Early English Classical Tragedies by John W. Cunliffe

Review by: G. C. Moore Smith

The Modern Language Review, Vol. 8, No. 2 (Apr., 1913), pp. 218-220

Published by: [Modern Humanities Research Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3713118>

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other hand, Mr Patterson certainly goes to an extreme in declaring that 'Latin hymns and devotional Latin poetry had no appreciable influence upon the development of the Middle English religious lyric' (p. 25). To cite a particular instance, No. 43, for which he failed to find a source, is directly based on the hymn *Ave Maris Stella* in Daniel's *Thesaurus Hymnologicus*, I, 204. Numerous other instances might be cited, especially among the poems addressed to the Virgin, in which the Middle English verses are expansions of Latin hymns.

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Early English Classical Tragedies. Edited with Introduction and Notes by JOHN W. CUNLIFFE. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1912. 8vo. c + 352 pp.

Professor Cunliffe is well known by his work on the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan drama, and no one could be more competent than he for the supplementary work he has undertaken in the book before us. He has given us the text of four early plays on the Senecan model—*Gorboduc*, *Jocasta*, *Gismond of Salerne* and *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, and has prefixed to them an Introduction in which he traces the history of Tragedy through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the close of the sixteenth century. Notes and a Glossary complete the book, the notes on *Gorboduc* being supplied by Dr H. A. Watt.

The Introduction is a most comprehensive and useful treatment of its subject. Its great omission—the only serious fault to be found with the whole book—is that it gives no account of Seneca's plays and their characteristics of structure and content. Such an account would have put the reader in a position to appreciate the various indications of a return to Seneca seen in Renaissance writers. As it is, an acquaintance with Senecan Tragedy is taken for granted, or left to be deduced by the reader from incidental references made in connexion with later writers.

Professor Cunliffe shows very lucidly how in the Middle Ages the very idea of tragedy as a dramatic form of art faded from knowledge, how it came to be thought that a play was recited by a single speaker, while one or more actors accompanied him in dumb show. (Incidentally he shows the long persistence of a curious error which turned one Calliopius, the scribe of a MS. of Terence, into the poet's friend who recited his plays.) One might think that this view of the manner in which ancient drama was given, might have had some effect in causing the introduction of *intermedii* into the representations of Italian renaissance plays. It hardly appears however from Professor Cunliffe's account that there is ground for assuming such a connexion: though it does seem clear that the Italian *intermedii*, as Professor Cunliffe argues, led to the English Dumb-shows. (It may be noticed that Mr Watt in his note on p. 298 is on this point not in agreement with

Professor Cunliffe, and considers that Dumb-shows are derived from a native source—‘the allegorical “tableaux” or stands which were a regular accompaniment of city pageants and court masques.’)

The Introduction throws a good deal of light on the method of staging by ‘houses’ derived, as Professor Cunliffe says, from the *sacre rappresentazioni*. Was not *Gorboduc* so staged? and should not this be remembered in connexion with Mr Watts’ note on p. 299:—‘It will be noted that no stage directions of any kind are given. These will be inserted wherever necessary in the notes. The opening scene of the tragedy takes place in a room in Gorboduc’s palace.’ That staging by ‘houses’ was in common use in English University plays is seen by the direction prefixed to Abraham Fraunce’s *Victoria*:—‘Quatuor extruendæ sunt domus, nimirum Fidelis 1^a, Fortunij 2^a, Cornelij 3^a, Octauiani 4^a. Quin et sacellum quoddam erigendum est, etc.’

Other points of interest which are treated in the Introduction are the contending influences of Greek and Roman tragedy in Italy in the Renaissance period, and the influence of the study of Vitruvius and the architectural remains of antiquity in bringing about a truer conception of the nature of classical drama. The political motive in *Gorboduc*, especially in Norton’s part of the tragedy, is well brought out.

On p. xlv, l. 4 from bottom, ‘Halcyone’ should be ‘Halcyonē’ (‘Halcyonæ’).

On p. lxxx ‘John Knox’s *Christ Triumphant*’ should be ‘John Foxe’s.’

