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ASPECTS OF CLASSICAL
LEGEND AND HISTORY
IN SHAKESPEARE

by

F. S. BOAS

ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE LECTURE
of the
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ANNUAL SHAKESPEARE LECTURE
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HISTORY IN SHAKESPEARE

BY F. S. BOAS

Read 28 April 1943

WHEN I was honoured with the invitation to deliver the Annual Shakespeare Lecture before the British Academy this year, my pleasure was tempered only by the difficulty of finding a suitable subject which had not been treated in previous lectures. But I had noticed that in a recent volume on Marlowe my study of the classical influences on his work appeared to have roused interest. I have therefore thought that it might not be inopportune to discuss once more some features of the old but ever fresh theme of Shakespeare's 'small Latin and less Greek'. I wish to make it clear at once that I shall not be primarily concerned with the Roman history plays, but with the stream of classical allusions that runs through the Shakespearian canon.

Recent investigation has thrown new light on some probable sources of Shakespeare's humanist outfit. Its basis was of course laid at Stratford-on-Avon Grammar School, where he was drilled in William Lily's Latin grammar and in such an elementary phrase-book as *Sententiae Pueriles*. There is an echo of this grounding in the scene in *The Merry Wives* where Sir Hugh Evans puts Will Page through his *qufs, quae's, and quod's*. It furnished phrases for the talk between Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel in *Love's Labour's Lost*. But in her able study of that play (1936) Miss Frances Yates indicated that the dialogue was also indebted to John Eliot's *Ortho-epia Gallica* (1593), which was an elaborate skit on the popular manuals for teaching foreign languages, including not only Florio's Anglo-Italian *First Fruits* and *Second Fruits* and Hollyband's *The Punch Schoolmaster* but also J. L. Vives's Anglo-Latin colloquies. An American scholar, Mr. D. T. Starnes, has also recently drawn attention¹ to the material in Renaissance dictionaries, especially Sir Thomas Elyot's *Bibliotheca*, twice revised and enlarged by Thomas Cooper in 1552 and 1559. This was in the first place

¹ 'Literary Features of Renaissance Dictionaries', in *Studies in Philology* (Jan. 1940).

a dictionary in which Latin words and phrases were rendered by a number of English synonyms. Thus *caelum* (in addition to other meanings) is 'heaven, the firmament, the air', and *terra* (also with additions) is 'earth, land, ground'. Is not Holofernes copying this method, when he talks of 'the ear of *caelo*—the sky, the welkin, the heaven', and 'the face of *terra*—the soil, the land, the earth' (*L.L.L.* iv. ii. 5-7) ? But the *Bibliotheca* was also a cyclopaedia giving *inter alia* accounts of classical worthies, legendary or historical, though not always with a sense of proportion. Thus Hercules has a column and a half, while Dido is merely 'a lady that builded Carthage'. Cicero has a generous allowance, but Julius Caesar is simply listed under his 'noble house' as the first emperor of Rome. Such compilations were very popular and they may well have supplemented for the dramatist North's *Plutarch* and Golding's version of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Turberville's translation of the *Heroïdes* and Marlowe's of the *Amores* were also available. The couplet from the *Amores* prefixed to *Venus and Adonis*, "*Villa miretur vulgus,*' &c., and that quoted from the *Heroïdes* in *T. of Sh.* m. i. 28-9, '*Hie ibat Simois*' &c., might seem to prove that Shakespeare was acquainted with these poems in the original. But even what I may call the tempered orthodoxy of Sir Edmund Chambers, to which I adhere, regards the underplot in *T. of Sh.* as probably not from his hand; and the publisher may have been responsible for the quotation at the head of *Venus and Adonis*. The only Latin verse in a play that is indisputably Shakespeare's is the neo-classic first line of the *Eclogues* of Mantuanus declaimed by Holofernes in *L.L.L.* iv. ii. 95. Other Latin verse quotations (as distinguished from schoolbook words and phrases) from Ennius, Horace, Virgil, Seneca, and Ovid are found in early plays and are, in my opinion, *pro tanto* evidence against Shakespeare's sole authorship. The more that I am convinced of the dramatist's absorbing interest in classical lore, the less can I trace signs of intimate first-hand familiarity with the Roman masters of poetry and prose.

One other source of Shakespeare's classical outfit should not be overlooked. It must have been from personal observation that he describes pictures and tapestries depicting old-world scenes. There are the paintings of the siege of Troy in the chamber of Lucrece and of the mythological subjects offered to the tinker Sly. The shaven Hercules in 'the smircht worm-eaten tapestry' (*Much Ado*, m. iii. 133-4) contrasts with the tapestry of silk and silver which adorns Imogen's chamber.

depicting the meeting of Antony and Cleopatra on the river Cydnus (*Cymb.* n. iv. 69 ff.), while the chimney-piece was carved to represent chaste Diana bathing.

With such equipment how did Shakespeare envisage the gods, heroes, and mortals of antiquity?

Of the Olympian deities Jupiter was seen by him chiefly under two aspects. He is the all-powerful god, the thunderer. As Dr. R. K. Root has observed in his valuable monograph, *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare* (1903), the conception here is at times Hebraic rather than classical. He is the 'thunder-bearer', 'the thunder-darter'. The Duke of Exeter in *Hen. V*, n. iv. 99-100, warns the French king that

in fierce tempest is he coming,
In thunder and in earthquake, like a Jove.

In *Cor.* iv. v. 109-11 the idea of Jupiter as a god of elemental power is combined with that of him as the embodiment of absolute truth: If Jupiter If Jupiter

Should from yond cloud speak divine things,
And say 'tis true.'

Here again the conception has something of a Hebraic note. But, strangely enough, the most majestic image of the chief Olympian's creative power is to be found in Nestor's splendid tribute to Hector in his militant glory (*TV. and Cress*, iv. v. 191):

Lo, Jupiter is yonder, dealing life.

