 'theatrical' than F1.

The strengths of this edition are in areas that used to be known as scholarly. In both the introduction and the notes Jowett provides clear and helpful digests of Shakespeare's use of his source material (essentially More, as mediated through Hall and Holinshed), in several places valuably indicating Shakespeare's inventiveness, as he collapsed or expanded time, aged some characters, and revived others from the dead, in line with his conception of an overall design. 'Shakespeare's dramatization of the chronicles introduces major episodes early in the play that are almost entirely fictional, a massive prologue sequence written in an imaginative, poetic, and classically informed style'. Again, 'despite his debt to the chronicles for historical information, Shakespeare's account of events after the murder of the young princes is organized around two fictional encounters: first Richard's confrontation with the two queens and his mother in IV. iv, and then the ghosts' appearance to Richard and Richmond on the eve of the Battle of Bosworth' (p. 22). In his notes Jowett helpfully points out how 'Shakespeare reshapes events to seed Richard's downfall in the moment his reign begins', inventing the interview with Buckingham in IV. ii (p. 285). Where some recent editors would like to abandon the whole concept of a play having an author, Jowett recreates Shakespeare's controlling intelligence behind this expansive version of history.

Jowett also adds valuable comments on Shakespeare's use of literary sources, such as Seneca's plays (pp. 23–4, 168, 198, 206, 289), the *Mirror for Magistrates* (pp. 22–3,

24–5, 148–9, 151, 274), and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* (e.g. pp. 25–7, 206, 214, 289, 298–9). However, I was unpersuaded by his attempts to describe *Richard II* as a revenge play (pp. 25, 38). He diligently cites Shakespeare's use of traditional proverbs, and notes many biblical allusions, many of those in Richard's role being ironic or blasphemous (e.g. pp. 155, 187, 232, 318, 333). He also helpfully cites sixteenth-century theological discussions of conscience and despair (e.g. pp. 196, 200, 343, 350). Like other Oxford editors, Jowett makes good use of the *OED* (for instance, the word 'castaways' (II. ii. 6) is 'entirely literal. *OED* does not record the seafaring sense before 1799': p. 217), and like them his index marks with an asterisk notes which supplement information in that great tool. The editor has sustained an alert scrutiny throughout the annotation, which is the fullest yet provided for this play.

Inevitably, not all notes convince. I cannot think that in Clarence's dream, the reference to 'Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl' (I. iv. 25) may be 'an ironic allusion to St Paul's metaphor of hope as the anchor of soul' (p. 195). Not all readers will be persuaded that the 'lady's chamber' in which 'Grim-visaged war . . . capers nimbly' (I. ii. 9–12) refers to 'a lady's vagina' (p. 148), or that 'Your bedchamber' (I. ii. 109) indicates the same bodily part (p. 165), or that Queen Elizabeth, describing herself as being 'not barren to bring forth complaints', and so intending to 'send forth plenteous tears to drown the world' (II. ii. 66–9) is referring to 'her menstrual cycle' (p. 220). When the Duchess of York describes her grandchildren as 'Incapable and shallow innocents' (II. ii. 17), Jowett takes 'incapable' to mean 'unsusceptible'. Hammond's gloss, 'unable to comprehend, unaware', seems preferable. Jowett might have observed that Shakespeare's characters often use the word 'Avaunt' (I. ii. 44) in addressing witches, real or imagined, and he might have noted the oddity of Richard greeting the two murderers as 'my executioners' (I. iii. 339), where 'my' would normally imply 'those coming to execute me'—executioners usually being state officials, appointed by the Crown. But in general the level of annotation is high, with several excellent notes.

The introduction, once it moves on from traditional scholarly topics to literary-critical interpretation, is less successful. It is composed of fourteen separate sections (pp. 3–72), followed by a survey of the play's theatrical history (pp. 72–110), in which Jowett admires 'new ways of conceptualizing the play', especially 'productions that deviate some way, or even considerably' from the original texts (p. 73). Jowett's orientation as a critic can be seen from his comment that 'Marjorie Gerber's influential study'—'Descanting on Deformity', in *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers* (1987)—'has placed psychoanalytic interpretation and considerations of gender in the foreground, showing how these cannot be separated from the arena of politics as traditionally defined' (p. 11). Although properly aware of some historical contexts, such as the Elizabethan language and printing-house practices, Jowett seems not to have noticed the inevitable anachronisms that result when these two twentieth-century interpretative schema are applied to Elizabethan drama, and he goes so far as to include the speculative psychocritical reading of Shakespeare's career by C. L. Barber and R. P. Wheeler, *The Whole Journey* (1986), in his list of works frequently referred to, a list which (inexplicably) does not include Wolfgang Clemen's *Commentary on Shakespeare's Richard III* (1957; English translation 1968). Jowett imposes psychoanalytical categories on the play without any compunction: Richard indulges in 'narcissistic fantasy' (p. 29); although 'deeply unlovable, almost everyone expresses emotional need for him' (p. 40); when he bares his breast to Anne's sword Richard displays 'aggressive passivity' and thus 'transfigures Anne', and when placing his ring on her finger—'Even so thy breast encloseth my poor heart' (I. ii. 190)—he exemplifies 'a fantasy of

prenatal engulfment by the female that Richard expresses elsewhere too' (p. 43 and n.). A reference to the Tower of London provokes an allusion to 'Sigmund Freud's commentary on the monuments of London as "mnemic symbols"' (p. 55), while Richard's belated wooing of the Queen for the hand of her daughter shows him attempting to find 'a new mother figure', in order to satisfy his 'maternal dependency' (p. 65).

Such interpretations impose inappropriate modern preconceptions on literature of the past. Jowett does equally assiduous homage to feminism, arguing that while the play mostly dramatizes the 'masculine scenarios' of medieval history, '*Richard II* presents a feminized community, presided over by three queens and a queen mother', a 'community of victims' which 'becomes an active force in disabling and defeating Richard' (p. 1). But Richard loses the power he had gained by his overreaching, pushing his accomplices too far, by his patent lack of legitimacy as a ruler, by the workings of his conscience, and by Richmond's superior military force. The women, who appear in relatively few scenes, are commentators used to sum up the cycle of chaos and misfortune which has ruined their own and others' lives, and to curse Richard. Women play a proportionally more important role in Shakespeare's histories than in the chronicles, but they are often locked in conflict between themselves, competing for power and survival. The problem with feminist, as with other political, criticism is that it generalizes and falsifies local incidents in a play in order to extrapolate feel-good moral lessons which validate a contemporary agenda. So Jowett argues that Richard's 'withered body is a symptom of imperfect maturation in the womb', which explains why he is 'consistently hostile' to women, and he even speculates that Richard has been adversely affected by 'Margaret's part in tormenting, and killing his father', which in turn suggests that 'his interpretations of his deformity might be seen as effects of identifying Margaret as a wildly aberrant alternative mother figure' (p. 36). Supposedly, 'the malignant forces that Richard blames are . . . feminized abstractions', but when he blames 'Edward's wife, that monstrous witch' and 'that harlot strumpet Shore' for causing his withered arm (III. iv. 72-7), by embodying 'disruptive femininity' in actual women 'he shifts monstrosity from himself' to them (p. 36). In other words, a male capable of a mature relationship with women, whole in body and psyche, would behave differently. But the focus of blame that Richard identifies in soliloquy, the only time when we know that he is telling the truth, is not 'femininity' but 'dissembling nature', which has 'cheated [him] of feature', and sent him into the world 'scarce half made up' (I. i. 18-22). As for Richard's impromptu accusation of the 'witches' who have withered his arm, Jowett has forgotten his own citation of the source's account: 'More notes that the lords knew that Richard had always had a withered arm, and so that his display was a pretence and a trap' (p. 256), a pretext to have Hastings executed. It cannot be taken seriously as a fixed part of Richard's personality, according to modern interpretational schemes.

