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Chapter

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NARRATIVE OF NEGATIVITY: WHIG HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE SPECTRE OF KING JAMES IN *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

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Traditional criticism of *Measure for Measure* has long noted a similarity between the fictional Duke Vincentio and the real King James. Indeed, some critics of *Measure for Measure* have insisted that the Duke and James are one and the same. Providing a cautious warning against such analogous readings, the 1991 Oxford editor N. W. Bawcutt advised that one 'would best be sceptical about excessive claims for royal presence' in the Duke's role.¹ Bawcutt's scepticism appeared in sharp contrast, however, to that of his Cambridge counterpart Brian Gibbons who, also in 1991, proclaimed 'no doubt' that aspects of the Duke's personality were 'intended to be recognized as allusions to the new king'.² Gibbons's comments echoed those of his Cambridge forebears, Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, who, in their 1922 Cambridge edition (and repeated in editions as late as 1950), maintained that 'James I's dislike of crowds' was a 'historic fact', and that 'any doubt upon the matter . . . should be laid to rest'.³ As is evident, for these early twentieth-century editors, analogous similarity between Shakespeare's Duke and the real King James was based irrefutably on 'historic fact', with Shakespeare attempting a lifelike portrayal, or topical caricature, of the personality or political opinion of his Scottish king and patron. Biographical analogy held the key to appreciating the contextual topicality of Shakespeare's dramatic creation, with the spectre of King James residing firmly in the Duke of *Measure for Measure*.

In this article, I will refer to this specific instance of biographical analogy, focusing as it does on certain negative aspects of James's personality

and reign whilst searching for parallels in the Duke, as the 'Duke-as-James' theory. That the 'Duke-as-James' theory should remain relatively unchallenged in criticism of *Measure for Measure* is surprising, not least in the light of revisionist historical research that has, ever since the 1950s, offered an alternative, more sympathetic view of James and his reception in England in 1603–4. Unfortunately, a culture of critical conservatism among Shakespeare scholars, especially those who follow the hegemonic/subversive model of new historicist practice, continues to uphold the 'Duke-as-James' theory as irrefutable 'historic fact'. By refusing to respond to longstanding revisionist historical research, new historicist scholars continue to nurture a traditionally held view of *Measure for Measure* as topical political commentary, with Shakespeare offering decidedly negative or apologetic opinions about the qualities and intentions of his new king. This article seeks to redress the imbalance caused by such critical conservatism by interrogating our tacit acceptance of the 'Duke-as-James' theory in relation to *Measure for Measure*, and by highlighting the anachronistic historical construct at the theory's core.

The almost universal belief that the disguised Duke in *Measure for Measure* represents a barely disguised caricature of James is based on two famous

¹ N. W. Bawcutt, ed., *Measure for Measure* (Oxford, 1991), p. 5.

² Brian Gibbons, ed., *Measure for Measure* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 22.

³ Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and John Dover Wilson, eds., *Measure for Measure* (Cambridge, 1922; rev. edn 1950), p. 118n.

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passages in the play. The first contains the Duke's brief explanation to Escalus about his secretive plans to travel 'privily away' from Vienna:

Duke. I love the people,
But do not like to stage me to their eyes:
Though it do well, I do not relish well
Their loud applause and *aves* vehement:
Nor do I think the man of safe discretion
That does affect it. (1.1.67–72)

The Duke's excuse is that he hopes to avoid both the public 'staging' and the consequent 'loud applause and *aves* vehement' (a hendiadys that combines loud clapping with the excessively loud 'hails and farewells') of his adoring public. Not only does the Duke fail to 'relish' these noisy public farewells – 'relish' either referring to being 'pleased or satisfied with' (*OED* *v.*¹3.b.) or, more intriguingly, to his 'appreciating' or 'understanding' them (*OED* *v.*¹3.d.) – but he also expresses concern over the 'safe discretion' (judgement or prudence) of any man who does 'affect it' (who ostentatiously shows a liking for such displays (*OED* *v.*¹5.a.)).

