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ANTHONY MUNDAY, PAMPHLETEER AND PURSUIVANT.

I. THE SECOND AND THIRD BLAST.

MUNDAY'S activity, like that of many men of similar calibre in modern Russia, seems to have been chiefly divided between journalism and espionage. In 1578 he visited Rome, ostensibly as a convert to Romanism, but really as a spy bent on penetrating the secrets of the English seminary where he was unsuspectingly received and kindly treated. Probably he was not yet in the service of Elizabeth's government, and Mr Seccombe suggests in the *Dictionary of National Biography* that the object of his visit to Rome was simply to get interesting 'copy' for his master John Allde, the stationer, to whom in October, 1576, he had been bound apprentice for eight years. Perhaps his experiences in Rome called the government's attention to his qualifications, for in 1582 he had become one of the regular agents for ferreting out popish plots and running priests to earth. Richard Topcliffe the head of this department described him to the queen's serjeant, John Puckering, as a man 'who wants no sort of wit'; but Munday's undoubted abilities were not counterbalanced by any weight of honesty, for we find him succumbing to the standing temptation of his profession—extortion by blackmail. This, however, did not impair his reputation with the authorities, for in 1584 he is spoken of as 'one of the messengers of her majestie's chamber,' and he seems from this time forward to have been regularly employed as a pursuivant, especially in all cases of recusancy and religious trouble.

Munday's pen was one of the busiest of the age, and his anti-papal work soon led to publication. The execution of Campion took place in December, 1581. On January 29, 1582, a tract appeared from Munday's hand entitled *A Discoverie of Edmund Campion...published by A. M. sometime the Popes Scholler, allowed in the seminarie at Roome amongst them.* Within a few weeks a reply appeared by one describing himself as 'a Catholike preist' under the title of *A true reporte of the death and martyrdome of M. Campion...* The interest of this tract is in the

aspersions it makes upon Munday's character. On sig. D 4^v appears 'A caueat to the reader touching A. M. his discouery,' a sentence of which runs as follows:—'Anthony Munday...who first was a stage player (no doubt a calling of some credit) [marginal note 'Northbroukes booke against plaiers'] after an aprentise which tyme he wel feined with deceauing of his master then wandring towards Italy, by his owne reporte became a coosener in his iourney. Comming to Rome, in his short abode there, was charitably relieued, but neuer admitted in the seminary as he pleseth to lye in the title of his booke, and being wery of well doing, returned home to his first vomite againe. I omite to declare howe this scholler new come out of Italy did play extempore, those gentlemen and others whiche were present, can best giue witnes of his dexterity, who being wery of his folly, hissed him from his stage. Then being thereby discouraged, he set forth a balet against playes, but yet (o constant youth) he now beginnes againe to ruffle upon the stage.' In a pamphlet, of which the address 'to the reader' is signed '22 March 1582,' Munday replied both to this defence of Campion and another which had appeared in French. On sig. D iij of his *Breefe Aunswer made unto two seditious Pamphlets* appears a section entitled 'An answere to his caueat concerning me and my Discouerie.' By way of rebutting the accusation quoted above, Munday prints an unsolicited testimonial to his behaviour from his late master John Alde and repeats his former statement that he had been received into the English seminary at Rome. But, and this is the striking point, he keeps a discreet silence concerning the extempore play, its unfortunate conclusion and the subsequent 'balet against plays.' We may therefore conclude that this part at least of 'a catholike preist's' indictment was substantially correct.

There are several points of interest in this indictment. First it may be noticed how ready the 'catholike' is to adopt the puritan's attitude towards the stage. He supports his sarcastic remark upon the dignity of the acting profession by a reference to Northbroke's *Treatise* against dicing, dancing, vain plays and interludes, and the reference shows how famous that book, published in 1577, had already become. Again, the phrase 'returned home to his first vomite againe' is curiously similar to a remark of Gosson's in his *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582). After giving certain reasons which induced him to take up the pen for the second time against the stage Gosson says:—'Beside this, hauing once already writtē against playes, which no mā that euer wrote plaies, did, but one, who hath chāged his copy, and

turned himself like ye dog to his vomite to plays again. And being falsly accused my self to do ye like, it is needfull for me to write againe¹.’ The similarity of phrasing may be accidental, but I am convinced that Gosson and the ‘catholike preist’ are referring to the same man.

Gosson’s first book against the stage, *The School of Abuse*, had been published in the autumn of 1579. Between this date and 1582, when *Playes Confuted* appeared, two attacks were made upon the stage, the first the famous *Second and third blast of retreat from plays and theatres* which was licensed on October 18, 1580, to Henry Denham, and the second,

A Ringing Retraite courageouslie sounded
Wherein Plaies and Players are fytlie confounded,

licensed to Edward White on November 10 of the same year. The latter has not been preserved for us, but it was obviously a ballad, and it is generally assumed, with every show of probability, that the said ballad was identical with the ‘balet against plays’ referred to in the *True Reporte*. Certainly we know of no other ballad which would tally with the description, and it may be noticed that the licensee Edward White was the publisher of Munday’s *Discoverie of Edmund Campion*. But Mr Fleay has gone a step further than this and attributed the pamphlet as well as the ballad to Anthony Munday². As this view has been called in question, in particular by Dr Thompson the most recent authority upon the puritans and the stage³, it is worth while considering for a moment the reasons for and against the theory.