In singular contrast is the other aspect in which the god most frequently figures in the plays, as a lover, pursuing the daughters of men in animal disguise. Of his amours, that which caught Shakespeare's fancy most vividly was his wooing of Europa in the shape of a bull. When Poin in 2 *Hen. IV*, II. ii. 186 ff. proposes to the Prince that they should disguise themselves as drawers to wait upon Falstaff and Doll Tearsheet, Henry exclaims, 'From a god to a bull? a heavy descension! it was Jove's case'. Falstaff himself in *M.W.W.* v. v. 3, while waiting for Mistress Ford in the forest, calls out, 'Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns'. And he reminds the god of another of his amorous transformations: 'You were also, Jupiter, a swan for the love of Leda'. In *Much Ado* v. iv. 45 ff., Claudio makes a punning allusion when rallying Benedick:

All Europa shall rejoice at thee,
As once Europa did at lusty Jove,
When he would play the noble beast in love.

When Benedick answers,

Bull Jove, sir, had an amiable low,

there is apparently a reminiscence of Golding who says of the metamorphosed god that he 'goes gently lowing up and down'. Florizel in *W.T.* iv. iv. 25 ff., in excusing to Perdita his disguise for her sake as a shepherd swain, declares:

The gods themselves,
Humbling their deities to love, have taken
The shapes of beasts upon them: Jupiter
Became a bull, and bellow'd.

The rape of Io, though the god is not mentioned by name, is one of the realistic pictures offered to Sly for his entertainment in the Induction to *T. of Sh.* ii. 56-8.

We'll show thee Io as she was a maid,
And how she was beguiled and surprised,
As lively painted as the deed was done.

The pure-minded Juliet can scarcely have known such stories, yet it is she who reminds Romeo (*R. and J. II.* ii. 92-3),

at lovers' perjuries,
They say, Jove laughs.

Another of Jupiter's transformations, for less questionable purposes, which caught Shakespeare's imagination was his lodging in the shape of a servant with the rustic couple Philemon and Baucis. The story is told by Ovid in *Metamorphoses*, viii. 630 ff. and is introduced enigmatically into the ball-room dialogue between Hero and Don Pedro, both masked, in *Much Ado*, n. i. 90 ff. When the former tells the latter that she does not like his 'favour' or appearance, Don Pedro replies, 'My visor is Philemon's roof; within the house is Jove'; whereupon Hero retorts, 'Why, then, your visor should be thatched'. Here again the reference is to Golding's description of the cottage, 'The rooffe thereof was thatched all with straw and fennish reede'. A more oblique allusion to the same episode comes somewhat more aptly from the cynical lips of Jaques in *A.T.L.* in. iii. 10-12. When Touchstone has told Audrey, 'I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths', Jaques comments, 'O knowledge ill-inhabited—worse than Jove in a thatched house!' The audience in the Globe or the Blackfriars must have been remarkably 'quick in the uptake' to seize the allusion here.

Three other gods are associated with Jupiter in Hamlet's description of his father—Hyperion, Mars, and Mercury. Hyperion chiefly denotes the Sun-god in his flaming intensity, while Phoebus figures mainly as driving his chariot. Thus the play-scene in *Hamlet* begins,

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground.

Juliet, eagerly expectant of the night that will bring Romeo to her arms, not only urges the sun's horses to their utmost speed but prays for Phaethon to bring day to a premature end by repeating his disastrous attempt to drive them (*R. and J.* m. ii. 1-4):

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a waggoner
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.

It is Shakespeare's only mention of the Phaethon legend, but it is exquisitely felicitous on Juliet's lips.

Mars for the most part appears in his conventional roles of the war-god and the lover of Venus, but there are two compressed references in *Tr. and Cress*, (m. iii. 188-90) and *Cymb.* (v. iv. 30 ff.) to the singular episode, deriving ultimately from the *Iliad*, v. 864, where he interfered in the battle, was wounded, and was rebuked by Jupiter.

Mercury, like Jupiter, has a curiously double character as the herald of the gods, 'new lighted on a heaven-kissing hill', and as the patron of crafty traders and even of rogues. Thus Feste can pray him to endue Olivia with 'leasing' or lying; and Autolycus boasts himself as 'littered under Mercury' and therefore 'a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles'. It is of the god in this ungracious aspect that Armado is thinking when at the end of *L.L.L.* he declares 'The words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo'. Shakespeare thus regards Apollo pre-eminently as the divinity of music and the arts. When Sly is offered entertainment (*T. of Sh.* Ind. ii) he is asked,

Wilt thou have music? hark! Apollo plays.

Berowne describes Love (*L.L.L.* iv. iii. 342-3)

as sweet and musical
As bright Apollo's lute, strung with his hair.

Even to Thersites in *Tr. and Cress*, (III. iii) he is 'the fiddler Apollo'. But like Jupiter he also figures as an amourist. One

of the pictures suggested to Sly is of the god's pursuit of the ill-fated Daphne through a thorny wood, while with Helena and Demetrius the parts are reversed (*M.N.D.* n. i. 231):

Apollo flies, and Daphne holds the chase.

Another episode of rape, that of Proserpina, by the divinity of the underworld, Pluto or Dis, suggests some of the loveliest lines in two of Shakespeare's latest plays. The supposedly rustic Perdita must have been reading Golding's version of the story of the seizure of the maid in a garden, and the flowers slipping from her lap, in Book V of the *Metamorphoses*, when she makes her appeal:

O Proserpina,
For the flowers now that, frightened, thou lett'st fall
From Dis's waggon! daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.

In *The Tempest* masque Ceres tells Iris that since Venus and Cupid

did plot
The means that dusky Dis my daughter got,
Her and her blind boy's scandal'd company
I have forsworn.

Here and elsewhere, without any apparent classical authority, Shakespeare represents Cupid as blind. Thus Helena, bewailing the dotage of Demetrius on Hermia, exclaims (*M.N.D.* i. i. 234-7)

Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind,
And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
Nor hath Love's mind of any judgement taste;
Wings, and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.

Hence Cupid in the plays personifies love not so much in its sensuous as in its capricious, mischief-making aspects. It is characteristic of this tricky boy-god that he can at will unloose either a golden or a leaden-headed arrow, of which the one causes love and the other arrests it. Here again Golding is the source when Hermia swears

by Cupid's strongest bow,
By his best arrow with the golden head,

that she will meet Lysander.

But for once Cupid used this golden shaft in vain when (*M.N.D.* ii. i. 157 ff.)

a certain aim he took
 At a fair vestal throned by the west,
 And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
 As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
 And the imperial votaress passed on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.