The second supposed allusion to James occurs in Angelo's description of the physical effect of his meetings with Isabella:

Angelo. So play the foolish throngs with one that swoons,
Come all to help him, and so stop the air
By which he should revive – and even so
The general subject to a well-wished king
Quit their own part and, in obsequious fondness
Crowd to his presence, where their untaught love
Must needs appear offence. (2.4.24–30)

Like the subjects who rush to greet their king, Angelo's blood rushes uncontrollably to his swooning (and lusting) heart, so stifling the metaphorical 'air' that will aid his moral recovery. Angelo likens this onrush of blood to the 'untaught' (ignorant) masses who, from 'obsequious fondness' (unduly servile and foolish affection) and spurred on by seeing the kingly object of their veneration, are prone to 'quit' (relinquish) their 'own part' (their allotted role in society) and crowd into the royal presence, thus unwittingly causing offence with their coarse behaviour. As Angelo's contemplation of his

physical and emotional response to Isabella's proximity suggests, the 2.4 dialogue is more subjective and introspective in its imagery. Although Angelo pointedly refers to a 'king', this royal presence in the metaphor, like a king's presence in a court, is a necessary factor in Angelo's expression of uncontrollable lust and unexpected passion; reference to a 'king' need not imply Shakespeare's conscious allusion to his own ruler, King James. Subjectivity and introspection remain the true focus of Angelo's concern.

The Duke's 1.1 'privily away' comment appears, however, far more specific in its self-analysis. Nevertheless, and despite the wholly acceptable and logical explanation for the Duke's secretive departure, the true reason for his travelling 'privily away' (as the audience soon discovers) is to embark on an adventure of subterfuge and surveillance, with the intention of observing the actions of his deputy: 'Hence shall we see / If power change purpose, what our seemers be' (1.3.53–4). Indeed, the likelihood that the Duke's original explanation represents no more than a diplomatic excuse for his disguised adventure is confirmed by his later choice 'To enter publicly' (4.3.93) on his return to Vienna with all the pomp and ceremony appropriate to his rank. The Duke's command to Angelo to 'Give [him his] hand / And let the subject see, to make them know / That outward courtesies would fain proclaim / Favours that keep within' (5.1.13–16), appears both ironic and politically astute. For a Duke who has earlier claimed to dislike 'staging' himself to his people's eyes, his decision to 'enter publicly' in 5.1 implies a confidence and ease with the spectacle of state that belies the 1.1 reference to self-conscious avoidance of the public gaze. As Steven Mullaney suggested in the late 1980s, such spectacle was particularly suited to Queen Elizabeth's 'theatricality of power'.⁴ Likewise, Jonathan Goldberg had already argued that James adopted and adapted Elizabeth's theatricality on his accession to the English throne, fashioning it to suit his

⁴ Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage* (Chicago, 1988), pp. 10–15.

more distanced, representational attitude to kingship and display.⁵ In consequence, and in the light of his staged return, the Duke's original excuse for hurrying away in secret appears at best spurious, at worst defensive and obfuscatory. It likewise suggests the Duke's skilful manipulation of his deputies and of events as they unfold.

Any suggestion that the Duke might be manipulating his deputies – claiming a desire to avoid his people and then returning to Vienna with all the spectacle of state for the public exposure of Angelo's misconduct – is, however, contrary to traditional occasionalist readings of *Measure for Measure*. Belief in the occasionality of *Measure for Measure* (its composition as a direct result either of the 'occasion' of James's accession to the throne or of a royal command performance at court) presupposes that the play represents Shakespeare's direct engagement in Jacobean social and political debate; in effect, that Shakespeare had a specific agenda in highlighting his monarch's presence in the play. Quiller-Couch and Wilson's comment, that the 1.1 and 2.4 passages appear to have been 'additions, written expressly' for the play's royal auditor at the 'Court performance of 1604', is a specific example of occasionalist commentary (*Measure*, 118n.). In the late 1970s, however, Richard Levin expressed his derision for those who interpret Shakespeare's plays as 'compositions directed at a special audience', in *Measure for Measure's* case, King James.⁶ Levin was particularly scathing about one aspect of the 'Duke-as-James' theory that had come to dominate critical consideration of *Measure for Measure*: the quest for suggestive parallels between the Duke's character and James's famous political writings, especially *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599 and 1603).⁷ This quest had resulted in the creation of what Levin termed a 'King James Version' of *Measure for Measure*. For Levin, this personality-nuanced 'King James Version' of critical study, based, as it appears, on the 'Duke-as-James' theory which represents its extreme expression, threatened to elide alternative readings of the play.

