

THE NEW HALKETT AND LAING

Halkett and Laing. *A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications in the English Language. Third (revised and enlarged) edition. 1475-1640.* Ed. John Horden. Longman, 1980. pp. xlviii, 272. \$140. ISBN 0 582 55521 3.

THE HISTORY OF THIS SECOND REVISION of the famous *Dictionary of the Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature of Great Britain* has already been recounted in this *Bulletin* by the General Editor of the new version, John Horden, in an article "The Revision of Halkett and Laing" (No.12, May 1978, pp.71-84). The story is necessarily told again in the Preface — often word for word but with rearrangement and added material (and the introduction of one sad misprint — "of" for "or" — producing "anonyma of pseudonyma" on p.xii). It need not be repeated in detail here; but, briefly, the original four volumes, completed and, indeed, compiled by Catherine Laing after the death of her father in 1880 (and that of Halkett in 1871), were published in the years 1882-8 and were first revised in the seven volumes published in 1926-34 as the *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*. Two supplementary volumes, VIII and IX, were added in 1956 and 1962, Volume IX containing additions and corrections. Now Dr Horden, with the assistance of an editorial board of five, a team of nine research editors, and many official and unofficial research assistants, has begun the publication of a second complete revision, the first volume being the one under review.

The new edition has a slightly different title again — *A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications in the English Language* — since it was felt, understandably, that the word "literature" was misleading (for instance, many of the publications listed are religious tracts, of no literary value whatever); translations into English are included; and "entries are not . . . confined to works printed in England". More important, there has been a change in plan, in that this edition has been divided into periods. The first volume thus covers only the *S. T. C.* years (and its editors have been able to take advantage of the published Volume 2 of the revised *S. T. C.* and of page-proofs and typescripts being used by Miss Pantzer for the as yet unpublished Volume 1). This, of course, is a great improvement. (It should perhaps be mentioned that the *Dictionary* is still confined to "books, pamphlets, single sheets" published in the *S. T. C.* period, except for other rare material that happens to be listed in *S. T. C.*² It does not extend to the numerous works that remained in manuscript until later times, such as — to chose an example at random — the anonymous play published by the Malone Society as *John of Bordeaux*, and generally attributed to Robert Greene.)

Although every entry in the new Halkett and Laing has been most carefully revised, and the chronological rearrangement made, this edition is tied to the earlier sets in two ways. It has been considered necessary to have an entry

corresponding to every item in the second edition, even where that edition was wrong in its belief that the work in question was anonymous or pseudonymous (e.g. Lodge's *Rosalynde*). This produces an anomaly, of course, but all such entries in the revision are distinguished by an asterisk, they have their value, and they can hardly cause any confusion. What is disturbing, however, is that entries are still arranged "in alphabetical order of title, excluding definite and indefinite articles". This practice makes the volume all but unusable for some purposes.

Let us assume that a reader wishes to know the evidence for the authorship of the work that he has heard of as *Pygmalion's Image*. He will look in vain under "Pygmalion" (and under "Image") and obviously cannot be helped by the otherwise valuable "Index of Writers' Names". If he happens to have noticed that the verse dedication is signed "W.K.", he can, to be sure, look that up in the "List of Pseudonyms", which will refer him to John Marston (as well as William Kempe); and then the index of writers will refer him to the relevant entry. Otherwise his only hope is to remember that Marston was somehow involved; look up the *S.T.C.* under Marston; and then trace the new Halkett and Laing item from its other useful "Table of *S.T.C.* Numbers".