Again Shakespeare does not trouble about consistency, nor ask how a blind archer could take a certain aim. But we forget this in the beauty and historical interest of Oberon's description. Venus, in contrast with her son, is the embodiment of sensual love. This is elaborated in 'the first heir of his invention', *Venus and Adonis*, and is touched upon in references to her intrigue with Mars whereby her sooty husband Vulcan is made a cuckold. But there comes a refreshing breath from the allusions to the doves which bear her through the air, as in the lovely description by Iris in *The Tempest* (iv. i. 92-4):

I met her deity
 Cutting the clouds towards Paphos, and her son
 Dove-drawn with her.

Opposed to Venus is Diana, the type of chastity. Claudio, crying out against the 'seeming' of Hero, whom he believes false, exclaims bitterly,

You seem to me as Dian in her orb.

Here there is also the conception of her as the moon-goddess. Thus Lorenzo in the gardens of Belmont bids the musicians wake Diana with a hymn. This image of her is combined with that of the virgin huntress in Falstaff's exhortation to Prince Hal (*Hen. IV*, i. ii. 28 ff.): 'Let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon.'

'Great Juno comes; I know her by her gait', cries Ceres in *The Tempest* masque. She may fitly here close the procession of deities in Shakespeare. She too has a double role. She is for the most part an Olympian virago. Volumnia speaks of herself (*Cor.* iv. ii. 52) as lamenting 'in anger, Juno-like', and Coriolanus invokes 'the jealous queen of heaven' (v. iii. 46). But she appears in more gracious guise when at the close of *The Tempest* masque she pronounces the benediction,

Honour, riches, marriage-blessing,
 Long continuance, and increasing.

But it is doubtful if any of the Olympians left so deep an impression on Shakespeare as the semi-divine hero, Hercules, or Alcides, son of Jupiter and Alcmena. He is to him the incarnation of bravery and strength. From first to last his exploits seem to have hovered before Shakespeare, if not always in accurate recollection. Thus in *L.L.L.* iv. iii. 340-1 Berowne cries,

For valour, is not Love a Hercules,
Still climbing trees in the Hesperides?

and Menenius Agrippa (*Cor.* iv. vi. 99-100) alludes to Hercules shaking down mellow fruit. The Hesperides were, of course, the guardians of the fruit, and it was gathered not by the hero himself but by Atlas for him. In the show of the Nine Worthies in *L.L.L.* he is paradoxically personated by Moth, the page, though Armado protests that 'he is not so big as the end of his club'. Holofernes answers that he represents him 'in his minority'.

Great Hercules is presented by this imp,
Whose club kill'd Cerberus, that three-headed canis,
And when he was a babe, a child, a shrimp,
Thus did he strangle serpents in his manus.

It is true that Hercules, according to Ovid, in his infancy strangled serpents, but though he brought Cerberus to the upper world he did not kill him. Some of the other labours are frequently but vaguely mentioned, the Nemean lion and the Hydra. But the most explicit and vivid description of the hero is Portia's curiously exotic comparison of him in his deliverance of Hesione to Bassanio when he makes his choice of the caskets (*M. of V. in.* ii. 53 ff.):

Now he goes,
With no less presence, but with much more love,
Than young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster: I stand for sacrifice;
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
With bleared visages, come forth to view
The issue of th' exploit. Go, Hercules!
Live thou, I live.

A less lurid aspect of the hero's exploits is remembered by Hippolyta (*M.N.D.* iv. i. 116 ff.):

I was with Hercules and Cadmus once,
When in a wood of Crete they bay'd the bear

With hounds of Sparta. ... I never heard
So musical a discord, such sweet thunder.

Yet even this man of might can be vanquished and humiliated by a woman's wiles. Benedick must have had his subjection by Omphale in mind, when he declaims against Beatrice (*Much Ado*, ii. i. 260-2): 'She would have made Hercules have turned spit, yea and have cleft his club to make the fire too.' More unexpected is Morocco's comparison of himself and his rivals in the choice of the caskets (*M. of V.* n. i. 32 ff.) to the hero and his page:

If Hercules and Lichas play at dice
Which is the better man, the greater throw
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand:
So is Alcides beaten by his page.

In more tragic mood Antony, infuriated by Cleopatra's betrayal of him in the sea-fight, wishes to emulate Hercules' treatment of Lichas in his death-agony (*A. and C.* iv. xii. 43-5):

The shirt of Nessus is upon me:—teach me,
Alcides, thou mine ancestor, thy rage:
Let me lodge Lichas on the horns o' the moon.

Hercules was the traditional ancestor of the Antonii, and it is an omen of the Roman's coming doom when music underground betokens that his protector is leaving him (*A. and C.* iv. iii. 16).

It must have helped to keep Hercules prominently before Shakespeare's imagination that the sign of the Globe Theatre was the hero bearing up the world. This explains the punning answer of Rosencrantz to Hamlet's question (*II. ii.* 377), 'Do the boys carry it away?', 'Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too'. But it was left to Ben Jonson to endow the hero with an academic title. In *The New Inn* (iv. iii), after Lovel has delivered an oration on true valour, Lady Frampul cries,

most manly utter'd all,
As if Achilles had the chair in valour,
And Hercules were but a lecturer.

Another of the semi-divine figures, Prometheus, was known to Shakespeare as the bearer of the creative fire. It is mentioned in two strangely diverse connexions. Berowne declares (*L.L.L.* iv. iii. 348) that women's eyes 'sparkle still the right Promethean fire'. Othello, in another of Shakespeare's most exquisite of classical adaptations, thus murmurs over the light beside Desdemona's bed (v. ii. 7 ff.):

Put out the light, and then put out the light:
 If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
 I can again thy former light restore,
 Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
 Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
 I know not where is that Promethean heat
 That can thy light relume.

The only reference to his punishment by Jove is when Aaron speaks (*Tit. And.* n. i) of Tamora being faster bound to his eyes 'than is Prometheus tied to Caucasus'. Here Shakespeare's hand is doubtful.

Other legends are drawn upon readily to serve varied purposes. Bassanio compares Portia's sunny locks to a golden fleece (*M. of V.* i. i. 171 ff.),

Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
 And many Jasons come in quest of her,

and Gratiano later cries exultingly, 'We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece'. There is a more recondite allusion to the Argonauts when the restoration of Jason's father to youth by their leader's sorceress wife is visualized by Jessica in her moonlight duet with Lorenzo (*M. of F.* v. i. 12 ff.):

In such a night
 Medea gathered the enchanted herbs
 That did renew old ^Eson.

In the same scene of moonlight enchantment Jessica, inspired by Golding, tells how

In such a night
 Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
 And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,
 And ran dismay'd away.

Yet at almost the same time Shakespeare did not hesitate to turn the Pyramus and Thisbe story in *M.N.D.* into an immortal burlesque. Bottom, too, can incidentally parody a still greater love tale when he assures Thisbe, 'Like Limander, am I trusty still⁵'; and later Benedick can instance 'Leander, the good swimmer' as one of those 'whose names yet run smoothly in the even road of a blank verse' (*Much Ado*, v. ii. 33-4). Rosalind gives Leander's swimming exploits a yet more satirical twist when she tells Orlando (*A.T.L.* iv. i. 100 ff.) that on a hot midsummer night 'he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont, and being taken with the cramp was drowned; and the

foolish chroniclers of that age found it was—Hero of Sestos'. Yet in the same play he quotes from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* the line, 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?', and the dramatist of *Romeo and Juliet* must have been thrilled by the poignant beauty of the dead shepherd's unfinished version of this tragic tale of love.

Perhaps the most singular of all Shakespeare's surprising applications of a classical story is to be found in *2 Hen. IV*, II. ii. 93, where the page cries to the red-faced Bardolph, 'Away, you rascally Althaea's dream, away'. Well may the prince intervene, 'Instruct us, boy; what dream, boy?' whereupon the page explains, 'Marry, my lord, Althaea dreamed she was delivered of a firebrand; and therefore I call him her dream'. But the boy has not verified his references, for Althaea was in truth not merely in a dream delivered of a firebrand, like Hecuba before the birth of Paris. She was warned that her son Meleager would die if a log on the hearth was consumed. There is a more accurate allusion by Shakespeare or another in *2 Hen. VI*, i. i. 235-6 to

the fatal brand Althaea burn'd
Unto the prince's heart of Calydon.

But o'ertopping all other old-world legends in sustained interest for Shakespeare were the related sagas of Troy and Carthage. The episodes in the ten years' siege that seem to have chiefly captured his imagination were not primarily the feats of arms but the eloquence of the veteran Nestor, the treachery of Sinon which led to the entry of the wooden horse, the pitiful death of Priam and Hecuba's frantic grief, and the flight of Aeneas bearing his father Anchises. In the well-painted piece portraying the siege hanging in the chamber of Lucrece the three former elements are prominent. Remarkably vivid, after brief sketches of Ajax and Ulysses, is the picture of grave Nestor surrounded by 'a press of gaping faces', swallowing up his 'golden words'. To Berowne (*L.L.L.* iv. iii. 169) one of the extreme examples of the incongruous is to see 'Nestor play at push-pin [a childish game] with the boys'; and Salarino (*M. of V.* i. i. 54-6) is scornful of the fellows of vulgar aspect who will

not show their teeth in way of smile,
Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.

In *3 Hen. VI*, m. ii. 188-90, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, planning how to catch the English crown, declares,

I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,
 Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,
 And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.

In the description of the picture of Troy in Lucrece's chamber no less than ten stanzas are devoted to perjured Sinon and Lucrece's impassioned comparison of his hypocrisy with that of her ravisher, Tarquin. In the last scene of *Tit. And.* v. iii. 85-7, Marcus bids Lucius

Tell us what Sinon hath bewitch'd our ears,
 Or who hath brought the fatal engine in
 That gives our Troy, our Rome, the civil wound.

There are other incidental allusions in *Pericles* and *Cymbeline*.

Of all the tragic consequences of the entry of the 'fatal engine' into Troy Shakespeare seems to have been most deeply stirred by the fate of 'credulous old Priam'. One of the most poignant, though unexpected and classically unsupported, allusions to the catastrophe is Northumberland's outburst in *2 Hen. IV*, i. i. 70 ff. to Morton who brings him news of the fatal outcome of the battle of Shrewsbury.

Even such a man, so faint, so spiritless,
 So dull, so dead in look, so woe-begone,
 Drew Priam's curtain in the dead of night,
 And would have told him half his Troy was burnt;
 But Priam found the fire ere he his tongue.

This does not derive from Virgil, nor does the first player's recital (*Hamlet* n. ii) of Aeneas' tale to Dido. As I have attempted to show elsewhere, the *Aeneid*, Book II, gives no authority for a long-drawn, horrific account of the slaying of the aged king by Pyrrhus. It is Marlowe in *Dido, Queen of Carthage.*, who elaborates the episode, adding grisly details, and telling how Pyrrhus

whisk'd his sword about
 And with the wind thereof the king fell down;
 Then from the navel to the throat at once
 He ripp'd old Priam.

Shakespeare must have had these lines in mind when he wrote:

Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide,
 But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
 The unnerved father falls.

And when the player tells of 'the mobled queen', Hecuba,

When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
 The instant burst of clamour that she made—
 Unless things mortal move them not at all—
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
 And passion in the gods,

there is a more far-off echo of Marlowe's description of the 'frantic queen', leaping upon Pyrrhus, while

the soldiers pull'd her by the heels
 And swung her howling in the empty air,
 Which sent an echo to the wounded king,
 Whereat he lifted up his bed-rid limbs,
 And would have grappled with Achilles' son.

But even in burlesque Shakespeare is not over-troubled to be consistent, and such lines as

Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
 And passion in the gods

have the ring of the true grand manner, and make us feel it natural that the player should turn his colour and have tears in his eyes.

The flight of Aeneas from the burning city bearing his father was of special significance to the Elizabethans because he was the link between Troy, Carthage, Rome, and, according to medieval and Renaissance belief, Britain. Shakespeare may not have penned young Clifford's comparison when carrying from the battle-field his father's body (*2 Hen. VI*, v. ii. 62 ff.):

As did Aeneas old Anchises bear,
 So bear I thee upon my manly shoulders.

But to him we certainly owe the similar parallel by Cassius after he had rescued Caesar from drowning (*Jul. Caes.* i. ii. 112 ff.):

I, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
 Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
 The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
 Did I the tired Caesar.

The reception of Aeneas by Dido, his recital of the fall of Troy, and their short-lived amour have frequent echoes in the early plays of the Folio, though here again Shakespeare's own hand

is doubtful. Queen Margaret cries to her husband (*2 Hen. VI*, m. ii. 116) that she has tempted Suffolk

To sit and witch me, as Ascanius did
When he to madding Dido would unfold
His father's acts commenced in burning Troy.

Tamora (*Tit. And.* n. iii. 21) invites Aaron to

conflict such as was supposed
The wandering prince and Dido once enjoy'd,
When with a happy storm they were surprised,
And curtain'd with a counsel-keeping cave.

Shakespeare too may probably be acquitted of the singularly inappropriate allusion to Dido's loving intimacy with her sister in *T. of Sh.* i. i. 158-9, when Lucentio asks counsel from his servant Tranio,

That art to me as secret and as dear
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was.

Yet scarcely less far-fetched is the pledge of Hermia to Lysander (*M.N.D.i.i.* 173-4),

By that fire which burn'd the Carthage queen,
When the false Troyan under sail was seen,

that she will keep tryst with him.

These references, whatever their immediate source, derive ultimately from Virgil, but there is nothing in the *Aeneid* to suggest the magical loveliness of Lorenzo's picture (*M. of V.* v. i. 9 ff.):

In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks and waft her love
To come again to Carthage.

And nothing could bear the more authentic seal of Shakespeare's imagination at its transcendent height than Antony's cry to Cleopatra (*A. and C.* iv. xiv. 51 ff.):

Stay for me:
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:
Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours.

From this radiant vision of Dido and Aeneas in the Elysian fields with their admiring 'troops' it is a disconcerting descent to Shakespeare's last allusion to them in *The Tempest*, u. i. 74 ff. When Adrian remarks that 'Tunis was never graced

before with such a paragon to their queen' as Claribel, Gonzalo interjects, 'Not since widow Dido's time'.

Ant. Widow! a pox o' that! How came that widow in? Widow Dido!

Seb. What if he had said, 'widower Aeneas' too? Good Lord, how you take it!

Adr. Widow Dido, said you? you make me study of that: she was of Carthage, not of Tunis.

Gon. This Tunis, sir, was Carthage.

What unforeseen significance have these last words to-day when Tunis is the symbol in all eyes of even more tremendous issues than was Carthage in the ancient world!

In *Troilus and Cressida*, as has been too little noted, Aeneas figures in a very different role from that of the faithless lover of the Carthaginian queen. He is the intermediary between the two camps; the urbane master of the ceremonies. Detailed discussion of the problems raised by *Troilus and Cressida* lies outside my purpose, for alike in the love-story and in the secondary plot introducing the Greek and Trojan leaders, it is not of classical but medieval origin. Not Homer nor Virgil but Dares Phrygius, Benoit de Saint-More, Guido Colonna, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Raoul le Febvre's *Recueil des histoires de Troie*, translated by Caxton, built up stage by stage this sentimental, pseudo-chivalrous romance, which depicted not only the delirious passion of Priam's youngest son, Troilus, for Cressida, but an amour between Achilles and Priam's daughter Polyxena, together with challenges and interchange of visits between the opposing warriors after the approved feudal fashion. It is true that this distinction did not mean as much to Shakespeare as to us, but in any case his humanist enthusiasm was never felt by him to be inconsistent with a readiness to make game of classical legends. His attitude reminds me of G. K. Chesterton's saying that no one was sufficiently at home with his religion till he could make fun of it. The show of the Worthies in *L.L.L.*, the tragical mirth of Pyramus and Thisbe in *M.N.D.*, Rosalind's raillery of the Leander story in *A.T.L.*, the first player's recital in *Hamlet*, are in their different ways illustrations. They should be borne in mind if we are to get Shakespeare's attitude in *Troilus and Cressida* into the right perspective. But of course the ridicule there is far more embittered and may have been in part a *riposte* to the publication in 1598 of eight books of the *Iliad* translated by Chapman, at whose *The Shadow of Night* he had already tilted in *L.L.L.*

The latest critic of *Troilus and Cressida*, Professor O. J. Campbell

of Columbia University,¹ has, I think, given help in our approach to what is perhaps the most difficult of all the problems connected with the play, and the only one to which I will briefly draw attention—the character of Thersites. Here there is little question of medieval influence. Chapman's lines, in his translation of Book II of the *Iliad*,

He the filthiest fellow was of all that had deserts
In Troy's brave siege; he was squint-ey'd and lame of either foot,

seem to have given the hint for the full-length figure compact of ribaldry and slime to whom 'all the argument is a cuckold and a whore'. Professor Campbell classes the play as 'a comical satire', in line with Jonson's *Every Man out of his Humour* and *Cynthia's Revels*. He lays stress on what I confess that I had insufficiently appreciated, the professional status of Thersites. He sees him performing 'all the various offices of the railer and the buffoon in the new satiric comedy', and compares him to Carlo Buffone in *Every Man out of his Humour*. But I would add that even if we do not go outside the Shakespeare canon his professional position is akin to that of Feste 'the avowed fool' and of the 'all-licensed fool' in *Lear*. He is at first attendant on Ajax, his 'sodden-witted lord', 'the elephant Ajax' who returns railing for railing and adds blows. Achilles, though he too is his butt, appreciates his status, and inveigles him from Ajax. When Patroclus interrupts him, Achilles reminds his minion that Thersites is 'a privileged man', and bids him proceed with his catalogue of all fools (n. iii. 63 ff.).

Ther. Agamemnon is a fool to offer to command Achilles; Achilles is a fool to be commanded of Agamemnon; Thersites is a fool to serve such a fool; and Patroclus is a fool positive.

Pair. Why am I a fool?

Ther. Make that demand to the Creator. It suffices me thou art.

It is an unanswerable retort. The amazingly nimble wit of Thersites and his unsurpassable command of Elizabethan Billingsgate extort an aesthetic admiration of his most outrageous outbursts. But, though he is a privileged man, he stretches beyond even the widest endurable limit Feste's dictum, 'There is no slander in an avowed fool though he do nothing but rail'. By a strange development the Homeric demagogue, transformed into a wearer of the motley, became a mouthpiece of that acute phase of Shakespeare's disillusionment, due perhaps, as Sir

¹ *Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's 'Troilus and Cressida'* (1938).

Edmund Chambers has suggested, to mental and physical strain, which had its climax in *Timon of Athens*.

In the most glaring of Shakespeare's anachronisms (*Tr. and Cress*, ii. ii. 166-7), Hector likens his brothers to

young men, whom Aristotle thought
Unfit to hear moral philosophy.

How far Aristotle really took this view, attributed to him also by Erasmus and Bacon, I leave you to infer from a detailed discussion by Sir Sidney Lee.¹ Among the other Greek philosophers, Pythagoras, with his theory of transmigration, is known to Gratiano, Rosalind, and Feste. Epicurus and Socrates, as the husband of Xanthippe, are mentioned, but the great name of Plato is not found in the Shakespearian canon. I must ask Professor Dover Wilson and Miss Yates to make their account with this stark fact in their recent ingenious attempts to show that Shakespeare's cosmology is predominantly Platonic rather than Aristotelian.² However this may be, I can find no trace in his conception of sexual relations of the doctrine of so-called Platonic love which was to influence strongly Jacobean and Caroline drama.

Similarly with the great Athenian soldiers and statesmen. Miltiades and Themistocles are unknown to the First Folio. The only Pericles with whom Shakespeare is concerned is the Prince of Tyre, and the Alcibiades in *Timon of Athens* has nothing but his name in common with his historical prototype. The single authentic Greek man of action to whom Shakespeare refers is Alexander the Great. He appears in the show of the Nine Worthies in *L.L.L.* as 'the world's commander', impersonating whom Sir Nathaniel the curate is 'a little o'er-parted'. Henry V before Harfleur, with an unexpectedly 'highbrow' flourish, exhorts his soldiers to prove worthy of their fathers who, like so many Alexanders, had shown their prowess in the fields of France. To Fluellen it is the king himself who is to be compared with 'Alexander the Pig' (iv. vii. 47 ff.), 'As Alexander killed his friend Cleitus, being in his ales and his cups; so also Harry Monmouth, being in his right wits and his good judgements, turned away the fat knight, with the great-belly doublet'. Was not George Steevens, when he suggested that Shakespeare was here ridiculing Plutarch's method in his *Parallel Lives*, considering too curiously? That is Horatio's

¹ *Life of William Shakespeare*, 653-4, n. 2.

² See *University of Edinburgh Journal*, Summer and Autumn Nos., 1942.

criticism of Hamlet when in the graveyard he lets 'imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole'. But the Prince expatiates further on this grim theme, and with Alexander he couples imperious Caesar in such a sordid anti-climax to their living greatness. Let us with Hamlet pass from Greece to Rome.

Just as Lear and Cymbeline were to Shakespeare probably little less real than the Henrys and Richards of the chronicle-plays, so the legendary figures of early Rome were not as sharply differentiated by him as by us to-day from the personages of the later republic. He had an instinctive conception of the integrity, the 'gra vitas', and 'pietas' of the typical Roman character. Hamlet's staunch friend Horatio speaks of himself as

More an antique Roman than a Dane.

Bassanio pays the highest tribute to his dearest friend Antonio when he describes him to Portia as (*M. of V.* m. ii. 297-9)

one in whom
The ancient Roman honour more appears
Than any that draws breath in Italy.

It is the glory of Brutus in the hour of his defeat and death that his own singleness of soul has met a full response (*Jul. Caes.* v. v. 33-5) :

Countrymen,
My heart doth joy that yet, in all my life,
I found no man but he was true to me.

It is the same quality that inspires Shakespeare's Roman women. Lucrece is a model of loyalty to her husband Collatinus, and when she has become the victim of Tarquin's outrage she must die by her own hand. Volumnia incarnates the very spirit of Roman patriotism. Perhaps I may be allowed to repeat words which I have already written about her last interview with her son:

'The voice of Volumnia pleading with austere majestic eloquence on behalf of her country, is not so much the voice of the human mother as the voice of Rome speaking through her lips. All personal feeling is annihilated in the absolute self-surrender to the welfare of the State. The Roman who can wound Rome is to Volumnia an alien, though he be born of her own body.'

Come, let us go:
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
His wife is in Corioli, and his child
Like him by chance.

It is significant that the heroine of *The Merchant of Venice* bears the honoured Roman name of Portia. As Bassanio declares, she is (i. i. 165-6),

nothing undervalued
To Gate's daughter, Brutus' Portia.

Thus Shakespeare had felt the magnetism of this classical Portia long before he drew the picture of her in *Julius Caesar* as her husband's perfect helpmeet who after the ruin of his fortunes swallowed fire.

It is curious that Shakespeare's interest in Roman history should apparently have been concentrated on two widely separated epochs. One includes the last days of the monarchy and the beginnings of the republic. The figures of Tarquin and Lucrece had bitten deep into his consciousness. Apart from the poem devoted to them Petruchio declares of Kate (*T. of Sh.* n. i. 297-8):

For patience she will prove a second Grissel,
And Roman Lucrece for her chastity.

The characteristic seal of Olivia in *Twelfth Night* is a Lucrece. To Macbeth's heated imagination murder (n. i. 25-6)

With Tarquin's ravishing strides towards his design
Moves like a ghost.

The Constable of France warns the Dauphin who has spoken scornfully of King Henry V (n. iv. 36-8):

You shall find his vanities forespent
Were but the outside of the Roman Brutus,
Covering discretion with a coat of folly.

The reference here is of course to the Lucius Junius Brutus, the nephew of Tarquin, who, after the murder of his elder brother, assumed a lunatic pose till the expulsion of the tyrant when, with Lucrece's husband as his colleague, he became one of the first two Consuls.

The action of *Coriolanus* is also laid in the early period when a revolted general, in league with a hostile State, could threaten the life of the young Republic. Then follows a long blank. There is no allusion by Shakespeare to the story of Appius and Virginia, in which Webster was to find a theme. More surprising is it that his preoccupation with Carthage seems to have ended with the flight of Aeneas and the death of Dido. He has not a word about the struggle for the mastery of the Mediterranean world between the African city and Rome. The Shake-

speare Concordance does not include the Scipios. Armado appearing as Hector in the show of the Nine Worthies refers almost slightly to the hero of Carthage,

This Hector far surmounted Hannibal.

Nothing is said of Sulla or Marius, whose rivalry was the theme of Lodge in *The Wounds of Civil War*.

Shakespeare's eye seems to have glided over the centuries till it became fixed on the figures of Gnaeus Pompeius and Julius Caesar. Pompey, like Alexander, makes a burlesque entrance in the show of the Nine Worthies, impersonated by the clown Costard,

Pompey, surnamed the Great,

That oft in field, with targe and shield, did make my foe to sweat.

In *Meas. for Meas.* (n. i. 262 ff.) Escalus makes derisively coarse play with this surname to Pompey, the bawd's servant, and threatens, 'I shall beat you to your tent, and prove a shrewd Caesar to you; in plain dealing, Pompey, I shall have you whipt'. But to the shrewd and valiant, if quaint-spoken, soldier Fluellen, Pompey stands for the model of true military discipline (*Hen. V*, iv. i. 68 ff.):

'If you would take the pains but to examine the wars of Pompey the Great, you shall find, I warrant you, that there is no tiddle-taddle nor pibble-pabble in Pompey's camp; I warrant you, you shall find the ceremonies of the wars, and the cares of it, and the forms of it, and the sobriety of it, and the modesty of it, to be otherwise.'

What exactly is Fluellen's authority for this tribute I do not know, but according to him Pompey anticipated the military authorities of to-day in warning the rank and file against talk that would help the enemy. There is more historical guarantee for the picture drawn by the tribune when he reproaches the fickle populace for welcoming Pompey's victor (*JuL. Caes.* i. i. 42 ff.):

Knew you not Pompey? Many a time and oft
Have you climb^d up to walls and battlements,

To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:
And when you saw his chariot but appear,
Have you not made an universal shout?

And do you now strew flowers in his way
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?

Shakespeare's dramatic instinct can interpret the tribune's

indignant feelings, but his own sympathy would have been with the welcoming crowds. For in the eyes of Shakespeare what Jove was among the Olympians and Hercules among the half-divine heroes, Julius Caesar was among mortal men. His presence seems to have haunted him from his earliest to his latest days of play-making. Some of the first references are to his connexion, real or legendary, with Britain. Lord Say, appealing to the men of Kent to save him during Cade's insurrection (*2 Hen. VI*, iv. vii), declares:

Kent, in the Commentaries Caesar writ,
Is term'd the civil'st place of all this isle.

This, the sole reference in the Folio to Caesar merely as an author, is questionably Shakespeare's, but we hear his voice when the young Prince of Wales in *Richard III* (in. i. 69) asks whether Caesar built the Tower of London, and gives a precocious summing-up of his career:

That Julius Caesar was a famous man;
With what his valour did enrich his wit,
His wit set down to make his valour live:
Death makes no conquest of this conqueror.

For Shakespeare Caesar sets the standard of all military achievement. When Lord Bardolph brings a report, later proved false, of a victory by Hotspur at Shrewsbury, he ends exultingly (*2 Hen. IV*, i. i. 20-3),

O! such a day,
So fought, so follow'd, and so fairly won,
Came not till now to dignify the times
Since Caesar's fortunes.

Iago describes Cassio as a soldier fit to stand by Caesar—the highest tribute that could be paid. In *All's Well*, in. vi, a French lord speaks of a disaster of war that Caesar himself could not have prevented, if he had been there to command. And in one of the latest plays, *Cymbeline* (m. i. 2-4) the Roman general, Caius Lucius, speaks reverently of

Julius Caesar—whose remembrance yet
Lives in men's eyes, and will to ears and tongues
Be theme and hearing ever.

Only in one respect did the idol seem to expose feet of clay—in his boast after defeating Pharnaces at Zela, *Veni, vidi, vici*. No less than four times does Shakespeare make game of this.

Don Armado plays characteristically upon it in his love-letter to Jaquenetta; Rosalind declares that there was never anything so sudden as the love between Oliver and Celia, but Caesar's thrasonical brag of 'I came, saw, and overcame'. Falstaff, after taking prisoner Sir John Coleville (2 *Hen. IV*, iv. iii), exclaims, 'I may justly say with the hook-nosed fellow of Rome, I came, saw, and overcame'. Cymbeline's queen, parleying with the Roman general, declares (m. i. 22-4):

A kind of conquest
Caesar made here, but made not here his brag
Of'came, and saw, and overcame'.

Yet it is the telegraphic brevity of this report that serves as the model for the dispatches of our generals in the field to-day.

Shakespeare seems to have had Caesar especially in his thoughts while he was writing *Hamlet*. The appearance of the Ghost, portending 'fierce events', recalls to Horatio how

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets.

Everyone remembers how in *JuL. Caes.* i. iii, in the dialogue of Casca with Cicero and afterwards with Cassius, the fantastic terrors of that 'dreadful night, that thunders, lightens, opens graves', are portrayed.

Is it not almost a case of Moth representing Hercules that Polonius in a university play should have enacted Julius Caesar? 'I was kill'd i' the Capitol; Brutus killed me', which provokes Hamlet's cynical punning retort, 'It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there'. In more serious mood is the Prince's sardonic meditation in the graveyard on the base uses to which the noblest of mortals may return after death,

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

'The mightiest Julius', 'imperious Caesar'! Yet when we turn to the play that bears his name the impression is at first scarcely less paradoxical than that made by *Troilus and Cressida*. His infirmities physical and mental are emphasized. He is deaf of one ear and subject to the falling sickness. He is superstitious, vacillating, arrogant. He is killed in Act in. i. Hence on the stage he is overshadowed, in their different ways, by Brutus, Cassius, and Antony, who are the star parts. But though the

man Julius is struck down, the spirit of Caesar triumphs. It is embodied in the ghost that appears in his tent at Sardis and on the field of Philippi to Brutus, who, as he looks on the body of Cassius, cries (v. iii. 94-6):

O Julius Caesar! thou art mighty yet!
 Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords
 In our own proper entrails.

This is echoed in the pregnant phrase in *A. and C.* n. vi. 12-13, recalling how 'Julius Caesar ... at Philippi the good Brutus ghosted'. And the spirit of Caesar lingers over this later play. It even intrudes into the transcendent love tragedy of the Roman general and the Egyptian queen, for four times, twice by Cleopatra herself, we are reminded that Caesar had been her earlier paramour, and twice mention is made of their son Caesarion. But the play is not merely Shakespeare's most consummate delineation of amorous passion. It depicts the struggle for the mastery of the Roman world. Here Octavius overcomes in turn his two fellow triumvirs, Lepidus and Antony, as well as Sextus Pompeius, who for a time revives on the sea his father's dignities and fame. Thus Octavius succeeds to the role of Julius, of whom Shakespeare, to emphasize their kinship, makes him not the nephew but the son. And the fact that throughout the play he is called simply Caesar indicates that the name has already been transformed into a title, and that (as was historically true) the imperial spirit, which the daggers of the republican conspirators could not reach, was re-embodied in this astute younger scion of the Julian house.

Such an interpretation is, I believe, legitimate. But I cannot go farther and find, as some would do, a political philosophy implicit in these two linked tragedies. Thus recently an American critic, Dr. J. E. Philipps, in a stimulating volume, *The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays* (1940), has written:

The defeat of the conspirators and the discrediting of the aristocratic principle which they represent suggest that Shakespeare saw the inevitability as well as the necessity of rule by one man. The action of *Julius Caesar* demonstrates primarily this necessity of monarchy; the culmination in the slight but positive action of *Antony and Cleopatra* demonstrates its inevitability.

I do not think that Shakespeare's mind moved along such lines of abstract reasoning.

Nor is this the end. 'Westward the course of empire takes its way', and it draws Shakespeare from Cleopatra's Egypt to the

Britain of Cymbeline. There when the king's uncle, Cassibelan, was ruler, Julius Caesar had made 'a kind of conquest', though according to Holinshed and Cymbeline's queen (in. i. 26 ff.) his shipping had been wrecked on our terrible seas and 'he was carried From off our coast, twice beaten'. Yet in the end Cassibelan promised a yearly tribute to Rome of three thousand pounds, which Cymbeline had left unpaid. It is demanded in the name of the emperor, now after his long period of settled rule known not as Octavius but Augustus. The queen anticipates her husband in a blunt refusal, and is backed up in characteristically clownish terms by her son Cloten,

Britain is
A world by itself; and we will nothing pay
For wearing our own noses.

The Roman general thereupon formally proclaims Augustus Caesar enemy of the British king, and war follows, affecting not only national fortunes but those of the chief figures in the romantic plots interwoven with the legendary historical action. In the end Britain wins the field, but Cymbeline follows the precedent of Cassibelan (v. v. 460 ff.):

Although the victor, we submit to Caesar,
And to the Roman empire, promising
To pay our wonted tribute.

.
Publish we this peace
To all our subjects. Set we forward: let
A Roman and a British ensign wave
Friendly together; so through Lud's town march:
And in the temple of great Jupiter
Our peace we'll ratify.

Was not the spirit of mighty Caesar potent yet, when the patriot William Shakespeare could present a British king, though undefeated, submitting to the claims of imperial Rome, and confirming this early treaty of London, as we may call it, in the shrine of the chief of the classical gods ?

Thus we have come the full circle, for it was with Jupiter that I began this survey. And as I look back on it I feel impelled to urge that Shakespeare's case refutes Pope's dictum that 'a little learning is a dangerous thing'. The evidence shows that the dramatist's classical lore was for the most part gained at second hand. It was also curiously partial, both in its con-

centration and in its omissions. The gods and heroes of Greece were known to him only under their Latin names. He drew no line between the original old-world legends and the medieval accretions. Every schoolboy is familiar with the anachronisms in the Roman history plays.

None the less, Shakespeare's classical knowledge, though second-hand, was not second-rate and should not be branded as superficial. It was emphatically not on the surface. On the contrary, I would apply to it an epithet unknown in his day, subliminal. It had seeped into his subconscious self, and thence, as he wrote, it welled forth at any moment on to his manuscript. The results, as I have tried to show, were not always equally fortunate. We can point to inconsistencies and incongruities and what seem to modern taste adventitious frills. But for the most part how rich and varied were Shakespeare's gains from the ancient treasure-house! To Marlowe the pagan world stood pre-eminently for beauty, personified in Helen. For Shakespeare too it meant beauty but also wisdom, as embodied in Nestor and Ulysses, and above all power, as exemplified by Jupiter among the gods, Hercules among the heroes, Alexander and Caesar among men. And here again I would submit that the acid test of the quality of Shakespeare's humanism is to be found not in the Roman history plays or *Troilus and Cressida* but in the galaxy of allusions scattered throughout the canon. A Bernard Shaw may, when it suits him, make dramatic sport with Caesar and Cleopatra, or Androcles and the Lion, but we should, I fancy, search his other plays in vain for classical references.

What did the audiences in the Globe and the Blackfriars make of it all? This is to me a constant enigma. The young gallants of the Inns of Court who, like Ovid in Jonson's *Poetaster*, were devotees of poetry instead of law, may have appreciated such echoes of their humanist studies. But how about the citizens and 'prentices, the groundlings? What was Hecuba 'and all that' to them, or they to Hecuba?

Nor is this a matter of merely antiquarian interest. In Shakespeare's time Latin had established itself as the basis of all higher education, and that position it maintained till recently when its ascendancy (and with it the less assured position of Greek) has been challenged from various angles. In his striking presidential address to the Classical Association in April of last year Mr. T. S. Eliot claimed that the 'maintenance of classical education is essential to the maintenance of the

continuity of English literature;'. With the wider implications of that thesis I am not here concerned. But it has a direct bearing upon the appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare's work. He was a Warwickshire man, born and bred in the very heart of Elizabethan England; his professional life was spent in its capital city. Yet like so many of his Renaissance contemporaries he had also if not a spiritual, an imaginative, home on the old-world "muse-haunted, Mediterranean shore. If under a new production there should arise generations ignorant of classical literature and lore, they will doubtless read and stage the plays, but they will be the poorer through having lost the key to much that is of richest worth in the vast Shakespearian treasure-house.