Despite Levin's comments and possibly because of the date of his writing being so close to the

advent of new historicist practice in the early 1980s, such caution has received only passing consideration from literary scholars intent on analysing *Measure for Measure* as an occasionalist text.⁸ It is, of course, wholly understandable why occasionalist readings of *Measure for Measure* appear so attractive, not least considering the famous Revels Account record of a performance 'By his Ma^{ties} plaiers': 'On S^t Stiuens night [Boxing Day 26 December 1604] in the [Banqueting] Hall [at Whitehall] A play caled Mesur for Mesur' by 'Shaxberd'.⁹ This reference provides the earliest and only evidence for the play's existence prior to publication in the 1623 Folio. Important as this historical evidence undoubtedly is, the fact that other Shakespeare plays presented at Court in the same Christmas Revels season (*Comedy of Errors* and *Henry V*) are equally well documented appears to counter any claim that *Measure for Measure* represents a unique example of court-specific play presentation. As Goldberg first noted, there are no extant plays irrefutably known to have been written specifically for court performance; all seem already to have appeared in the public repertory.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the continued acceptance of a specific occasionality for *Measure for Measure*, which has proved most valuable when considering the play's chronological situation in the Shakespeare canon, has only served to confirm the 'Duke-as-James' theory as literary 'fact' for those who believe the character of King James lurks in the character of the Duke.

⁵ Jonathan Goldberg, *James I and the Politics of Literature* (Baltimore, 1983), pp. 30–1.

⁶ Richard Levin, *New Readings vs. Old Plays* (Chicago, 1979), p. 167.

⁷ King James, VI & I, *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies* (Edinburgh, 1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (Edinburgh, 1599; repr. London, 1603). See Jenny Wormald, 'James VI & I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: the Scottish Context and the English Translation', in Linda Levy Peck, ed., *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 36–54.

⁸ Ivo Kamps and Karen Raber, *Measure for Measure: Texts and Contexts* (Boston, 2004), pp. 124–7.

⁹ Public Records Office AO3/908/13.

¹⁰ Goldberg, *James I*, p. 231.

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Of significant importance for our understanding of the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory as an anachronistic historical construct, rather than as ‘historic fact’, is the actuality that the theory’s heritage can be traced to a critical tradition that gained strength not in the seventeenth century in the immediate aftermath of either Shakespeare’s, King James’s or King Charles’s death, but in the mid-eighteenth century. Indeed, what is generally accepted as the earliest mention of the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory in relation to *Measure for Measure* was not made until 1766, when Thomas Tyrwhitt claimed that Shakespeare’s intention in writing the Duke was ‘to flatter [‘to represent too favourably’ (*OED* v.19.a.)] that unkingly weakness of *James the first*, which made him so impatient of the crowds that flocked to see him, especially on his first coming’.¹¹ Tyrwhitt offers apparently irrefutable historical evidence about James’s public persona to justify this comment. This evidence, however, is itself potentially flawed and, like so much eighteenth-century commentary on James, is reliant on partisan hearsay rather than objectively gathered ‘historic fact’. Stemming from historical commentary by individuals actively participating in a post-regicide, pro-Parliament narrative of negativity directed against all aspects of the Stuart monarchy, such partisan historicizing, full of half-truths and gossip, scandalous fictions and downright lies, was to become known as Whig historiography.¹² First identified by Herbert Butterfield as a principle ‘introduced for the purpose of facilitating the abridgement of history’, Whig historiography presented a grand narrative of historical events that was biased in favour of an inevitable progression towards liberal democracy and constitutional monarchy. Whig historiography was also to become the defining historical principle for describing James’s personality and rule, reaching its apotheosis with Thomas Babington Macaulay’s *History of England* of 1848.¹³ It was in direct response to eighteenth-century Whig historiography, therefore, that Tyrwhitt introduced the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory into the vocabulary of *Measure for Measure* criticism.

