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SHAKESPEARE LECTURE

JACOBEAN PLAYWRIGHTS AND 'JUDICIOUS' SPECTATORS

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WHEN Hamlet is lecturing the Players at Elsinore about practising truth to nature in their craft he admonishes them that 'this overdone, or come tardy off, though it makes the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve: the censure of which one' (he adds) 'must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others'. Hamlet's ideas have a classical background. But hardly anyone in England had discussed plays or acting in quite those terms before, with the exception of Ben Jonson. About a year before *Hamlet*, in 1599, Shakespeares's company had given *Every Man out of his Humour*, that novel and deliberately programmatic work where Jonson appeals to 'judicious friends' and 'happy judgements' in his audience, as against the cavils of 'envious censors' and downright 'fools'.[1] The adjective *judicious* was still new to the language, and Hamlet underlines it by making it serve as a noun (the only place where Shakespeare uses it in this way). It gives the prince's pronouncement an extra touch of fastidiousness, even a hint of up-to-the-minute fashionable affectation, such as Jonson himself illustrates, very soon afterwards, in *Cynthia's Revels*, when Mercury praises Crites, the 'perfect' moralist and critic, as one who 'strives rather to be that which men call judicious, than to be thought so: and [who] is so truly learned, that he affects not to shew it'. Even so, Jonson in turn borrows straightforwardly from Hamlet in the self-justifying afterword to his next comedy, *Poetaster*, where he announces that he will now bring out a tragedy, for which the satisfaction of one 'judicious'

[1] *Every Man out of his Humour*, Induction, ll. 56–65, 131–3, 194–6, in C. H. Herford & Percy Simpson (eds), *Ben Jonson*, Vol. 3 (Oxford, 1927). (I have modernized spellings in all quotations in this paper).

person 'alone' will be sufficient, and equivalent to 'a Theatre'.[2] Between them, Jonson and Hamlet evidently launched the word; in the London theatres about 1600 it implied an important step in critical self-consciousness. Within the next few years, Middleton, Marston and other playwrights were hoping expressly for approval from 'judicious spirits'; by way of variant, Heywood appealed to 'judicial spirits' in his epilogue to *The Golden Age* in 1610. In the sequel, *The Silver Age*, Heywood appealed in his prologue to 'this judging Nation'.[3]

Judging and *judgement* were commoner words than *judicial* or *judicious*. In the Caroline theatre, as Michael Neill has pointed out, the buzzword of commendation was to be *wit* (covering dramatic construction as well as language).[4] *Wit* was already a prominent word in the dramatic vocabulary of Shakepeare's time. But during the last Elizabethan and early Jacobean years—from 1599, the moment of *Every Man out of his Humour*, to about 1613, the time of Shakespeare's retirement—the keyword in a dramatist's approach to his public was rather the word *judgement*. A few earlier plays anticipate this keyword. For instance, the Prologue to Lyly's *Midas*, acted by the boys of St Paul's in 1589, excuses the piece as a 'mingle-mangle' by alluding to the difficulty of conforming to changeable fashions and divergent tastes, but assures the 'Gentlemen' present that the actors are 'jealous of your judgements, because you are wise'; and Marlowe invites 'patient judgements' in his prologue to *Faustus*, as if tempering the notorious 'vaunt' he had delivered in *Tamburlaine*. But if we search back before 1599, to 1587—the probable year of *Tamburlaine* and of *The Spanish Tragedy* which, with Lyly's comedies, gave shape to the drama of Shakespeare's day,—we can only find a few such appeals to

[2] *Cynthia's Revels*, II.iii.132, and *Poetaster*, To the Reader, ll. 222–8, in Herford & Simpson, *Ben Jonson*, Vol. 4 (Oxford, 1932).

[3] Thomas Middleton, *The Family of Love*, Epistle to the Reader (1608), in A. H. Bullen (ed.), *Works*, Vol. 3 (1885); Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, Prologue (1600), in H. Harvey Wood (ed.), *Plays*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1934); compare Barnabe Barnes, *The Devil's Charter*, Epilogue (1607); John Day, *Law Tricks*, To the Reader (1608); Fletcher, *The Coxcomb*, Epilogue (1609?); also Thomas Heywood, *The Golden Age* (1610) and *The Silver Age* (1611), in *Pearson Reprints* of *Heywood's Dramatic Works*, Vol. 3 (1874), pp. 79, 86.

[4] Michael Neill, '"Wit's most accomplished Senate": the audience of the Caroline private theaters', *Studies in English Literature*, **18** (1978). I have discussed topics related to the present paper in '"Wit" in Jacobean comedy' (1984), reprinted in *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobeans* (Cambridge, 1986).

'judgement': only five, perhaps,[5] out of some forty plays provided with prologues or epilogues or else published, within that dozen years, with epistles to a patron or to the reader. In contrast, the fifteen years from 1599 to 1613 yield at least thirty-five plays containing a similar appeal, out of eighty-four furnished with prologues or epilogues, or with prefatory addresses. Admittedly, more plays are extant altogether from the later period—perhaps 179 plays of all kinds, as compared with ninety-four. But it is noticeable that somewhat more plays from the later or Jacobean period contain extra-dramatic passages addressing the public directly, either from the stage or the printed text; and specific references to the idea of critical 'judgement' become much more frequent, arising in roughly one play out of every five, as contrasted with just over one in twenty.

'Judgement' required knowledge and understanding; in other words, classical learning. As in Lyly's prologue, it was the province of 'Gentlemen'—though members of the wider public that Marlowe, for example, was writing for might also be allowed to claim their share. Heywood's sequence of plays beginning with *The Golden Age* was intended as a course in popular education, dramatizing a cycle of Greek myths for 'this judging Nation', with a liberal dose of spectacle, from the stage of the Red Bull; but in the epilogue to the third play, *The Brazen Age*, Heywood observes that 'the learned ... only' can 'censure right' how well he has condensed his sources: 'The rest we crave, whom we unlettered call,/Rather to attend than judge'. This distinction between the

[5] Prologues to Lyly, *Midas* (1589); Marlowe, *Dr Faustus* (*c.* 1592); and Henry Porter, *Two Angry Women of Abingdon* (pub. 1599); Printer's preface (1591) to Lyly's *Endimion*; and cf. R. Wilmot's letter to 'the Gentlemen Students of the Inner Temple' and 'the Gentlemen of the Middle Temple' (1591), prefacing his *Tancred and Gismunda* (Hazlitt/Dodsley's *Old English Plays*, Vol. 7 [1874]). In addition, the prologue to *The Wars of Cyrus*, acted by the boys of the Chapel Royal, is addressed to 'gentle gentlemen,. ... worthy to judge of us' (ed. James Paul Brawner, *Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, **28**, Urbana, 1942). *The Wars of Cyrus* is a faintly classical anonymous blank verse piece, largely derived from Xenophon. Some scholars would date it *c.* 1588, i.e. after *Tamburlaine* (see E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Vol. 4 [Oxford, 1923], p. 58). It was printed in 1594. But Brawner would attribute it to Richard Farrant, Master of the Chapel Royal from 1576 to 1580, and he gives strong arguments for dating the play in or just after 1576—possibly as the first play Farrant produced when he opened the (first) Blackfriars in that year as a private theatre (edn cit., pp. 12–20, 38–71). In any case, *The Wars of Cyrus* is probably the earliest extant play written for a private theatre and containing a prologue addressed to the 'judgement' of the 'gentlemen' gathered there. It strengthens the case for a special association between the idea of 'judgement' and private theatre audiences.

two grades of spectator is significant, though it is also significant that Heywood, an experienced actor-playwright, counts upon finding both at the same performance.

The emphasis on learning or judgement in prologues and the like after 1600 was in part the expression of what may be called a new wave of playwrights, Shakespeare's younger contemporaries, who began to write for the theatres after the disappearance of the first generation of University Wits. Chapman was an assertively self-taught scholar and so, in a sense, was Ben Jonson (who had the benefit of schooling at Westminster under the distinguished antiquarian, William Camden); John Marston, an Oxford graduate, was also a member of the Middle Temple, as likewise, it appears, was John Webster, who collaborated with him in his revised production of *The Malcontent* in 1604;[6] Heywood and Middleton had been students at Cambridge and Oxford; Thomas Dekker was an industrious pamphleteer as well as a playwright. For all of these men, a display of learning must have seemed natural and necessary, or at least advantageous. The so-called War of the Theatres, which excited attention in the wake of *Every Man out of his Humour*, was due, as Rosencrantz and Guildenstern explain to Hamlet, to the renewed opening of 'private' playhouses—Paul's in 1599 and the second Blackfriars in 1600—and the competition between the boy actors appearing there and the adult companies established in the public theatres. But the War was also a personal slanging-match between Jonson on one side and Marston with Dekker on the other. That meant that the stage was now a place where literary reputations could be built up or deflated. It was all the more important because there were insufficient openings for men with scholarly attainments; returns from publishing were meagre; and the benefits of patronage were elusive or disappointing.

But further, the writers' appeal for favourable 'judgement', which outlasted the two-or-three year War, signals a continuing change in the social composition of the London public. Evidently a bigger proportion of the public was coming from the ranks of the educated and the wealthy; courtiers, professional men and well-to-do Londoners like the circle of the letter-writer, John Chamberlain; students from the Inns of Court—a particularly prominent group; fashionable gallants, of uncertain status; and

[6] M. C. Bradbrook, *John Webster, Citizen and Dramatist* (1980), p. 28; on these writers as a group, see Alfred Harbage, *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (New York, 1952), pp. 90–101.

an increasing number of country gentlemen visiting London for business or pleasure, especially during the terms when the law-courts were sitting, accompanied often by their wives. This increase in the numbers of wealthy playgoers does not mean that the poor and 'unlettered' were crowded out—in spite of the contention of Professor Ann Jennalie Cook that workmen, apprentices, servants and even shopkeepers had neither the time nor the money to go to plays.[7] On the contrary, in 1603, for example, a moralist, Henry Crosse, could lament that 'poor pinched, needy creatures', surviving on beggary, 'yet will make hard shift but that they will see a Play, let wife and children ... languish' as best they might. In 1609, in an often quoted passage of satire, Dekker cheerfully observed that 'The Theatre is your Poet's Royal Exchange', where 'your Gallant, your Courtier, and your Captain, had wont to be the soundest paymasters', but where 'the Farmer's son' is as free to come as 'your Templar', and

> your Stinkard has the self-same liberty to be there in his Tobacco-Fumes, which your sweet Courtier hath: and ... your Car-man and Tinker claim as strong a voice in their suffrage, and sit to give judgement on the play's life and death, as well as the proudest *Momus* among the tribe of *Critic*;

and, rather less cheerfully, in a prologue of 1611, for the same Red Bull theatre where Heywood was delivering his digest of classical instruction, Dekker hit out at dramatists pandering to the masses:

> A Play whose *Rudeness*, *Indians* would abhor,
> If't fill a house with Fishwives, *Rare, They All Roar.*
> It is not Praise is sought for (Now) but *Pence*,
> Tho' dropp'd, from Greasy-apron *Audience.*

Whatever allowance we make for satiric exaggeration, statements like those surely confirm the presence in some number of lower-class playgoers. Indeed, about 1618, the Mayor of Exeter, resisting repeated visits from acting companies to his city, explained to

[7] Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576–1642* (Princeton, 1981). Cook's conclusions have been accepted by Michael Hattaway in *Elizabethan Popular Theatre* (1982), pp. 44–50, but opposed by Martin Butler, in *Theatre and Crisis 1632–1642* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 293–306, and by Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. xiii, 3–4.

the Privy Council that 'those who spend their money on plays are ordinarily very poor people'.[8]

Nevertheless, it seems likely that working men and the poor, however greedy for intervals of pleasure, must have cut down their attendance at plays after the years of dreadful hardship in the mid-1590s. We are told that after the years of dearth culminating in 1597 the buying-power of a London building worker's wages stood at the lowest point for 200 years; and over the next forty years, punctuated as they were by economic depressions, the recovery of wages in London and the provinces was both uneven and slight.[9] No doubt the effects of this economic hardship can be read in the records of acting throughout the provinces, where the number of players' companies and the number of their known visits had been rising steadily since the time of Shakespeare's childhood, only to fall away just as steadily soon after 1595.[10] If we could have statistical records about the middling and poorer classes' playgoing in London, I presume they would tell a very similar tale.

But meanwhile, playgoing by the well-to-do was evidently increasing. From the scattered records of London theatre attendances by known individuals, nearly all belonging to the gentry,

[8] Henry Crosse, *Vertues Common-wealth* (1603), in Alexander B. Grosart (ed.) *Occasional Issues*, **7** (1878), p. 118; Dekker, *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), Chap. 6 (quoted, Gurr, *Playgoing* p. 222); *If This be not a Good Play, the Devil is in It*, Prologue (1611), in Fredson Bowers (ed.), *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, Vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1958); letter from the Mayor of Exeter, in J. T. Murray, *English Dramatic Companies, 1558–1642*, Vol.2 (1910), p. 6.