If it be objected that this enquirer ought to have remembered that the fuller title of the work was *The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image* and that the entry can be found under "Metamorphosis", let that objector try to trace the anonymous work that he does know as *The Metamorphosis of Ajax*. Where is it? Under "New": "*New (A) discourse of a stale subject, called the metamorphosis of Ajax*". The only way of finding an entry is to know the *full* title of the work one is seeking (and a "popular" modern edition might not give that) — or to have already some idea of the answer to the question one is asking. (To take one further example, *Gammer Gurton's Needle* is under "Ryght".) The folly of the whole method will be evident if the reader will look at the number of items under "Here" (largely because of titles like "*Here endeth . . .*" or "*Here foloweth . . .*" or "*Here begyneth . . .*" — including an edition of Chaucer's *Troilus and Creseyde*), or under "Thus" ("*Thus endeth . . .*") or "Tragedy", or "Treatise", or "True", or "Short", or — worst of all — "Of" (*Of gentlynnes & nobylite a dyaloge*). Great care has been taken to give cross-references when a work has been published under two different titles (such as C8, Lyly's *Campaspe* — though the second entry is not as one might expect under "Alexander" but under "Moste" — "*Moste (A) excellent comedie of Alexander, Campaspe, and Diogenes*"); but it will be clear that until further full indexes are published this first volume by itself is not as useful as it should, and could easily, have been.

There are two further problems, arising from the otherwise wholly commendable refusal of the editors to guess when they don't know. One can have nothing but praise for the policy of giving "documentary evidence for the attribution of authorship made", for the caution of such an entry as (C66) "Three of the twelve homilies . . . were almost certainly written by Cranmer, but probably the remainder were only edited by him", and for the careful recording of mis-

attributions even when the revisers do not pretend to know the correct one (e.g. E84); but sometimes an entry seems to imply — and “seems” is as far as one should go with the criticism, for the editors do use question marks — that the choice is between named authors when it might be fairer to say that there is no strong evidence for attribution to any known writer (*Lochrine*, for example — L8). The second difficulty (and the two are not unrelated) is that it is the policy of the revision to provide entries only for works “of which the authorship has been established, reasonably conjectured, or — although mistaken — publicly asserted”. How, then, does one know when to stop looking? How decide whether the work one is seeking has been deliberately or accidentally omitted? After the most diligent search I have been unable to find any mention of the ‘old’ Lear play *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (1605?) — and since the relevant number, 213, is not to be found in the special “Table of Greg Numbers” [i.e. the numbers from the *Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*], there probably is no entry here. But why? There can be no doubt that *Leir* has been “publicly asserted” to be by Greene, and Peele, and others. Is its omission then accidental? Probably not, for there is another editorial principle — frankly, inconsistent with the first — that “it would be a doubtful service to scholarship if now unacceptable attributions were given a new lease of life by having attention drawn to them here. So deliberate, but tacit, omission has been adopted as the best policy” — and anonymous plays are specifically instanced. What, then, is the difference in this respect between *Leir* and *Lochrine*? Even if failure to trace *Leir* should prove only my own incompetence or ignorance, the general criticism is still valid: there should be *some* easier way of finding out if an entry exists, or where it is, and there is need for some addition to, as well as clarification of, the otherwise meticulous (if not always convincing) statement of editorial principles in the Introduction.

A first impression that the presentation of the evidence for authorship is scholarly, up-to-date and reasonably consistent is on the whole confirmed by a spot-check of items associated with Greene, Peele, Kyd, Marlowe and Marston. Discussions of the authorship of *The Defence of Coney-catching*, for example, are well covered in D53, with the added note that “although this is nominally a riposte” to the two earlier pamphlets by Greene, “it reads more like an advertisement for those two pieces, and is almost certainly from the same pen”. On *The Groatsworth of Wit*, G109 gives the main evidence for thinking that Greene was the author, and Chettle only the editor, with reference to the principal articles on the subject (I am prepared to believe that W.B. Austin’s computer analysis “proving” that Chettle wrote the piece was thought too unconvincing to be worth listing). I35, on *The Insatiate Countess*, and A199, *The Arraignment of Paris*, are other good examples of thorough presentation of testimony (for and against) and persuasive drawing of conclusions. It is encouraging, too, to see Collier forgeries identified and dismissed as evidence (as in T9). In such an entry as F69, however, although reference is also made to discussions by F.S. Boas and Arthur Freeman rejecting Kyd’s authorship of *The First Part of Jeronimo*, the listing of what turns out to be a one-sentence comment by Philip Edwards is of little use, and a

simple statement that the play is too *late* to be by Kyd would have been more helpful. Again, in H212, it is slightly misleading to give as the authority for Kyd's authorship of *The Householder's Philosophy* "F.S. Boas, ed. *The Works of Thomas Kyd* (1955) lxii-lxiv": these pages are only lithographic reprints of the 1901 edition and not part of the new material added in 1955. More important, in T143, on the 1604 *Faustus* the verdict that "some parts of the play, especially the comic scenes, are probably not by Marlowe" is, on the evidence presented, too emphatic, and deceptive, particularly as it has not been possible to mention the reopening by Bowers of the case against Marlowe — and no statement at all is made about the relation of the 1604 to the 1616 text or even about the existence of the 1616 version.