Preceded in 1765 by Samuel Johnson’s obvious displeasure at *Measure for Measure*’s morality,

being particularly outraged by ‘*Angelo*’s crimes’ and believing that ‘every reader feels some indignation when he finds him spared’,¹⁴ Tyrwhitt’s 1766 ‘Duke-as-James’ comments about the 1.2 and 2.4 dialogue demonstrate how far Shakespeare’s play had captured the imagination of the age. Citing the opinion of ‘some of our Historians’ (a comment which, as we shall later see, is particularly relevant when considering the source for his ideas), Tyrwhitt discusses how James ‘restrained’ the crowds who flocked to him and offers ‘A Manuscript in the *British Museum*’ as primary evidence:

Sir *Symonds D’Ewes*, in his *Memoirs of his own Life*, has a remarkable passage with regard to this humour of *James*. After taking notice, that the King going to Parliament, on the 30th of January, 1620–1, ‘spake lovingly to the people, and said, ‘*God bless ye, God bless ye*’; he adds these words, ‘*contrary to his former hasty and passionate custom, which often, in his sudden distemper, would bid a pox or a plague on such as flocked to see him.*’¹⁵

For Tyrwhitt, the most convincing proof of James’s ‘unkingly weakness’ comes not from the early years of James’s reign when *Measure for Measure* was first performed, but from a manuscript describing a reminiscence about the year 1621 (old-style calendar 1620) written by the parliamentarian and procedural historian, Sir Simonds D’Ewes. D’Ewes relates this experience in his handwritten *Autobiography* (c. 1637), a self-edited though unpublished account of his life up to 1635 (based on memory and personal documents) intended for the private edification of his family.¹⁶ D’Ewes’s *Autobiography* was not published, therefore, until 1845, over two centuries after his meticulous and

¹¹ Thomas Tyrwhitt, *Observations and Conjectures upon some Passages of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1766), p. 36.

¹² Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London, 1931), pp. 24–6.

¹³ Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II*, 5 vols. (London, 1848–55), vol. 1 (1848).

¹⁴ Samuel Johnson, ed., *The Plays of William Shakespeare*, 8 vols. (London, 1765), vol. 1, p. 378.

¹⁵ Tyrwhitt, *Observations*, pp. 36–7.

¹⁶ BL Harley MS 646, fols 53–4.

steady hand first drafted it.¹⁷ In his discursive narrative style, which embraces personal, national and international affairs and anecdotes in chronological sequence, D'Ewes recalls how once, as an onlooker and 'not without some danger', he had positioned himself in a throng of well-wishers to see 'his Ma^{tie} passe to Parliament in state' on his 'short progresse from Whitehall to Westminster' (Harley 646, fol. 54). This fleeting moment in the young D'Ewes's life is seized upon by Tyrwhitt to explain two passages in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*.

Primary evidence as D'Ewes's testimony undoubtedly is, it is also worthy of a certain circumspection, especially since it recalls an event towards the end of James's life that occurred when D'Ewes was obviously an impressionable nineteen-year-old observer and newcomer to London. As recently as September 1620, four months prior to the state occasion he recalls, D'Ewes had been forced by his overbearing father to leave Cambridge University and embark on a career at the Inner Temple. Only a year old when James acceded to the English throne, and educated variously in Dorset and Suffolk, D'Ewes's only experience of the metropolis or of the pomp of state came from occasional sojourns with his father and grandfather, whose legal duties kept them in London for the seasonal Terms.¹⁸ D'Ewes's 1620s comment about James's customary behaviour must, by necessity, be considered at best a response to, at worst an interpretation of, family hearsay and gossip about James's early reign; it cannot be considered objective personal observation conducted over a number of years.

Closer inspection of this particular memory also negates Tyrwhitt's emphatic stance about its significance. The same anecdote continues with D'Ewes's observation (not included in Tyrwhitt's commentary) that King James, on 'looking upp to one window as hee passed full of gentlewomen or Ladies all in yellow bandes hee cried out aloud, A pox take yee are yee there; at which being much ashamed, they all withdrew themselves suddenlie from the window' (Harley 646, fol. 54). Tantalizing as this picture of an elderly, disgruntled and possibly paranoid monarch might be, or for what reason these

specific onlookers (or perhaps, more intriguingly, one special 'onlooker' among many) were recipients of James's ire, D'Ewes's reminiscence hardly proves some newly found desire in the king to speak 'lovingly' to his subjects, nor does it confirm a general displeasure with the wider crowds who flocked to see him. Indeed, the whole procession, as described by D'Ewes, is one of pomp and public display. Likewise, with the cheering crowds and 'danger' of the throng, D'Ewes was fortunate to have heard *anything* the king had to say, let alone be in a position to interpret his meaning or compare it with his 'former' behaviour.