First of all, we have the similarity between the title of the tract and that of the ballad. This suggests a common author but does nothing more, since a ballad writer would be quite likely to steal or adapt a title from a book that had recently appeared. We should rest our argument rather upon the words already quoted from Gosson. *The Second and Third Blast* was an important book. It was the first book that had been entirely devoted to attacking the theatre. It was obviously inspired by the civic authorities and even bore the arms of the corporation on its title-page. It would be impossible that Gosson, who followed the battle between player and puritan very closely, could have been ignorant of its existence. Now the author of the *Third Blast* (the *Second* was a translation from Salvian) expressly informs us that he had been ‘a great affecter of that vaine Art of plaie making,’

¹ Hazlitt, *English Drama and Stage*, p. 212.

² *History of the Stage*, pp. 51, 52.

³ *Controversy between the Puritans and the Stage*, New York, 1903, pp. 68, 86—7.

to which the editor of the book adds the remark: 'Yea...as excellent an Autor of those vanities, as who was best¹.' When therefore Gosson tells us that besides himself no playwright had ever written against plays except one, we are forced to conclude that he is referring to the author of the *Third Blast*, and when he goes on to say that the man had afterwards gone back to work for the stage once more, we are inevitably reminded of the words of the *True Reporte*. Munday had not only acted but written plays, and the story of the 'extempore play' supplies a motive for a temporary disgust with the stage. The city was at this time setting on foot one of its great campaigns against the theatre, and would probably be ready to pay for a tract written on its side of the question. Everything in fact points to Munday as the author of the *Third Blast*, and provides ample reasons for his authorship. Finally, the similarity between the titles, taken together with Gosson's definite statement that only *one* person connected with the stage had written against it beside himself, indicate that the ballad and the tract were from the same pen.

The only argument against the theory is that Munday returned to the stage in 1580, and therefore could not have written the *Third Blast* at the end of that year. But this argument, if valid, would be equally telling against Munday's authorship of the ballad, which no one seems inclined to dispute. The objection seems to rest upon Munday's description of himself as 'a servant of the Earl of Oxford,' in *A Viewe of Sundry Examples*, printed in 1580. To this it may be replied first, that the year at that time was generally reckoned as ending not on the 31st December, but on the 25th March following, so that there would have been plenty of time for Munday to repent of his repentance and 'return to his vomit' before the year ran out; secondly, that 'servant of the Earl of Oxford' does not necessarily imply that Munday was a member of the Earl's acting company. The Earl of Oxford was very free with his patronage, and at this time attracted many young men into his service, and among them John Lyly, who was apparently engaged in secretarial work². It is in any case absurd to credit Munday with the ballad licensed November 10 and refuse to admit that he could have written the *Third Blast*, licensed October 18.

That a man like Munday should be pressed into the city's service to write against the stage is a curious commentary upon the general conduct of the puritan campaign.

¹ Hazlitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 100, 101.

² See the present writer's *John Lyly*, pp. 7, 28.

II. THE MARPRELATE CONTROVERSY.

That Munday had not in reality the slightest sympathy with the puritan cause is shown by the part that he played in the Marprelate controversy—a chapter in his career that has, I believe, hitherto passed unnoticed. The author of *An Almond for a Parrat* (spring, 1590), the last of the replies on the episcopal side to the Marprelate tracts, bids Martin ‘beware Anthony Munday be not euen with you for calling him Iudas, and lay open your false carding to the stage of all mens scorne¹.’ This may perhaps be read as a threat to renew the anti-Martinist plays which had been suppressed in the autumn of 1589, and it has been suggested that the threat was actually carried into effect in the form of *A Merry knack to know a knave*². The words of *An Almond* were, in any case, a reply to one of Martin’s flings in *The Reproof of Martin Junior* commonly known as *Martin Senior*. On sig. A 2^v of this Martin gives us ‘an oration of Iohn Canturburie to the pursuivants, when he directeth his warrants unto them to post after Martin.’ Anthony Munday is the first pursuivant to be addressed, and the following words are put into Whitgift’s mouth concerning him: ‘I thanke you Maister Munday, you are a good Gentleman of your worde. Ah thou Iudas, thou that hast alreadie betrayed the Papistes, I thinke meanest to betray vs also. Diddest thou not assure me, without all doubt, that thou wouldest bring mee in, Penry, Newman, Waldegrave, presse, letters, and all, before Saint Andrewes day last. And now thou seest we are as farre to seeke for them, as euer we were.’ From this it is obvious that Munday was still engaged as a pursuivant, and was one of the chief police agents set on to Martin’s track.

As it happens, we possess a little picture of Munday in the exercise of his profession. On December 6, 1588, one Giles Wiggington, who was suspected to have had a finger in the Marprelate pie, was summoned to Lambeth to answer for himself. The ‘archbishop’s pursuivant’ who ‘apprehended him at his lodgings, while he was in bed,’ was none other than our hero. They took a boat to Lambeth and on the way Munday, under pretence of desiring to be instructed, induced his prisoner to speak unguardedly of his opinions, and of what he knew concerning Martin, all of which was of course carefully reported to the archbishop when they reached Lambeth, although a strict promise of secrecy had been given to the simple-minded puritan minister³.