On p. lxxxvi. It is rather curious that though *Gismond of Salerne* was acted at the Inner Temple in 1567, the authors, all, as Professor Cunliffe says, presumably members of the Inn, were all of them men in middle life. At any rate none of them, ‘Rod. Straf[ford?], Hen[ry] No[el], G. Al., Ch[ristopher] Hat[ton], R[obert] W[ilmot]’ can be identified in the Admission Lists of the Inn which begin in 1546. One would expect that a new form of literary enterprise would have been taken in hand by men of thirty or under.

On p. cxix. Professor Cunliffe says that Legge’s *Richardus Tertius* was ‘acted at St John’s College, Cambridge in 1573, and apparently repeated in 1579 and 1582.’ The play was acted in 1579. In a previous volume of this *Review* (III, p. 141) I discussed the date 1582 and came to the conclusion that it might be disregarded. I know no evidence for a first representation in 1573.

On p. 31 should not the comma after l. 9 and the full-stop after l. 10 be interchanged?

On p. 306 Mr Watt says ‘It is not clear why the Duke of Albany should be here [*Gorboduc* v. 2, 120] referred to as a foreign prince.’ But Holinshed’s *Chronicle* (1577) i fo. 39^b shows that Albany lay chiefly in Scotland.

The authors of *Gismond of Salerne* and of *The Misfortunes of Arthur*, especially the latter, drew very largely on Seneca, as is well shown in the editorial notes. It has not however been shown that Hughes is under obligations to Lucan also, and I am therefore greatly

obliged to my colleague Professor W. C. Summers, who made the discovery, for allowing me to print here his valuable note on the point.

In *Arthur*, Act iv, Scene 2, where the Senecan influence is very slight, Hughes is inspired by Lucan. It is known that Garnier got from the seventh book of the *Pharsalia* some ideas for the battle of Thapsus in *Cornélie* (cp. especially *Corn.* 1727 sqq. with *Phars.* 557 sqq.). But the description of the battle between Arthur and Mordred is little more than amplification of Lucan's. We have all the essentials reproduced: the clamour for the signal, portents and heavy rains, the hesitation of a usually confident general, the reference to the various nations fighting with each army and warring each in its own peculiar way, orders given to soldiers to spare the mean and slay the noble, the refusal of the poet to follow out every detail of the fray, and so forth—not without occasional misunderstandings of the difficult original. I notice by the way in this same battle-scene at least three loans from other books of the *Pharsalia*.

Dr Cunliffe's book is a valuable supplement to Mr Warwick Bond's *Early Plays from the Italian* and may be warmly recommended to students of the Elizabethan drama.

G. C. MOORE SMITH.

The Authorship of the Second and Third Parts of King Henry VI.
By C. F. TUCKER BROOKE (Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences). New Haven: Yale University Press. 1912. 8vo. 67 pp. (145—211).

The purpose of Mr Tucker Brooke's paper is to prove that Marlowe was the sole author of the *Contention* and *True Tragedy*, that Shakspeare alone altered these two plays into the pieces called *The Second* and *The Third Part of Henry the Sixth* in the 1623 folio, and that the Shaksperian versions are very much inferior to their Marlowe originals. Mr Tucker Brooke also believes that the text upon which Shakspeare worked was fuller and less corrupt than that of the Millington quartos, so that 'the 1623 version of the plays, besides including for the first time the alterations of Shakespeare, also represented a purer and more complete copy of the Marlovian work.' This view denies to Shakspeare any hand in the *Contention* or the *True Tragedy*, refuses to admit collaboration by Greene, Peele, or any other dramatist with either Marlowe or Shakspeare, and so contravenes, in various degrees, the opinions of Halliwell-Phillips, Furnivall, Fleay and Miss Jane Lee.

The essay is a *Tendenzschrift*, written by a devotee of Marlowe to the greater glory of his master. This fact does not deprive it of critical value: on the contrary, it has inspired the writer to the laborious collection of excellent objective evidence, while the interpretative power of sympathy has sharpened his insight into Marlowe's character, and Marlowe's way of regarding life and men. But it leads him into dealing somewhat cavalierly with Shakspeare, whenever he can be looked on as a rival to Marlowe, and with any and every critic whom Mr Tucker Brooke suspects of a deficient adoration at the shrine of Christopher. Mr Halliwell-Phillips, in setting up the hypothesis which alone (in my