Of final significance, when considering Tyrwhitt's reliance on this eminent 'witness', is D'Ewes's own anti-Stuart predisposition and, as his Victorian editor J. O. Halliwell accurately described it, his insufferable pedantry.¹⁹ In 1643, six years after penning his autobiography, D'Ewes famously aligned himself with the parliamentary side.²⁰ As a parliamentary sympathizer and (albeit private) commentator on political history (his first published work on Elizabethan parliaments appeared in 1682, thirty-two years after his death), D'Ewes's observations were to become of particular relevance to later Whig historians who recognized the value of his unsympathetic portrait of the Stuart monarchy.²¹ Even so, these same observations and notes did not enter the public domain until long after the sale of D'Ewes's private papers in 1705, their acquisition for the Earl of Oxford's library, and, following the earl's death in 1741, their relocation to the British Museum as part of the Harley

¹⁷ J. O. Halliwell-Phillips, ed., *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, 2 vols. (London, 1845), vol. 1, pp. 169–70.

¹⁸ Andrew G. Watson, *The Library of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (London, 1966), pp. 2–3.

¹⁹ Wallace Notestein, ed., *The Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes* (New Haven, 1923), p. x.

²⁰ See J. M. Blatchly, 'D'Ewes, Sir Simonds, first baronet (1602–1650)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7577, accessed 26 September 2010.

²¹ Sir Simonds D'Ewes, *The Journals of All the Parliaments During the Reign of Queen Elizabeth Both of the House of Lords and House of Commons* (London, 1682).

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MSS.²² Writing some twenty years after a select few finally gained access to these documents, Tyrwhitt was responding to evidence only recently being read and recognized by his contemporaries as valuable material in their arsenal of Whig propaganda. Tyrwhitt was also responding to evidence from a man whose youthful response to an ailing monarch could not mask the fact that D'Ewes was describing memories from his early impressionable days in London, long before his legal and political skills had made him an invaluable though pedantically self-important asset to the nation's government.

Implicit in Tyrwhitt's description of James's personality and his use of D'Ewes's reminiscence as a key to interpreting aspects of *Measure for Measure* is an underlying acceptance of nuanced Whig historiography disseminated by contemporary commentators who pored over newly available manuscripts for the least sign of any publicly or privately expressed anti-Stuart feeling. D'Ewes's memoirs (and his comments about the Stuarts), having remained in private libraries for nearly a century, were now open to scrutiny by partisan eighteenth-century Whig historiographers. Nevertheless, partisan historiography was by no means restricted to the eighteenth century, nor was Tyrwhitt's awareness of James's personality and rule necessarily restricted to D'Ewes's newly discovered testimony. Ralph Houlbrooke has recently traced the genesis of Whig historiography to the period that accompanied the fall of the Stuart monarchy (Charles I's execution in 1649) and the subsequent publication of memoirs that 'purported to uncover James's personal weaknesses and the more unsavoury aspects of his regime'.²³ The dry, ironic and cynical character assassination of James as 'a Slave' to his 'Favourites' in Sir Anthony Weldon's memoirs of 1650 set the tone for subsequent moralizing exposés about the king's supposedly unrestrained homosexual proclivity.²⁴ Like Weldon, Francis Osborne (1658) also attacked James's sexuality, claiming that the king openly and 'amorously conveyed' his affection to his '*Favorites or Minions*' as if he had 'mistaken their Sex, and thought them Ladies'.²⁵ With anti-theatrical homophobic

fervour, Osborne describes James's propensity for 'kissing [his favourites] after so lascivious a mode in publick, and upon the Theater as it were of the world, [which] prompted many to Imagine some things done in the Tying-house [a barely-disguised euphemism for anal intercourse], that exceed my expressions no less then they do my experience' (128).²⁶ Weldon's and Osborne's prejudiced, inaccurate and rabidly anti-Scottish 1650s polemics were to have a lasting influence on subsequent histories of James.