Knowing how to read a play has become a problem for current literary theory, with its dogma that, since works of literature cannot reliably represent any external reality, they refer to themselves, the practice of writing, or that of acting. In the theatre we obviously confront actors representing characters, in an imagined world, and although few today would share Dr Johnson's conviction that the spectator always knows that he is sitting in a theatre, in responding to drama it is necessary to keep an imaginative hold on the represented character and its role in the play, attending to but not foregrounding the actor. Jowett, however, insists that as the play begins 'the audience first sees an actor alone on stage' (p. 27), and he repeatedly discusses the action in terms of the actor's relation to the audience (e.g. pp. 32, 41). From here it is a small step to arguing

that the play is in fact 'about the nature of performance' (p. 1), and to imposing on it a peculiarly modern notion of self-reflexivity, describing 'the play's own activity of playing' (p. 21), in which Richard has 'a meta-theatrical function' (p. 34), and where 'Anne, like the audience, is susceptible to the perverse erotic charm of the theatre' (p. 41). Of course, Shakespeare does draw attention to Richard's awareness of his own hypocritical brilliance, but when pressed too hard this insight submerges the character into the actor. Jowett cites a recent claim to find 'precise connections between parthenogenesis, the monstrous birth and the artist', a bizarre idea in itself, which he appropriates in arguing that 'Richard defies nature and seeks to determine himself as . . . a creature fashioned by the poet. This, after all, is what qualifies the spontaneity of all actors' roles' (p. 37). But what then happens to the character?

Some naive observers allegorize recent changes in literary-critical fashion as a progressive development which has rejected outmoded approaches. Those who do not share this model of progress may observe that, whether or not there have been gains, there have certainly been losses. The most spectacular casualty in current approaches has been the language and form of literary works. Jowett offers no comment on the poetry of *Richard III*, and only a few uncomprehending remarks on its rhetoric (e.g. pp. 25–6, 60–2). It is hard to know how, in his wonderfully sustained engagement with the play's text, he could have failed to notice the enormous quantity of rhetorical figures it contains, showing Shakespeare's unflagging energization of language. In its 3,500 lines there are approximately 3,800 instances of rhetorical figures (485 instances of *antithesis*, 485 of *parison*, 404 puns, 365 of *ploké*, 205 of *anaphora*, 180 of *epitheton*, 163 of *polyptoton*, and so on: I cite a forthcoming study by Stefan Keller). In IV. iv, the famous scene of the three queens' lament and recrimination, Shakespeare uses 811 figures in 539 lines. Yet this verbal dimension, this whole subculture of artful language, so cherished by Renaissance writers and readers, goes unobserved by modern editors. That scholars and critics should rediscover this historical dimension of Shakespeare's text is an event which we must await, depending on one's temperament, with greater or less hope.

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ROSLYN LANDER KNUTSON. **Playing Companies and Commerce in**

Shakespeare's Time. Pp. x+198. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. £37.50.

The title of this book might lead one to expect a large-scale enterprise. Professor Knutson's study is in fact narrow, technical, and detailed—and probably the better for it. Her main subject is the so-called 'War of the Theatres' that scholars have long extrapolated from satirical interchanges that took place in plays presumptively staged in the years 1599–1601, notably *Cynthia's Revels*, *Histrion-Matrix*, *Hamlet*, *Poetaster*, and *Satiromastix*. For readers educated in the 1960s (as I was) the 'War of the Theatres' was simply a fact. The outlines of the story were laid down by scholars in the second half of the nineteenth century (from Cartwright in 1864 through Simpson in 1878 to Penniman's *The War of the Theatres* in 1897). Frederick Fleay's *Chronicle History of the London Stage* (1890) inferred commercial ramifications from personal conflict, an interpretation further developed in R. B. Sharpe's *The Real War of the Theaters* (1935) and 'transformed' by Alfred Harbage 'into a class war between the public and private playhouses' (*Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, 1952). Half a century on, the word of Harbage is no longer mistaken for the word of God, and many scholars have