¹ McKerrow’s *Nashe*, III, p. 374, l. 22. ² Thompson, *Puritans and the Stage*, p. 200.

³ For Wiggington’s account of this episode see a volume of manuscripts entitled *A Second Part of a Register*, pp. 843—849 (Dr Williams’ Library).

Since Munday has thus been proved beyond all possibility of doubt to have been engaged in tracking the Marprelate press in its movements across the country, he may I think with every show of probability be supposed to have also taken part in the production of the anti-Martinist tracts. It would be strange indeed if a man of his literary reputation and ability had not written something upon a matter which must then have occupied so much of his thoughts, especially as the bishops were at this time ready to encourage, and probably to reward, those who took up the pen against their formidable antagonist. Munday, we may be almost certain, was one of the little group of anti-Martinist writers, and the only difficulty is to point to the pamphlets that came from his pen. In this Martin himself gives us a clue, somewhat vague it is true, but worth stating for all that. On page 25 of the *Protestation* the following sentence occurs, 'then among al the rimers and stage plaiers, which my Ll of the cleargy had suborded against me, I remember Mar-Martin, John a Cant. his hobbie-horse, was to his reproche, newly put out of the morris, take it how he will; with a flat discharge for euer shaking his shins about a maypole againe while he liued.' Martin is speaking of his tract *More Worke for the Cooper*, which had just been captured with the printers and press, and is drawing upon his memory for its various points and sallies. It is clear from his words that as a retort to the anti-Martinist plays he had written what he would perhaps have entitled 'a pageant of petty popes,' and that Mar-Martin had figured in this as giving some performance at which he was hissed off the stage. The word 'newly' is curious and cannot in this connection mean 'recently,' since Martin is not referring to any actual occurrence. We must therefore, I think, give it its other meaning of 'again,' or 'anew,' and suppose that Martin is hinting at some occasion in which Mar-Martin had really been disgraced upon the boards of a theatre. Such an incident would be the very thing that Martin would pounce upon and turn to his own ends. I suggest, therefore, that the incident in question is that referred to in *A True Reporte* and that Martin identified Mar-Martin with Anthony Munday. The epithet 'John a Cant. his hobbie-horse,' which is obviously suited to the archbishop's pursuivant, lends some additional support to the theory¹.

Assuming then the identification to have been intended and to have been correct, what did Munday write in support of the bishops against Martin? There are of course the rhymes which appeared in

¹ Martin had already, it will be remembered, referred to Munday's treachery against the Papists. It is not impossible therefore that he had read *A True Reporte*.

the spring of 1589 under the title of *Mar-Martine*, but I fancy that Martin's reference to the morris and the maypole point to the fact that 'Mar-Martin' had been also engaged in the anti-Martinist dramatic work which made its appearance on the London stage in the summer of 1589. The author of *Martins Months minde* tells us that Martin had been 'made a may game upon the stage,' and gives the Theater as the place of performance¹. Martin's words would lead us to conjecture that Munday either wrote this piece or took a prominent part in it as an actor. I am inclined to believe also that Munday had a hand in the prose anti-Martinist tracts that followed the dramatic attack. Mr McKerrow has made certain discoveries, which we hope to see set out in the fifth volume of his magnificent edition of *Nashe*, that make it highly improbable that Munday any more than Nashe could have been responsible for the tracts that passed under the name of Pasquill. Nashe certainly took some part in the controversy, for we have his own word for it. Perhaps he merely contributed to the dramatic replies, perhaps he was the author of the amusing *Martins Months minde*. This would leave by process of exhaustion *An Almond for a Parrat* for Munday, the very tract, be it noticed, which gives a resentful reply to Martin's reference to him as Judas. None of the other pamphlets show such a remarkable knowledge of the Marprelate business, and moreover the kind of knowledge it displays is just that which a pursuivant engaged in detective work would be likely to have gleaned. But what converts a possibility into a strong probability is the fact that the author of *An Almond* once distinctly speaks of himself as *Mar-Martine*: 'I giue thee but a bravado now, to let thee knowe I am thine enemie; but the next time you see *Mar-Martine* in armes bidde your sonnes and your familie prouide them to God-ward, for I am eagerly bent to reuenge, & not one of them shall escape, no, not T. C. himselfe as full as he is of his myracles².' This passage should be sufficient to convince anyone that *Mar-Martine* and *An Almond* are by the same hand, and it is hoped that the foregoing argument will be held sufficient to show that the hand in question was that of Anthony Munday. It only remains now to identify the personality of Pasquill and we shall be in a fair way towards clearing up the most teasing and obscure section of a teasing and obscure subject, the authorship of the anti-Martinist tracts in the Marprelate controversy.

JOHN DOVER WILSON.

CAMBRIDGE.

¹ Sig. E 3.

² McKerrow, *Nashe*, p. 350, ll. 6—10.