Character assassinations they undoubtedly are, but Weldon's and Osborne's testimonies at no time introduce the theme of James's avoidance of crowds or unwillingness to stage himself to public gaze. Indeed, in another of his anti-Stuart, anti-Scottish polemics, *A Cat May Look Upon a King* (1652), Weldon describes the 'Entrance of King James into this Kingdome, with as much pomp and glory as the World could afford', a description which belies any claim for kingly reticence towards public display.²⁷ Similarly, Osborne (intending only to demonstrate the sexual duplicity of both James and Queen Anne) cites a specific occasion when James made a very public show of affection as an apparent political statement to his English subjects. Osborne recalls how, when next he saw the King's 'Progress after his Inauguration' (his state procession sometime after the 25 July 1603 coronation), James was 'dres'd' in an outfit, 'as *Greene* as the *grasse* he trod on, with a *Fether* in his Cap, and a *Horne* instead

²² Watson, *Library*, p. 62.

²³ Ralph Houlbrooke, 'James's Reputation 1625–2005', in Ralph Houlbrooke, ed., *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government* (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 169–90 (p. 171).

²⁴ Sir Anthony Weldon, *The Court and Character of King James* (London, 1650), fol. A3^v.

²⁵ Francis Osborne, *Traditionall Memoyres on the Raigne of King James* (London, 1658), p. 127.

²⁶ For recent study of Stuart Court effeminacy, see Thomas Alan King, *The Gendering of Men, 1600–1750* (Madison, 2004), pp. 70–6. Also: Michael B. Young, *King James and the History of Homosexuality* (New York, 2000), pp. 36–63; David M. Bergeron, *King James and Letters of Homoerotic Desire* (Iowa City, 1999), pp. 147–219.

²⁷ Sir Anthony Weldon, *A Cat May Look Upon a King* (London, 1652), p. 85.

of a Sword by his side' (54). James's flamboyant huntsman's attire, evoking as it would the English folklore hero Robin Hood, is accompanied by an unusual degree of political awareness for the expectations and wants of the gathering spectators:

He that evening parted with his Queene, and to shew himself more uxorious before the people at his first coming than in private he was, he did at her Coach side take his leave, by Kissing her sufficiently to the middle of the Shoulders, for so low she went bare all the dayes I had the fortune to know her. (55)

James's overtly sexual public display of affection towards his wife and queen, as well as the ostentatious employment of an English mythical figure for his processional costume (as described by a commentator who had already shown little regard for the monarch), displays none of what Tyrwhitt was, a century later, to describe as James's 'unkingly weakness'. Unsavory as Osborne's character assessment of James might be, neither he nor Weldon appear responsible for later comments about James's antisocial, politically incompetent or reclusive behaviour.

Although Weldon and Osborne are representative of the negative responses to the House of Stuart that were voiced in the aftermath of Charles I's execution, alternative views about James's personality were also being expressed at the time. Sir William Sanderson's 1656 description of James as a wise and intelligent monarch, who was by nature more reserved than popular, is representative of this alternative pro-Jamesian polemic.²⁸ As Houlbrooke notes, the diverse opinions expressed by Weldon and Osborne on one hand and Sanderson on the other meant that, by 1660, 'two sharply opposed views of James had been established':

In the eyes of his admirers, he was a wise, far-sighted, eloquent, open-hearted king who had given his realms and their churches peace and stability. His English critics saw him as a monarch whose mistaken policies towards Roman Catholicism at home and abroad had contributed to his quarrels with his parliaments, along with his extravagance, his elevating of his undeserving favourites and his attempted stretching of the crown's prerogatives.²⁹

Two sharply opposed views indeed, but neither the arch-vilifiers Weldon or Osborne nor the arch-apologist and supporter Sanderson offer any suggestion that James was a king who avoided or feared all public display. Quite the reverse; their comments suggest a reserved and intellectual statesman who, through manipulation of his public persona (whether attractive or not), was fully aware of the spectacle of state as an adjunct to successful rule.

As Sanderson's positive appraisal of James's character confirms, bipartisan attitudes towards the Stuart king remained the norm throughout the closing decades of the seventeenth century. By the early eighteenth century, James was finding further support from royalist or 'Tory' apologists such as the Earl of Clarendon (1702) and Laurence Echard (1707), who both describe his great perspicacity and sound judgement.³⁰ Unfortunately for James, however, the predominant eighteenth-century stance was to become one of Whig animosity towards the king and his regime, as epitomized by the Whig historian John Oldmixon, whose *The History of England* (1730) not only accuses James of abusing English law and custom 'notoriously' for his personal political gain but also nurtures a conspiracy theory that the Gunpowder 'Plot was of the King's own making', with James 'privy to it from first to last'.³¹ What seems apparent, therefore, is that Tyrwhitt's 1766 'memoir' evidence is written in the critical tradition not of the royalist or 'Tory' apologists but of that anti-Stuart Whig historiography of which Oldmixon's *History* is such a significant example. Tyrwhitt's comments

²⁸ Sir William Sanderson, *A Compleat History*, 2 vols. (London, 1656), vol. 1, pp. 507–13; Sir William Sanderson, *Aulicus Coquinariae: or a Vindication [of] The Court and Character of King James* (London, 1650), pp. 200–5.

²⁹ Houlbrooke, 'James's Reputation', p. 176.

³⁰ Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1702–4), vol. 1, p. 9; Laurence Echard, *The History of England*, 3 vols. (London, 1707–18), vol. 1, p. 979.

³¹ John Oldmixon, *The History of England* (London, 1730), pp. 14 and 27. See Pat Rogers, 'Oldmixon, John (1672/3–1742)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20695, accessed 26 September 2010.

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also demonstrate how ‘Whiggish’ influences had begun to permeate contemporary consideration of Shakespeare, at least with regard to *Measure for Measure*.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Edmond Malone (1790) was to develop Tyrwhitt’s argument in a similar ‘Whiggish’ tone. Writing twenty-four years after publication of Tyrwhitt’s *Observations*, Malone comments that the same 1.1 and 2.4 ‘passages . . . seem intended as a courtly apology for the stately and ungracious demeanour of King James I . . . written not long after his accession’.³² For Malone, there is no doubt that Shakespeare, rather than flattering James, was in fact apologizing for his monarch’s unattractive ‘demeanour’ (his bearing or outward behaviour (*OED* 2)), with ‘stately’ used in its pejorative sense of ‘haughty, domineering, arrogant’ (*OED* A.adj.2.a) and ‘ungracious’ as ‘ungraceful, unattractive’ (*OED* a.5.a). Apparently calling upon Osborne’s unflattering description of James’s personal appearance, Malone’s uncomplimentary remark, which complements Tyrwhitt’s own interpretation, also represents a turning point in critical consideration of *Measure for Measure* as topical political commentary and Shakespeare’s overt attempt to acknowledge his patron’s less attractive attributes. For Malone, *Measure for Measure* could now be read as actively engaged if not in the inexorable decline of the Stuart monarchy, then at least as justification for the inevitable bloody outcome of later years.

That Malone’s ‘courtly apology’ theory was generally accepted by his contemporaries is suggested by its repetition in George Steevens’s 1793 edition of *Shakspeare*.³³ Even so, the Malone theory also had its detractors, as is evident from George Chalmers’s scathing 1799 rebuttal of those ‘commentators’ (Malone and Steevens) who offer their argument for the apparent ‘stately and ungracious demeanor of King James’: ‘No,’ exclaims Chalmers, ‘[t]he fault of this prince was *too much familiarity*, and not stateliness; he was good natured, and not ungracious; he did not like to *stage* himself to the people’s eyes; because he delighted in retirement, in the company of a few, in study, and in writing.’³⁴ For Chalmers,

there appears no doubt that Shakespeare’s Duke is correlative to James. Indeed, he expresses his belief ‘that the character of *the Duke*, is a very accurate delineation of that of King James, which Shakspeare appears to have caught, with great felicity, and to have sketched, with much truth’ (404). The debate about *Measure for Measure*, according to Chalmers, revolves not around whether Shakespeare intended to caricature his king but whether such caricature should be considered offensive or complimentary. As if pre-empting the twentieth-century ‘King James Version’ controversy and its fascination with textual negotiation, Chalmers adds the rejoinder that, ‘[k]nowing that King James’s writings; his *Basilikon Doron*; his *The True Lawe of free Monarchies*; and other treatises; had been, emulously, republished, in 1603, by the London booksellers, in many editions, Shakspeare could not fitly give a closer parody’ (404–5). What is evident from Chalmers’s interpretation of the supposed allusions to James is that he considers *Measure for Measure* a ‘parody’ of contemporary Jacobean political thought and, more importantly, that such parody does not imply Shakespeare’s condemnation of his king: ‘Shakspeare did not intend to make an apology, but merely to give *traits of character*’ (409). Whether those ‘*traits of character*’ are derogatory or not, the critical analysis of Malone, Steevens and Chalmers demonstrates how entrenched the concept of the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory had become by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

By the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Knight (1849) could reaffirm that Chalmers had made a ‘random hit’ with his description of the Duke’s character traits, claiming them an ‘accurate’ though good-natured ‘parody’ of James.³⁵ Knight’s subsequent comparison of the Duke with James nevertheless betrays his own ‘Whiggish’ distaste

³² Edmond Malone, ed., *The Plays and Poems of William Shakspeare*, 10 vols. (London, 1790), vol. 1, p. 344.