[9] E. H. Phelps Brown & Sheila V. Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, compared with Builders' Wage-Rates', App. B, *Economica*, **23**(n.s.) (1956). See Alan Everitt, 'Farm Labourers', and Peter Bowden, 'Agricultural Prices, Farm Profits, and Rents', in Joan Thirsk (ed.) *The Agrarian History of England and Wales IV, 1500–1640* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 396–465, 593–695; John Walter & Keith Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England' (1976), in Paul Slack (ed.), *Rebellion, Popular Protest and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1984); C. G. A. Clay, *Economic expansion and social change: England 1500–1700* (Cambridge, 1984), Vol. 1, pp. 38–45, 49; Vol. 2 pp. 28–31.

[10] See my article, with Gerald Harrison & Bruce Cochrane, 'Les Comédiens et leur public en Angleterre de 1520 à 1640', in Jean Jacquot (ed.), *Dramaturgie et société ... aux XVI^e^ et XVII^e^ siècles* (Paris, 1968), Vol. 2, pp. 531–2, 538–41. (The statistical tables I gave there are inadequate by now, in view of the data published subsequently in Malone Society *Collections* and in *Records of Early English Drama*; but I believe the new data still confirm my general account of a prevailing increase in plays by professional companies touring the provinces from about 1560 to about 1595, followed by a decline).

that have been assembled by Professor Andrew Gurr, it emerges that less than ten names can be assigned to the fifteen years before 1595, but a dozen names to the five years following.[11] And not only the number of well-educated playgoers but the kind of interest they expressed appears to have been changing after about 1595. As a student at Lincoln's Inn, John Donne was said to be 'a great frequenter of Plays'; he was lastingly impressed by *Tamburlaine* and *Dr Faustus* and later, as a friend of Jonson, penned a tribute to *Volpone*; but his interest in the theatre, as shown by his poems of the mid-1590s, such as his Satires, was chiefly an amused fascination with the actors' resplendent costumes.[12] About the same time, the verse epigrams of Sir John Davies of the Middle Temple show a lively interest in the foibles of playgoers, but not in the actors or the playwrights or their plays. But by 1598 a minor poet, Robert Tofte, was describing how his own amour had been affected by a visit to a theatre to see *Love's Labour's Lost*; in 1598 also, the literary gossip, Francis Meres, could parallel Shakespeare with Plautus and Seneca, revealing an extensive acquaintance with his work and extolling him as 'the most excellent' of English writers for the stage; and in 1599 another minor poet, the Cambridge man, John Weever, devoted admiring epigrams to Shakespeare and to Jonson, Marston and the actor, Edward Alleyn, on the same plane as eminent poets, Spenser and Daniel; while Marston, in his verse satires of the same year, portrayed a gallant, obsessed by plays and players, who could utter nothing else but 'pure *Juliet* and *Romeo*'.[13] We can see the emergence of connoisseurship in stage affairs, especially in the works of Shakespeare. Professor Gurr lists a gentleman who really kept a commonplace book like that of Marston's stage-struck gallant: a Mr Edward Pudsey, who, about 1600, noted down extracts, apparently from memory, after performances, from

[11] Gurr, *Playgoing*, App. I.

[12] R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford, 1970), pp. 72–4, 117, 195: see Donne, *Elegy* XV, lines 59–60; *Satires* I, l. 99, and IV, ll. 180–87; *To Sir Henry Wotton* ('Here's no more news ...'), ll. 19–21. Sir John Davies's *Epigrams*, Nos 1, 3, 7, 28, 39, 47 (1593?) contain satiric sketches of playgoers; see Gurr, op. cit.

[13] Robert Tofte, *'Love's Labour Lost*, I once did see a play ...', in *Alba* (1598) ed. A. Grosart (1880), p. 105; Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia* (1598) in G. Gregory Smith (ed.), *Elizabethan Critical Essays* (1904), Vol. 2 pp. 317–18; John Weaver, *Epigrammes in the Oldest Cut & Newest Fashion* (1599), ed. R. B. McKerrow (1911), pp. 75, 76, 95, 96, 101; John Marston, *The Scourge of Villanie* (1599), Satire X 'Humours', ed. G. B. Harrison (1925), p. 107.

plays by Jonson, Marston, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dekker.[14] To give one more example of the evolution of educated or academic taste: back in 1580, and again in 1593, the Cambridge don, Gabriel Harvey, had ridiculed the professional stage in the spirit of Sir Philip Sidney; but about 1601 he made a note that Shakespeare's poems and his tragedy of *Hamlet* 'have it in them, to please the wiser sort'.[15] I presume that 'the judicious' were to be found, if anywhere, in the neighbourhood of the writers and gentlemen I have just mentioned.

Very likely it was this gathering interest in the stage shown by members of the gentry that made possible and encouraged the rise of the private theatres, where the boy actors flourished between 1599 and 1608, when Shakespeare's company, the King's men, in effect put a stop to their competition and then occupied Blackfriars in addition to the Globe. The private playhouses were relatively small and intimate, roofed in, artificially lit and expensive; Alfred Harbage describes them as coterie theatres in his impressive and influential study of *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*.[16] Although Harbage recognizes that audiences at Paul's, Blackfriars and Whitefriars must have overlapped to a large extent with those at the public theatres and that often the same poets wrote for both kinds of stage, he holds that the work of the private theatres was aimed at an exclusive clientele and expressed a self-conscious but rootless avant-garde, remote from the healthy national mainstream of the productions at the Globe, the Fortune and the Red Bull. Choristers by training, the boy actors excelled in music and elocution—and parody. Unlike the self-governing adult companies, they were controlled by their managers, who included literary men, such as Marston and Daniel. And no doubt these factors affected their styles and repertory. For instance, the private theatres ignored the type of national history play which had been popular in the 1590s and still sometimes appeared on the public stage under James I, now

[14] Gurr, *Playgoing*, pp. 200–1.

[15] Gabriel Harvey: see Smith (ed.), *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, Vol. 1, p. 125; Vol. 2, p. 261; G. Blakemore Evans (ed.), *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston, 1974), p. 1840.

[16] See above, n. 6. For comparison with Harbage, see the studies of the private playhouses in *Dramaturgie et Société* (n. 10, above), especially Jean Jacquot, 'La Répertoire des compagnies d'enfants à Londres (1600–1610): Essai d' interprétation socio-dramaturgique', pp. 729–82; and Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: the story of a theatre company, 1553–1608* (Cambridge, 1982).

glorifying the Tudor past. Instead, the private theatres concentrated on satire and social comedy, in plays studded with parody and with topical allusions, genuine or suspected, that regularly brought their authors into trouble with the Privy Council. And the allusive, sophisticated manner and satiric bias of plays by Marston and others give some weight to Harbage's account of them as coterie drama. All the same, I think Harbage exaggerates the gap between the two kinds of theatre, because he underrates the prominence of the gentry at large among London playgoers and because he sets aside the more self-aware and self-critical tone of drama in general about the time of *Hamlet*.

One sign of this development, as I have partly indicated already, was a change in the style of prologues, which now much more commonly discuss the public's reaction to plays or voice the dramatist's hopes of success, in the manner of Terence, as well as, or instead of, introducing the plot. In particular, there was a new style for inductions—opening scenes where the delivery of a prologue is amplified, usually into dialogue between two or more speakers and sometimes with stage business. Earlier inductions had prepared for the mood of the main action, or recounted antecedent events, though they could also introduce the role of a spectator within the play, as in *The Spanish Tragedy* or *The Taming of the Shrew*. But with *Every man out of his Humour* Ben Jonson brought in a new style of induction, where critical theory and the state of public taste are made the subjects of discussion, and the real spectators are provoked into critical engagement within the play. Before introducing two of the characters in the main play, Jonson provides a spokesman (who lectures the audience on the true meaning of 'humours' and on the difference between those who are and those who would like to appear 'judicious') together with two friends of the spokesman, one of whom sketches out the 'laws' and the classical history of comedy; and the two friends remain on stage to fill recurrent pauses in the main dialogue, one amiably questioning and the other obligingly explaining the methods the dramatist has used in his art. Jonson incorporates a theoretical disquisition that reminds a modern reader of the prefaces of Bernard Shaw. There were precedents in the theory-ridden comedies of Renaissance Italy, but Jonson goes further; if criticism can be defined as the deduction of general 'laws' or principles and their application to particular works of literature, then Jonson, after Philip Sidney, initiated dramatic criticism in England. But other inductions point in the same direction as *Every Man out of his Humour*. In the anonymous crime story, *A Warning*

for Fair Women, also performed by Shakespeare's company in 1599, three speakers named Tragedy, History and Comedy debate what the public really want; and Heywood's early, undemanding romance, *The Four Prentices of London: with the Conquest of Jerusalem*, has three prologue speakers to forestall likely objections and to urge the 'clear-sighted Gentlemen' present 'with the eyes of their judgements' to look tolerantly on any unintentional 'errors'.[17] Marston competed with Jonson in his inductions. *Antonio and Mellida*, his first play for Paul's in 1599, was introduced by eight of the boys, with 'cloaks cast over their apparel', questioning the parts they were about to play and ridiculing theatrical stereotypes taken from *Tamburlaine*; two years later, *What You Will* opened with two friends of the author pouring scorn on habitual detractors (or 'Knights of the *Mew*') and—evidently against Jonson's dominance—rebutting the idea that what 'the world' thought of a play should be decided by 'three or four deem'd most judicious':

> *Music and Poetry* were first approv'd
> By common sense; and that which pleased most,
> Held most allowed pass: [your] rules of Art
> Were shap'd to pleasure, not pleasure to your rules.

Other inductions of the next few years bring spectators into the dialogue. Webster's, for the Globe production of Marston's *Malcontent*, has Burbage and other actors to justify the borrowing of the piece and its freedom in satire to two gallants who insist upon sitting on the stage, one of them a frequenter of Blackfriars, who has 'seen this play often' and complains 'it is a bitter play', although he '[has] most of the jests here in [his] table-book'. Again, in a Blackfriars play of 1606, *The Isle of Gulls* by John Day (a comedy that brought its producers into trouble), the Prologue begs 'gentlemen' to 'judge' the plight of the hard-working poet, after three representative playgoers have been heard on the stage, one gentleman demanding to hear 'vice anatomized', preferably with some 'great man's life charactered in't', the second wanting bawdry, and the third, 'a stately penned history'—which is scoffed at as 'fustian', with 'swelling comparisons, and bombast Epithets'. In the same year, in a Paul's prologue glancing at the same contradictions of taste, Francis Beaumont declared that 'inductions [were] out of date';[18] but he was then to provide a

[17] Richard Simpson (ed.), *A Warning for Fair Women*, in *The School of Shakespere*, Vol. 2 (1878); *The Four Prentices of London*, in *Heywood's Dramatic Works*, Vol. 2.

[18] Francis Beaumont, *The Woman Hater* (1606).

notable one himself, in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, where the naïve but vociferous demands of the grocer and his wife twist the actors' preparations entirely out of shape. And the liveliest of inductions about audience opinions was still to come, in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* of 1614, for the opening of a new public theatre, the Hope.

These inductions reveal a new climate of vocal theatrical criticism, even if it was not yet taking the form of essays or treatises. So do the dedications and prefatory letters which now become more common, as the playgoing public extends into a reading public as well. But it is striking, from these allusive references, that the dramatists are at least as much concerned with their audience and their audience's unpredictability as with their own guiding intentions. They have the precepts and examples of a common classical education to appeal to, but not the yardstick of a shared educated taste, such as writers were to assume by the age of Dryden. Critical 'judgement' was not so much a settled reality as an ideal, or perhaps a deferential supposition, even in what Harbage calls the theatres of the coteries.

Hamlet considers that the penny-paying groundlings 'for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise'; but he has no more esteem for the elder statesman, Polonius, who had been 'accounted a good actor' in a university play in his youth: 'he's for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps'. As the private theatres got going, writers were optimistic at first: Marston hoped for 'judicious' appreciation from 'calm attention of choice audience' at Paul's, and Jonson (though 'doubtful') for 'sweet attention,/Quick sight, and quicker apprehension,/ (The lights of judgement's throne)', which shone—if 'any where'—at Blackfriars.[19] But very quickly, hope gave way to complaint, whichever type of playhouse was in question. In general, Ben Jonson took much the same line as Hamlet: on the one hand, he insisted that the common spectator was seduced by 'the concupiscence of dances and antics' and by that 'excellent vice of judgement' in play-writing that preferred dash and volubility to the exercise of 'election and a mean'; on the other hand, he attacked the arrogance of those who, for instance, would misjudge his unsuccessful *Catiline* on the strength of 'some pieces' of

[19] Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, Prologue and epilogue (1600); Jonson, *Cynthia's Revels*, Prologue (1601).

Cicero conned at school.[20] In only one of his many statements on the subject—the prologue to *The Silent Woman* (at Blackfriars)—does Jonson say, as Marston had said in *What You Will*, that

> of old the art of making plays
> Was to content the people; and their praise
> Was to the poet money, wine, and bays—

as opposed to 'the sect of writers', in 'this age',

> That, only, for particular likings care,
> And will taste nothing that is popular;

everywhere else, he steps forward as a moral and cultural instructor, correcting an unenlightened and recalcitrant public. Similarly, Webster blamed 'the uncapable multitude' and the undiscriminating thirst for novelty among the general run of playgoers at the Red Bull for his disappointments over *The White Devil*; while after the failures of *The Faithful Shepherdess* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, Fletcher blamed 'the common prate/ Of common people', devoid of 'judgement', and in 1613 Beaumont's publisher was to blame 'want of judgement' in the public for not initially 'understanding the privy mark of *irony* about' his piece. Both of these works by as yet little-known authors had been produced at Blackfriars.

The dramatists would have liked, or said they would have liked, to write on the neo-classical lines Sir Philip Sidney had advocated. Like the courtly writers of closet drama from Sidney's circle, Jonson, Webster and Chapman wished to model their tragedies on those of Seneca, compact in plot and unremittingly stately and sententious in language. But the public thwarted this ambition. When Jonson published *Sejanus* in 1605, he confessed that he had broken 'the strict Laws of *Time*' and had failed to provide 'a proper *Chorus*', because it was impossible 'to observe the old state, and splendour of *Dramatic Poems*, with preservation of any popular delight'. However, he defended his inclusion of footnotes from Latin sources for learned readers and maintained that he had kept the essentials of tragedy, namely 'truth of Argument, dignity of Persons, gravity and height of Elocution, [and] fulness and frequency of Sentence'. Webster followed suit in 1612 with *The White Devil*, while complaining that 'the uncapable multitude'

[20] See Jonson, *Volpone*, Dedication to the Universities (1607); *Catiline*, Dedication to William, Earl of Pembroke (1611); *The Alchemist*, Epistle to the Reader (1612): cf. Jonas A. Barish, 'Jonson and the Loathèd Stage', in William Blisset *et al.* (eds), *A Celebration of Ben Jonson* (Toronto, 1973).

would have choked off 'the most sententious tragedy that ever was written, observing all the critical laws, as height of style, and gravity of person', even if it was 'enriched' with a 'sententious *Chorus*' and with the 'divine rapture' of a 'passionate and weighty' Messenger speech. Chapman asserted that the 'soul' of 'an authentical tragedy' was 'material instruction' (though not literal truth) and 'elegant and sententious excitation to virtue'; and in dedicating his *Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois* in 1613 to the eminent courtier, Sir Thomas Howard, he pointed out that such works were patronized by 'the greatest Princes of Italy' and claimed that 'in the scenical presentation' (at Whitefriars) his own tragedy had 'passed with approbation of more worthy judgements', although admittedly it had also encountered 'some maligners'.[21] In a similar vein, Fletcher professed to dispel popular 'errors' for readers of *The Faithful Shepherdess* by summarizing the correct laws of tragicomedy, which he had absorbed from Guarini.

Uneducated prejudice was not the only ground for complaint. Although organized opposition to the stage seems to have dropped for a time after 1600, writers sniped at abiding puritan enemies; and they feared the malice of informers, not without cause. They mocked the swagger of be-feathered gallants on the stage, and suspected the influence of claques.[22] Above all, they hit out at 'maligners' in the theatrical world itself. Jonson furnished *Poetaster* with 'An armed *Prologue*' so as to quash the opening speaker, who is the monster, Envy; and Envy loomed large in other plays, especially for the private theatres. Among thirty-three plays from the private theatres issued with prologues or prefaces between 1599 and 1608, while sixteen appeal to the audience's 'judgement', no less than twelve, often the same plays, lash out at malicious or envious detractors. No doubt a playwright could sometimes find envy a convenient scapegoat. But it was not necessarily a myth. In the expanding London of around 1605 there were three public and three private theatres in regular use—an exceptionally large market for plays (especially when we consider that throughout the last third of the seventeenth century an even more populous London could only sustain two theatres

[21] Webster, *The White Devil*, To the Reader (1612); Chapman, *The Revenge of Bussy d' Ambois*, Dedication (1613), in Thomas Marc Parrott (ed.), *The Tragedies of George Chapman* (1910).

[22] See Day, *The Isle of Gulls*, Induction (referring to 'a prepared company of gallants, to applaud his [the author's] jests, and grace out his play'), ed. G. B. Harrison (1936), sig. A2; Dekker, *The Gull's Hornbook*, Chap. 6. (on the behaviour of gallants on the stage).

and, much of the time, only one). But the inner ring of frequent and most influential Jacobean playgoers—courtiers and law students, writers and gallants—must have composed, not a coterie but, a small world, where jealousy and animosity were potentially explosive.

There was no settled code of manners or ideas prevailing in this small world surrounding the theatres. When Jonson published the Folio of his *Works* in 1616, he dedicated *Every Man out of his Humour* to his friends at the Inns of Court, 'as being born the judges of these studies'; but the lawyers only formed a single, though prominent, social group. Towards that time, we hear of meetings of scholarly gentlemen at the Mermaid, perhaps foreshadowing the clubs of Addison's day, but hardly constituting a nucleus of literary opinion.[23] The gentry who flocked to London in pursuit of pleasure and fashion as well as marriage-treaties or business made the prosperity of the private theatres possible. More than that, the influx of landed heirs, with their adventures and misadventures among the money-lenders, gallants and sharks of the capital, provided the central thread of social comedies, from Jonson's 'humour' plays onwards. But most of these gentlemen were lodgers, not residents; they were regarded (by the King, for instance) as social nuisances, neglecting their estates and duties in the shires; and they had little or no focus for social life, except perhaps in the taverns or in the theatres themselves.[24] Hence the importance of 'humours' and the social pretensions they imply, in comedy and satire, and in tragedy as well. In a number of plays about 1600 the central figure is a scholar or moralist, an aloof, caustic observer of the confusion of social values; for instance, Jonson's Macilente in *Every Man out of his Humour*, or Marston's Malcontent, or, in a sense, Hamlet or the Duke in *Measure for Measure*. Or else the theme of city comedies is a battle of wits over sex or money. *Volpone* is a supreme example, set at the aesthetic distance of Venice; but most plays with this theme have a topical, London setting, like *The Alchemist*. A characteristic example is Middleton's *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, produced at Paul's about 1605 and then at Blackfriars, where the hero is a bankrupt but sobered prodigal who resolves, in effect, to live up to his name, Witgood:

[23] I. A. Shapiro, 'The "Mermaid Club"', *Modern Language Review*, **45** (1950).
[24] Cf. Butler, *Theatre and Crisis* (n. 7, above), Chap. 6.

Well, how should a man live now, that has no living; hum? Why, are there not a million of men in the world, that only sojourn upon their brain, and make their wits their mercers; and am I not one amongst that million and cannot thrive upon't? Any trick, out of the compass of law, now would come happily to me. [I.i]

Witgood's and similar tricks hinge on social pretensions, but it is the battle of wits that gives the comedies their drive, not definition of status; as the editor of another Middleton play observes, 'no meaningful code of "manners" is established to distinguish the pretender from the gentleman'.[25] Emrys Jones has recently described *The Silent Woman* as the first West End comedy,[26] and some of Fletcher's plays might be said to follow suit; but there was no *drawing-room* comedy of manners—or 'genteel' comedy, as it was originally called—before Shirley's plays under Charles I and then the plays of the Restoration. For Jacobean playwrights, the subject-matter of comedy was precisely the blurring of social boundaries in London and the mixture of classes. That was the image in the mirror they held up to their spectators.

Thinking of his own *salon*-centred audiences in Paris, Molière was to remark, 'C'est une étrange entreprise que celle de faire rire les honnêtes gens': making gentlefolk laugh was a funny business.[27] The task of writing for the market was, if anything, stranger still for the Jacobeans, in view of the mixed composition of their total public. As we have seen, both John Day and Francis Beaumont stressed the incompatibility of different playgoers' demands. They were not the first; a few years earlier, for instance, Heywood expected, in the epilogue to his domestic tragedy, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, that 'some [would] judge [his play] too trivial, some too grave'. Diverse tastes in the theatre and changing standards constituted a problem. On the other hand, however, it was also a spur to writers to assert their independence. And here, I think, they gained a positive strength from the social mixture of their

[25] Richard Levin (ed.), Middleton, *Michaelmas Term*, Introduction (1966) p. xvii. For general studies of social topics in this body of plays, see L. C. Knights, *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson* (1937), and the more recent work of Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto, 1973), and Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy* (2nd edn, 1980).

[26] Emrys Jones, 'The First West End Comedy', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, **68** (1983).

[27] Molière, *La Critique de L'École des femmes*, scene vi (1663): see Erich Auerbach, '"La Cour et la Ville"' (1951), in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York, 1959); W. D. Howarth, *Molière: a Playwright and his Audience* (Cambridge, 1982).

public, envisaged as a whole. Although drama was gravitating towards the leisured and wealthy, no one class among playgoers was yet in a position to take over and monopolize the dramatist's point of view. On the contrary, the dramatist-as-entertainer had to reckon with the multitude, like it or not; while the dramatist-as-preacher kept in mind the ideal of an inclusive social order, with a place for clowns as well as princes, country as well as city, the poor as well as the rich. Variety of moods, of settings, of points of view was still common in Jacobean plays, as in an Elizabethan 'mingle-mangle'. And the basis of dramatic language was still the idiom of common speech, vigorously employed. There was an extra degree of literary artifice, which went along with the writers' appeal to educated 'judgement'. But it was precisely the interaction, the felt tension, between literary artifice and common idiom that made for vitality in the language of the Jacobean stage.

Sir Philip Sidney had emphasized the neo-classical rules of unity in time and place, as observed (for their own type of picture-stage) by the Italians. In practice, of course, English playwrights ignored the rules, like their counterparts in Spain; most flagrantly, in dramatizations of history or legend for the public theatres. However, Shakespeare uses a choric speaker or presenter to supply gaps in the narrative and compensate for the physical limitations of the stage by urging spectators to 'work' their 'imaginary forces' so as to picture unstageable battle scenes or distant voyages, such as the transfer of Henry V's army to and fro across the Channel. Similarly, in *Old Fortunatus*, in the same year as *Henry V* (1599), Dekker follows Shakespeare's example, by pointing out through his Prologue that 'this small Circumference must stand,/ For the imagined Surface of much land', and begging the audience's 'thoughts to help poor Art', by allowing the speaker to interpose periodically as 'Chorus' to the action, 'Not when the laws of Poesy do call,/But as the story needs'.[28] Other plays likewise specify through a Chorus-speaker that the audience should 'imagine' sea-changes for the characters. This convention in radically unclassical plays was an indirect concession to the classical 'laws of Poesy'.

[28] Dekker, *Old Fortunatus*, in *Dramatic Works*, Vol. 1; Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Prologue and Chorus II, III, IV, V; also *Pericles* (at the Globe, 1608; Chorus IV: 'Imagine Pericles arriv'd at Tyre ...'). Compare Anon., *Captain Thomas Stukeley* (Rose theatre, 1596/99?: Chorus, lines 2251 ff., 2296 ff., 2656ff.: 'imagination must supply' the full picture of the battle of Alcazar; Simpson [ed.], *School of Shakspere*, Vol. 1); Heywood (?), *2 Edward IV* (Derby's Men, *c.* 1599: Chorus relates King Edward's return from France and invites spectators to 'imagine'

More generally, one can trace a kind of zigzag through prologues or prefaces between the authors' uncertainty over public taste and confidence in their own professional skill. In his earliest plays, Marston, for instance, hopefully expected recognition for novelty—or freedom from 'mouldy fopperies of stale Poetry' and 'Unpossible dry musty Fictions'—and recognition for 'rare composed Scenes', adorned with 'purest elegance'; but when he published *Antonio and Mellida* soon afterwards, in 1602, he dedicated it to the 'only' discerning 'rewarder', namely, 'Nobody'.[29] And Chapman, in the prologue to his comedy, *All Fools*, in 1604, voiced 'amaze[ment]' over the inscrutable 'fortune' of the stage and the lordly presumption of spectators at Blackfriars, who '[scorned] to compose plays' but none the less pretended to 'judge better far' than the poets who '[made]' them. On the other side, Middleton was shrewder and more pragmatic. In his preface to *The Family of Love*, printed in 1608, he regretted that the lapse of several years since the comedy had been produced would deprive it of novelty for London gallants, so that it might now only be saleable for country audiences and to 'termers' (or visitors to London). But his preface to *The Roaring Girl*, written jointly with Dekker for the Fortune theatre and published in 1611, is a confident advertisement for the general appeal of the play, linked with a comment about fashion:[30]

Matthew Shore's oversea journeys; *Heywood's Dramatic Works*, Vol. 1, p. 119); Heywood, *Four Prentices* (Admiral's Men, *c.* 1600?; later at the Red Bull: Presenter, 'Imagine now ye see the air made thick/ With stormy tempests, that disturb the Main'; *Dramatic Works*, Vol. 2, p. 175); Anon., *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* (Chamberlain's Men [?], *c.* 1600: Chorus, opening Act II and at end of III.ii: 'imagines' Cromwell's travels abroad; William Hazlitt [ed.], *The Doubtful Plays of William Shakespeare*[1887]); Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment: Given to King James* (1604: the readers' 'imaginations' must 'suppose' part of the King's progress through London; *Dramatic Works*, Vol. 2, p. 264); Heywood, *2 If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* (Queen Anne's Men, at the Curtain, 1605: Chorus, 'Imagine you now see them [the ships of the Armada] under sail'; *Dramatic Works*, Vol 1, p. 333); Day and others, *The Travels of Three English Brothers* (Queen Anne's Men at the Red Bull, 1607: Chorus asks spectators to imagine the Shirley brothers' far-flung journeys; A. H. Bullen [ed.], *The Works of John Day* [1881]).

[29] Marston, *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, Prologue (Paul's, 1600); *Antonio's Revenge*, epilogue (Paul's, 1600); Dedication (1602) to *Antonio and Mellida* (Paul's, 1599). Cf. Day, praising patronage of 'Signor No-Body' in preface (1608) to *Humour out of Breath* (Whitefriars, 1608).

[30] Middleton's signed preface (1611) to *The Roaring Girl* (ed. Bowers, in Dekker's *Dramatic Works*, Vol. 3).

The fashion of play-making, I can properly compare to nothing, so naturally, as the alteration in apparel: For in the time of the Great-crop-doublet, your huge bombasted plays, quilted with mighty words to lean purpose was only then in fashion. And as the doublet fell, neater inventions began to set up. Now in the time of spruceness, our plays follow the niceness of our Garments, single plots, quaint conceits, lecherous jests, dressed up in hanging sleeves, and those are fit for the Times, and the Termers: Such a kind of light-colour Summer stuff, mingled with diverse colours, you shall find this published Comedy. ...

'Neater inventions': Middleton's belief in stylistic improvements in play-making (reminding us today of our experience of changing techniques in films and television) was evidently shared by others. When Heywood dedicated his *Four Prentices of London* to the London apprentices of 1615, he felt bound to apologize for his fifteen-year-old piece in the light of 'these more exquisite and refined Times', 'more Censorious' now over 'accurateness both in Plot and Style'. And Webster, while regretting the impossibility of composing *The White Devil* as a 'sententious' classical tragedy, asked the reader of 1612 to measure it by the work of Chapman and Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and Shakespeare, Dekker and Heywood—the contemporaries he admired 'in the strength of [his] own judgement'. Again, when commending his *Devil's Law Case* to 'the Judicious Reader', in 1623, Webster pressed for recognition of his own literary skill, while also paying tribute to the work of the actors:

A great part of the grace of this (I confess) lay in action; yet can no action ever be gracious, where the decency of the language, and ingenious structure of the scene, arrive not to make up a perfect harmony.

'Decency' (that is, appropriateness) of language and the 'ingenious structure of the scene' are much the same criteria as Jonson had consistently advocated and Marston had hoped to be judged by.

To return briefly to Middleton: one prologue of his is worth quoting in full because it is typical of his view of his audiences (though exceptional in its jaunty metre). It was probably written for a public theatre about 1612, and it takes account both of those 'above' (the better-off spectators in the galleries) and of those 'below' (the supposedly slower-witted groundlings):[31]

[31] Middleton, *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*, in Bullen (ed.), *Works*, Vol. 4. On the prologue, cf. H. S. Bennett, 'Shakespeare's Audience', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, **30** (1944), p. 76. There is a commentary on this play in George E. Rowe, Jr., *Thomas Middleton and the New Comedy Tradition* (University of Nebraska Press, 1979), pp. 114–29.

How is't possible to suffice
So many ears, so many eyes?
Some in wit, some in shows
Take delight, and some in clothes:
Some for mirth they chiefly come,
Some for passion—for both some;
Some for lascivious meetings, that's their errand—
Some to detract, and ignorance their warrant.
How is it possible to please
Opinion toss'd in such wild seas?
Yet I doubt not, if attention
Seize you above, and apprehension
You below, to take things quickly,
We shall both make you sad and tickle ye.

This prologue, with its frankly commercial ending, comes from *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*, a comedy in the style of quick-moving romantic complication that was beginning to make Fletcher successful, but which meant a new departure for Middleton. However, in *The Roaring Girl*, Middleton and Dekker had set out from the same view of many-headed Opinion to develop an independent standpoint. The girl of the title was a real Londoner of the day, the notorious Mary Frith, called 'mad Moll', who often dressed and behaved like a man. According to the preface, the play has deliberately defended her reputation. The prologue describes how, knowing the title, every spectator 'brings a play in's head' with his own idea of a Roaring Girl. The play shows Moll as a self-reliant, talented, generous character, street-wise and quick with her sword, a female Robin Hood, prompt to help lovers in distress but repeatedly obliged to free herself from the base expectations of the crooks and gallants she encounters. By the end, Sir Alexander Wengrave, her principal enemy, is forced to correct his opinion of her, based on prejudice and rumour; 'Forgive me, now I cast the world's eyes from me,/ And look upon thee freely with mine own' [V.ii.243]. The epilogue carries this moral further by telling the fable of the painter who, to please successive onlookers, altered every feature in a portrait in turn, until the portrait as a whole was ruined.[32]

[32] The parable of the painter in the Epilogue to *The Roaring Girl* was also used to illustrate a dramatist's difficulties with the public in Robert Daborne's Epilogue to *A Christian Turned Turk*, acted by the King's Men about 1610 and published in 1612. It is not clear which epilogue was written first but very likely both reflect common talk among theatrical writers at the time.

In this way, *The Roaring Girl* applies the idea of genuine judgement equally to the authors themselves, the spectators as critics and the characters within the play. The continuity between writer, spectators and characters, between judgement in dramatic literature and its counterpart with regard to social behaviour, was even more thoroughly worked out, a few years later, by Ben Jonson, in *Bartholomew Fair*. The Fair is represented as a place of popular holiday entertainment. But the induction at the Hope playhouse opens with a stage-hand, who confides to the audience that he has worked in theatres for thirty years (since 'Master Tarlton's time') and that, in his opinion, the self-important poet does not know his business, since he has omitted performing animals and the like time-honoured attractions. Then a Scrivener appears, to read out 'Articles of Agreement' between spectators and author, defining the spectators' right to 'their free-will of censure, to like or dislike at their own charge'. On the author's behalf, the Scrivener lists some of the attractions that will be provided, while ironically conceding that there will not be any 'drolleries' or 'monsters', 'to make Nature afraid', in the manner of *The Winter's Tale* or *The Tempest*. No informer should be 'so solemnly ridiculous' as to pick out any hidden political allusions. A stubbornly old-fashioned playgoer can be tolerated:

> He that will swear *Jeronimo* [i.e. *The Spanish Tragedy*] or *Andronicus* are the best plays yet, shall pass unexcepted at here as a man whose judgement shews it is constant, and hath stood still these five and twenty or thirty years. Though it be an ignorance, it is a virtuous and staid ignorance; and next to truth, a confirmed error does well.

But above all, each spectator is to judge for himself—within the limits of his capacity:

> the author having now departed with his right, it shall be lawful for any man to judge his six penn'orth, his twelve penn'orth, so to his eighteen pence, two shillings, half a crown, to the value of his place [presumably, inflated prices for the opening of a new playhouse]—provided always his place get not above his wit;

and provided, further, that he forms and stands by his own judgement, without copying his neighbour, be the latter 'never so first in the Commission of Wit'. Jonson's banter covers a serious inspection of the relations between writer and public under conditions of the market. The legal analogies he plays with were common and were bound to be prominent at the time in any reference to the mental process of 'judgement'. But Jonson traces trustworthy critical judgement more deeply, to self-knowledge on

the part of the critic. He promises all the spectators of *Bartholomew Fair* 'sport' and 'delight'– 'provided they have either the wit or the honesty to think well of themselves'. Vanity and gloom are disqualifications.

The characters within the play are pleasure-seekers at the Fair, mostly naïve; or fairground operators, whose business it is to exploit them; or else self-appointed, censorious watchdogs. In other words, they cover the same spectrum of minds (in caricature) as those concerned with the London theatres. The censors prove no less gullible than the simpletons—notably, Adam Overdo, the minor magistrate who (like a real Lord Mayor of the day) disguises himself so as to detect 'enormities' with his own eyes. He first appears at the Fair in the dress of a local madman, congratulating himself that 'They may have seen many a fool in the habit of a Justice; but never till now a Justice in the habit of a fool' [II.i]. But he pedantically misinterprets the petty crimes he witnesses, while his officious interference earns him first a cudgelling and then a spell in the stocks. His first-hand judgement is absurd. However, neither Overdo nor the other victims of the Fair's topsy-turvydom are presented simply as farcical oddities. A prime impulse shared by watchdogs and pleasure-seekers alike is an interest in the Fair as spectators (or consumers). And the induction has provoked the real spectators in the playhouse to examine the same kinds of impulse in themselves.[33]

Unlike Jonson, of course, Shakespeare abstained from authorial criticism. The occasional prologues in his plays serve to introduce the story, and his epilogues mark the step, for the audience, back from fiction to ordinary life, while requesting their continued favour for his company: 'And we'll strive to please you every day'. Although Shakespeare refers very often to acting in his plays, he says nothing directly about his own function as a dramatist—probably because, as actor and sharer in the most successful company, he felt more sure of himself than other dramatists and more attuned to his audience. But that does not mean that he was left untouched by the critical ideas expressed by his contemporaries; only, that he reacted to them in his own way. For example, the Player scenes in *Hamlet* constitute, in effect, an induction within the play, dealing both with the actors' profession and with the responses of spectators who interest us as individuals.

[33] I have discussed *Bartholomew Fair* in more detail in an article for *Renaissance Drama*, **10** (n.s.) (1979), reprinted in *Dramatic Form in Shakespeare and the Jacobeans*.

And his development as a dramatist is strongly marked both by a growing attention to the human aspect of forming judgements and by a growing tendency towards reflectiveness, even sententiousness, on the part of his characters. In *The Merchant of Venice*, for instance, characters comment on one another and the climax is an exciting trial scene; but personal judgements barely affect the trial scene or the general course of the plot. But *Measure for Measure*, containing similar themes, turns on the way people judge one another, intimately and publicly. Again, in *Julius Caesar*, the conspiracy arises, is accomplished, and fails through the medium of personal judgements; and what brings this Roman history to life is precisely our impression of the main actors as patricians who have watched one another for years, an impression derived vividly from their terse incidental comments: 'He was quick mettle when he went to school', for instance; or, 'He thinks too much; such men are dangerous'. And in the major tragedies that followed, Shakespeare not only makes the action turn on the way characters evaluate their own or each other's motives, but repeatedly makes his speakers reflect and generalize, even in the course of passion; as (to quote one more example) when Macbeth's mind swerves to the moral consequence while he is steeling his will to the murder of Duncan:

> But in these cases
> We still have judgement here, that we but teach
> Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
> To plague th' inventor.

This tendency gives an extra dimension to Shakespeare's speakers. It enhances their stage presence beyond personal character. It provides a choric commentary, sometimes an ironic overtone, enriching and complicating the flow of passion and the active will. And this tendency towards choric sententiousness was a tendency Shakespeare shared with the other Jacobeans, though as a rule his sententious passages are much more subtly keyed to the speaker and the occasion.

When Shakespeare's former colleagues, Hemings and Condell, published the First Folio of his plays in 1623, they cajoled the potential buyer in the tone of confident salesmen:

> you will stand for your privileges we know: to read, and censure. Do so, but buy it first. ... Judge your six-penn'orth, your shilling's worth, your five shillings' worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the just rates, and welcome. But, what ever you do, Buy. ...

The most likely buyers for such an expensive book would have been frequenters of the private theatres, whom the actor-editors greet without flattery:

> And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and sit on the stage at *Blackfriars*, or the *Cockpit*, to arraign Plays daily, know, these Plays have had their trial already, and stood out all Appeals. ...

The editors strike a neat balance between artistic and business considerations, between reading plays and seeing them, and between the author's credentials and the rights of his critics. Their language, with its legal joking, recalls the induction to *Bartholomew Fair*; and they say they would rather have purchasers 'weighed' than 'numbered'—again, in the spirit of Ben Jonson, whose resonant poetic tribute to Shakespeare's memory they published over the page. To that extent, their edition seems like at least a qualified victory for the idea of judiciousness and whatever it stood for in the shape of discerning erudition and moral realism, sharpness, economy, dignity or restraint. Yet, with all that, Hemings' and Condell's preface is not addressed to 'the Judicious Reader' but, in the first place, '*To the Great Variety of Readers*. From the most able, to him that can but spell'. I imagine Shakespeare would have liked it that way.