Indeed, there is some cause for concern about the treatment of Bad Quartos generally — and, consequently, of Shakespeare. Here there are signs of differences of opinion, and even of knowledge, between contributors. F71 correctly identifies *The First Part of the Contention* as "a corrupt version of Shakespeare's *2Henry VI*" but part of entry E137 describes the first Quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) as "A 'bad quarto' of the play, of which an enlarged and improved (although still corrupt) version was printed as *The most excellent and lamentable tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (M179)". This, presumably paraphrasing the Q2 title-page, is nevertheless nonsense. If Q1 is a "bad quarto" — a *debased* version of the original play, however "reported" or otherwise put together — then there is simply no question of that text's being "enlarged" or "improved" as Q2: Q2 is the earlier in order of "composition", so to speak, not the later, though it was the second printed. To be sure, Q2 occasionally consulted Q1, presumably where its own manuscript "copy" was missing or illegible or otherwise defective; and it does, for instance, preserve "first shots" and perhaps an unsatisfactory version of the Queen Mab speech — but it is not, in any accepted sense, "corrupt" and it is certainly not "enlarged". And if it be argued in defence of E137 that whoever wrote that item meant only that Q2 was "an enlarged and improved version" of some hypothetical lost form of the play, not of the Q1 text, that opinion would still lack any supporting evidence whatever — and in any case there can be no such excuse for the entry for Q2 (M179) which specifically states that that text is "a revised and enlarged edition of *An excellent conceited tragedie of Romeo and Juliet* (E173)". This is setting the clock back a hundred years. If ever a reprinting of the volume under review is envisaged, a leading Shakespeare scholar should be invited to go through it. Such a scholar will also be concerned to find that while publication in the First Folio is thought worth mentioning as part of the evidence for Shakespeare's authorship of, for example, *Titus Andronicus*, in M195, this information is not given for early editions of *Romeo and Juliet* or *Richard II* or *Richard III* where Shakespeare's name appears on a different Quarto (as if attribution of a Q made all other evidence superfluous). It would also be desirable to improve on the cryptic statement (P131) that G.I. Duthie thought *A Shrew* and *The Shrew* "independent versions of a lost play".

Attention may be drawn to one other series of examples of differences of standard in different entries. In R93, a commendably full note on *The Revengers*

Tragedy, the ascription to Tourneur by Archer, Kirkman and Langbaine is recorded but obviously not taken to be conclusive or even necessarily significant, and in M205 the attributions of *Mucedorus* to Shakespeare by Archer and Kirkman are rightly brushed aside; yet in P87 Kirkman is the only "authority" given for the attribution to Middleton of *The Phoenix* (and there is not even a question mark to indicate that Kirkman alone would be insufficient authority) and in M8 Moseley's 1660 catalogue is treated as satisfactory evidence (presumably as an interpretation of the initials "T.M." on the title-page) for Middleton's authorship of *A Mad World, my Masters*.

Obviously, where a work covers as much ground as does the new Halkett and Laing, any reviewer will be able to find some faults, and will run the risk of seeming ungracious and ungrateful by doing so; yet it is precisely because this book will probably become, as the publishers claim it to be, "a unique and indispensable reference work" in the great libraries of the world that it ought to be as good as it can be made. Reviews may perhaps be regarded as the first step in the process of collaboration that will lead to some later "dictionary". It is to be hoped, however, for the reasons given, that that dictionary will be not a fourth edition of Halkett and Laing but one arranged on different principles, although necessarily indebted to all its predecessors — and that *it* will not be tempted to even "occasional" transcription of a swash italic "I" as "J" (what would McKerrow have said about this!) and will not find it "regrettably unavoidable" to transcribe "ye" as "ye".

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