³³ George Steevens, ed., *The Plays of William Shakspeare*, 15 vols. (London, 1793), vol. 1, p. 568.

³⁴ George Chalmers, *A Supplemental Apology for the Believers in the Shakspeare-Papers* (London, 1799), p. 408.

³⁵ Charles Knight, *Studies of Shakspeare* (London, 1849), p. 319.

for the Stuart monarch. Despite the fact that ‘James was a pedant, and the Duke is a philosopher,’ Knight observes, ‘there is the same desire in each to get behind the curtain and pull the strings which move the puppets’ (319). Knight implicitly scorns the pedantry of James’s personality. For Knight, the underlying factor that links both Shakespearian character and historical reality is the ‘desire’ (a particularly emotive word which implies heightened sexual appetite) of both Duke and King to manipulate situations and subjects to their advantage and whim. That Knight should make these less-than-flattering observations is not surprising since his *Studies of Shakspeare* was published a year after the first two volumes of Macaulay’s *History of England* (1848) first appeared in print. Recognized as the archetypal Whig historian, Macaulay writes an unashamedly partisan history that (following Weldon’s and Osborne’s lead) describes James’s implicitly homosexual ‘fondness for worthless minions . . . [his] cowardice, his childishness, his pedantry, his ungainly person and manners, [and] his provincial accent, [which all made] him an object of derision’.³⁶ Macaulay’s distinctive 1848 reference to James’s ‘pedantry’ is reflected in Knight’s own 1849 description of James as a ‘pedant’. Indeed, the resurgence of interest in the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory in Shakespeare criticism from the 1850s onwards appears directly linked to the prevailing popularity of Macaulay’s partisan Whig history.

The pervasive negativity towards James of Macaulay’s Whig history, and its implicit application by Shakespeare scholars to *Measure for Measure*, set the standard for subsequent consideration of the Duke’s role in Victorian criticism. It was not, therefore, until the first decade of the twentieth century that serious doubts were expressed about the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, Bostonian editors of a famous complete works based on the First Folio (1903–5), argue that the ‘dislike of public adulation’ in *Measure for Measure* is more reminiscent of *Coriolanus*, ‘rather than James’.³⁷ Porter and Clarke’s American comments, apparently immune to the partisan excesses of British Whig vitriol (a

possible reason why their notes were unceremoniously dropped from the thirteen-volume British edition published in 1906), are contemporaneous with historical reappraisals of James’s character.³⁸ Most notable among these was P. Hume Brown’s scathing 1902 description of Macaulay’s Whig history as ‘false and cruel and vindictive’.³⁹ Nevertheless, the twentieth century also saw a growing interest in the social implication of *Measure for Measure*, as exemplified by George Bernard Shaw’s 1898 comment that Shakespeare was, with *Measure for Measure*, ‘ready and willing to start at the twentieth century if the seventeenth would only let him’; in effect, that *Measure for Measure* was coming of age.⁴⁰ Heralding the transition from Johnsonian moral outrage to Shavian social commentary, Shaw’s remark is indicative of a new climate in which *Measure for Measure*, and thus the ‘Duke-as-James’ theory, could develop its own topical and socially oriented literary and historical specificity.

‘Duke-as-James’ specificity is likewise evident in the occasionalist source study of the German scholar Louis Albrecht (1914), which describes *Measure for Measure* as specifically ‘*vorschwebte*’ (‘envisioned’) by Shakespeare to be ‘*Huldigungsakte für den neuen König bei seiner Thronbesteigung in England zu gestalten*’ (‘shaped as a homage for the new king on the occasion of his accession in England’).⁴¹ Albrecht also explicitly champions the argument of Chalmers that the play was directly influenced by *Basilikon Doron* (131). Even so, