

THE REIGN OF KING EDWARD THE THIRD **A member of the First Folio family**

The apocryphal plays – those tentatively attributed to Shakespeare – number about thirteen; and all five examined so far, in *UDGCB* and these pages, have proved to secrete the Shakespearean allegory, and therefore certainly to be members of the First Folio family, the twin themes of which – summarised in the closing lines of *Cymbeline*, the final play of FF – are the aetiology, pathogenesis, and crisis of the Puritan disease, and the methods by which Shakespeare was lifted from the hell of a Puritanism-induced anxiety/depression neurosis of acute onset, which had precipitated his flight to London in search of healing and a new life, through the ministry of Sir Francis Bacon and the Gnostic tradition. These plays have fallen into two broad groups: those written entirely (*Mr. Arden of Feversham*, *AYT*) or partly (*LOC*, *STM*) by Shakespeare; and *The Spanish Tragedy* (probably by Thomas Kyd), with no evidence of his hand. To the latter group can now be added *The Reign of King Edward the Third*. The name of the fine George Peele, author of *David and Bethsheba* and *The Battle of Alcazar*, has plausibly been put forward as its author. It may be surmised – tentatively at this stage – that Shakespeare and Marlowe (*I-3HVI*) worked under the close supervision of Bacon (the *HVI* plays bear his unmistakable signature: see post on *AYT* above), and that only these plays were included by Bacon in FF; while a group of secondary writers were under the supervision of Shakespeare, with their work later being omitted.

While containing no evidence of the high style of Bacon, the writing of *EIII* is of a high standard indeed. Its allegorical structure is entirely familiar to us: the play forming a strict unity, and not at all a hybrid, with the early Acts being added as an afterthought, as has been postulated. Once again, the theme of *EIII* is the necessity, for understanding of the given or phenomenal world, of prior intellectual engagement with the world that lies unseen below the surface of things. In the *Taming of the Shrew*, the seen world is represented by Bianca Minola, the unseen world by her sister Kate, yet another Queen of Hell of the plays; and the marriage of Kate to Petruchio (the “Church killer”) precedes that of Bianca to Lucentio (“enlightenment”): the two husbands being aspects, of course, of the one ego. It is reiterated constantly, in play after play, that the Holy Grail of the hero’s questing is the wisdom derived from knowledge of the unseen world as described in the written word: so that Kate and her kin are also Grail Queens, guardians of the Grail. This axial personage of the plays is represented in *EIII* by the Queen, wife to King Edward, who is described as “black” and “foul” (II, ii, 109-10); the visible world by the Countess of Salisbury, who is compared to the sun no less than nine times in nine lines (II, i, 155 ff.); while King Edward is, course, the Puritan figure, who attempts the fatal shortcut of controlling the seen world by denying the unseen (King’s wooing of the Countess, and repudiation of the Queen), but comes to see the light (quitting of the Countess; campaign against France) through the ministry of the Gnostic written word (Lodowick).

This comparison, by the King in his delusion, of the Countess to the sun, recalls Romeo’s similar words in the famous balcony speech: for Juliet represents too the sham Goddess of Puritanism, a fraud, as sundered from the unseen world that should be recognised to underpin Her. For the light of the moon is the reflected brightness of the sun, yet in the context of night (unseen world); whereas the sun

is divorced from that context. This is a routine mythic interpretation, so familiar to us from Robert Graves' *The White Goddess* and the works of Joseph Campbell. As with Juliet, the Countess-as-Moon Goddess is specifically repudiated (II, i, 143-4).

France bears the value of the unseen world, as does her ally Scotland, as several precisely placed "I"'s for "Ay"'s make clear; the campaign against her, the intellectual engagement of the unseen world, new-divested of its negative mantle, by the ego-in-transformation, with the aim of control (cf. Kate's complete subjugation in *TOS*). This conflict is thus germane to that of *HV*. We recall that Richmond bears in *RIII* the value of this reborn underworld, while Richard is the anathematised version of old; and the exiled Frenchman Artoys is created Earl of Richmond in the very first lines of *EIII*. The sword or dagger represents always in FF the ithyphallos-libido, more broadly the underworld; and the King's early drawing of his sword against the Frenchman Lorraine's in I, i, graphically portrays the nature of the challenge confronting the Gnostically reasoning ego, which he will soon deny in his descent into Puritanism. The character of Warwick represents throughout *1-3HVI* the principle of psychic turmoil, as suggested by "War-": the conflict impelling the subject toward the Puritan word view; and it would be wholly consistent with Warwick's role as father of the Countess if he were to bear the same value in *EIII*.

Lodowick is a fascinating character, and instructive. He does not appear in the sources, although a later one (Painter, *The Palace of Pleasure*) inserts an unnamed secretary in a minor role. Lodowick is a fine example of the allegoric strategy of the plays at work. Indeed, the low-level analyses of the variations from the sources as either modifications or conceptions *de novo* for the allegory, are scepticidal agents of great potency; and in *UDGCB*, I document these scepticides exhaustively with respect to *Julius Caesar*, and analyse the more important variations in many of the other plays. Lodowick will appear again, in *Measure for Measure*, to reprise the same allegoric role of the Gnostic ideal. The name was undoubtedly taken from the famous Ludovico il Moro, who became Duke of Milan in 1494, having married, remarkably, Beatrice d'Este in 1491. This would serve – to draw not too long a bow - to identify the Duke in *MFM* with the hero of the *Divine Comedy*. Milan underwent much building and reconstruction during his reign; while there lived at his court some hundred artists, scientists, painters, historians, musicians, poets, and printers. Milan under Ludovico was one of the richest cities in Italy, exporting tapestries, velvet, cotton and linen cloth, silk, wrought iron, gold and jewellery, and arms. There could not be a better name for the creative magi of *MFM* and *EIII*. The written word, as central to all of this, is represented by the *billet-doux* which the King asks Lodowick to write; the repudiation by the Puritan of the Gnostic tradition (which engages the unseen world) conveyed therein, by the King's rejection of it. We have seen, in *UDGCB* and the post on *STM* above, that "I go" signifies detumescence, or more broadly the suppression from consciousness of the unseen world, where "I" bears its familiar value; and so here, where's Lodowick's "I go" (II, i, 193), in response to his dismissal by the King on the entry of the Countess, is wholly consistent with the allegory.

Let us follow closely the sequence of events in II, ii. That the Puritan is considering the written word is signified by the letters from the Emperor to the King; that he is constructing a new, sham Nature, by the King's elaborate confusion of the Emperor and the Countess; that this involves the suppression of the underworld, by the King's 'Then let those foot trudge hence upon those horse/According to our discharge, and be gone': for the horse or horse-and-rider represents always in the plays the libido in action, as sourced by Bacon from Socrates' famous extended metaphor in Plato's *Phaedrus*. This suggests that the microcosm is moving upstage; and this is confirmed by Lodowick's entry and introduction of Prince Edward. The drum beat represents always in FF the surge of libido (e.g. the drum of Alcibiades – a typical Boar - in *Timon of Athens*); and the drum accompanying the Prince's entry indicates his value. The scenario is that the subject is reading the written word – perhaps

Apuleius' magical Hermetic masterpiece *The Golden Ass*, the massive influence of which on FF, far beyond what the critics have supposed, is shown in *UDGCB* – when he comes across, say, the graphically described (especially in the Latin original) seduction of Fotis by Lucius. He sees the libido described therein, with its threat to induce his own, and denies it (King's 'Away!' to Lodowick).

Lodowick now re-enters, to introduce the Prince, and the King welcomes him; yet he again dismisses him as the Countess enters. However, we are about to witness the sea-change in the ego from Puritan to Gnostic, the final reference being always to the life of Shakespeare; and Lodowick, who has remained onstage, is now given money by the King, which means that his principle is being strengthened (this is always the point of money in FF). That this new Gnostically-conceived Nature will convey the unseen world is signified in a familiar way:

King That thou shalt yield to me?

Countess I, dear my liege, your due.

- Where "I" agrees with "your due". The Countess' revelation of the knives, - one for King Edward to stab the Queen, the other meant for her own heart, - which changes his mind and turns him toward France, recalls the blade-deaths of Juliet and Julius Caesar, amongst others: the point being always that the unseen world is now being identified with or acknowledged by the victim, who on the plane of allegory does not now die, but is reborn. In the source (Painter) there is only one knife: the second having been introduced here to emphasise that the deaths of the two women would be, on the plane of allegory, *cousins germanes*, as actuating the sea-change in the world-view of the subject (the king). Immediately the scene switches to France, as the road to Gnostic enlightenment is taken up. The Countess remains in England, consistently with the allegory, though not with Froissart's *Chroniques*, the main source for *EIII*.

Food bears throughout FF, like money, the value of the power of principle: and the French King John's meal as the English approach signifies that the unseen world is being engaged in its full might, and not as the sham, diminished form of the Puritan world-view. Two "I"'s for "Ay"'s spoken by the French (III, ii) confirm their allegoric value. The challenge for the author was to convey a sense of overall willingness, rather than assault and resistance, to mirror the progress of the ego-in-transformation; and this was met by the French citizen's 'But tis a rightful quarrel that must prevail;/Edward is son unto our late king's sister;/Where John Valoys is three times removed.' King Edward's refusal of the sop of riches from the French king (III, iii) signifies, again, that the unseen world is not being diminished, but engaged in all its might.

What is all this business about the liberation of Gobin de Graie? Gobin is a French traitor, who has guided King Edward to the safest route across the river Somme, and is rewarded with his freedom in return. Froissart gives his name exclusively as 'Gobin Agace'; while Holinshed spells it 'de Grace' the first time, and 'Agace' in three subsequent instances. We suspect some activity on the allegorical plane: for immense significance is often found, in FF, to inhere in a single letter (e.g. 'Ventidius' become the unusual 'Ventigius' in *Timon of Athens*). *Gobin* is French for "hunchback", which may have suggested the surname: for *Graie* is the Italian for the famed 'Graeae' of Greek mythology, the three monstrous sisters of the myth of Perseus, who were born old, and had one eye and one tooth between them, which they shared in turn. (This sort of linguistic miscegenation is not uncommon in FF). The myth tells of Perseus' successful mission to slay the Medusa, who had been terrorising western Spain. Mercury gave him wings for his feet; Pluto a helmet; Pallas a shield and mirror; while the Graeae lent him their eye and tooth.

That this interpretation is indeed correct is confirmed by consulting the works of Bacon. There can be not the slightest doubt that the reference here is to Bacon's interpretation of the Perseus myth in his *De sapientia veterum* ("Wisdom of the Ancients"). Whereas Robert Graves so memorably understood the Greek myths as reinterpretations, often confused travesties, of the legends and powerful symbols of the ancient matriarchal societies which preceded the Hellenic era, Bacon saw them, equally memorably, as secretive by design of the highest wisdom. Bacon interpreted the Perseus myth as concerning, - of the highest relevance to *EIII*, - the wisdom of war, and the Graeae to represent the traitor. Here is what he says:

And the eye and the tooth are as it were common to them all: the eye because all their information is handed from one to another and circulates through the whole party; the tooth, because they all bite with one mouth and tell one tale, - so that when you hear one you hear all. Therefore Perseus must make friends of those Graeae...

Gobin de Graie is clearly, as a traitor, these Graeae. Further, there is an emphasis in *Dsv* which is of the highest significance. For, whereas King Edward's campaign against France is on the basis of a fine point of lineage, Bacon interprets the Medusa as referring to a tyranny: which was precisely the character of Puritanism's hold on the psyche and society.

Prince Edward is formally armed by his father in a *rite-de-passage*, and is enjoined by him, strikingly, to 'Receive this lance into thy manly hand;/Use it in the fashion of a brazen pen...' This serves, by a technique familiar to us from FF, to identify Ned specifically with the libido described in the written word (for example, that of Lucius as Fotis undresses in *TGA*), which however is now engaged as *idea* rather than succumbed to as will. This episode is not mentioned in the sources, but was invented *de novo* for the allegory.

Audley gives Ned a shield. He is an old man, a Proteus ("first man"), Adam, or Nestor analogue, and bears therefore the value of the primal matter of the fluid realm - the deepest level of the unseen world - on which the forms of phenomena are based (see post above on 'Proteus', a key figure in the Baconian philosophy). The modern scientist recognises the Proteus principle in the elementary particles - finally mesons - of which atoms are made. The Proteus of myth went to sleep at noon, after checking on his herds of seals (full differentiation of the multifarious forms of Nature). Thus also does the Fool observe this bedtime (*KL III*, vi), after the temple of Lear has been reconstructed, this time on surer foundations. Audley's death in the final scene of *EIII* is therefore wholly consistent with his allegoric value: for his work has been done. So too is his gift to Ned consistent, of a shield to wear on his forearm. As in *KL*, the primal matter is being identified with the libido; and it is interesting to note that Nietzsche similarly identified, in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, (libidinous) Dionysius with the fluid principle.

Prince Ned's allegoric value is confirmed by the sword with which he is knighted (*III*, v, 90), together with a precisely placed "I" for "Ay" from the king (*III*, v, 89).

The Villiers episode, absent from Holinshed, is mentioned briefly in Froissart, who however gives the protagonists entirely different names. The prisoner Villiers is sent by Salisbury to obtain a passport from the Duke of Normandy to allow his (Salisbury's) safe passage through his lands to Calais, to join the king. Remarkably, Villiers will not abscond, but remain faithful to the terms of his mission. He bears the value of the libido in action, as Salisbury's "...take Horse, and post from hence" (*IV*, i, 34) tells us; while the root of his name is undoubtedly the French *vil*, "vile, "cowardly" (cf. Viluppo in *The Spanish Tragedy*).

This brings us to a constant theme of FF, of the necessity for the attainment of Gnostic enlightenment of the enquirer's victory over his own passions, which is linked to Bacon's philosophical goal of ultimate dominion over Nature, as memorably portrayed in the complete subjugation of Kate Minola by Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. This is also the point of the half-starved dog in Albrecht Dürer's *Melencolia I*, as well as Rosinante in *Don Quixote*, and the feeble Bill the Pony in Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. I argue in *UDGCB* that the *locus classicus* of this ideal is the ritual of the twenty-eighth ("Knight of the Sun") degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, as so memorably retrieved from oblivion by Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas (*The Second Messiah*, Arrow, 1998); wherein the candidate is warned: 'Ye who have not the power to subdue passion, flee from this place of truth'. Bacon was formally inducted into Freemasonry by King James in 1603; although the early plays are saturated with its lore, as I show in *UDGCB*. Specifically, the author of *EIII* may well have had in mind *The Golden Ass*, whose intensely erotic early episodes must be engaged and traversed as idea, rather than succumbed to as will, to enable the later episodes to work their magic of psychic transformation.

Froissart does not name Salisbury, who has made the request of Villiers, as such, but as Sir Walter Manny. The significance of the variation – yet another scepticide of high toxicity – is to be found in the Latin root *salus*, "weal", "welfare" (see below). The name "Charles" is linked always in FF to the ithyphallic principle (see below); and Salisbury passing in safety through the lands of Charles, Duke of Normandy, with written passport in hand, courtesy of the still-captured Villiers, to meet the king at Calais, is a graphic representation of the reader passing through, say, those early chapters of *TGA*, his ideas still undissolved in blind will, to the final attainment of Gnostic nobility.

Six poor Frenchmen are expelled from the besieged Calais, and given food and money by King Edward. Later, six wealthy citizens will likewise appear, as prisoners to him. The numbers of the former group are put at about 1700 by Froissart, while Holinshed does not give an estimation. The two groups in *EIII* are evidently to be linked. It might be argued that this is simply a matter of dramatic effectiveness; however, the closely-wrought allegorical context would suggest otherwise: the former group portraying the unseen world as not attenuated, as it would be by the ego-in-denial, but engaged in its wholeness; the latter, that world finally under the dominion of the intellect, through its engagement by reason and the imagination. We are seeing here the technique, common in FF, of returning to square one, as the author uses incidents in the sources to express and emphasise the same principle in different ways.

That the written word is the medium of the transformation in question is indicated again by the written prophecy, given to the French by a hermit, that the English will prevail. The herald's "I go" in response to his dismissal by Ned, who has scorned the French king's offer of peace, means that the unseen world is being controlled, its threat neutralised, by the ego-in-transformation. On the other hand, there is in *I-3HVI* the constant association of the "I" principle with the Roman Church (Bishop of Winchester), who have never engaged it, and therefore remain at its mercy. This denial would reach its culmination in the immolation at the stake of Giordano Bruno in Rome in 1600. The Gnostic written word is again portrayed in the prayer book which Ned sends back to the French Prince Phillip. This is another instance in the plays of the principle of referral, where the phenomenal world described in the printed page is referred back to the unseen world underlying it. A further "I go" from the herald rounds off this episode.

King John of France is firmly identified with the unseen world, which threatens, as ever, to destroy (IV, v, 70):

King I, freely to the gallows to be hanged,
Without denial or impediment.
Away with him [*Salisbury*] !

Salisbury would seem to be yoked here to his accustomed principle (see *I-3HVI*) of psychic or public safety (< Latin *salus*, “welfare”, “well-being”). He bears here the “pass and warrant” for passing in safety, which will be honoured by King John, but only after much persuasion by his son Charles, Duke of Normandy. The protraction of their debate mirrors the patience required of the ego as he ponders the written word – for there are no shortcuts. The name Charles is yoked in FF to the ithyphallic principle (the wrestler in *As You Like It*; Duke of Suffolk, as named in the late *HVIII*); and it would be utterly consistent with the allegory if this were also the case here. Interestingly, Suffolk was not named thus in the early *I-3HVI*, but only in *HVIII*, almost as an afterthought: so that the Charles of *EIII* may be the original in the corpus.

Here is a beautiful touch. England has represented here, if you like, Shakespeare as reader c.1587-9 (Melancholy Jacques in *AYLI*: see post on ‘Two Forests’ above). Now, in the last lines of the play, Shakespeare as writer (Orlando) is adumbrated:

Prince Edward ... So that hereafter ages, when they read
The painful traffic of my tender youth,
Might thereby be inflamed with such resolve,
As not the territories of France alone,
But likewise Spain, Turkey, and what countries else
That justly would provoke fair England’s ire,
Might, at their presence, tremble and retire.

This recalls the last lines of *The Tempest*, when Prospero (who is Shakespeare) summons his visitors into his cell, to tell them “The story of my life,/And the particular accidents, gone by,/ Since I came to this isle...”. *TT* is the first play in the First Folio, and Prospero’s story is that to be told in the pages to come – of the fall and rebirth of William Shakespeare. This solves the problem of why *TT* should end with Prospero returning to his cell, when its whole point has been his abjuration of it and his magic.

[return to top](#) [home](#) [index](#) [contact me](#) [order](#) [links](#)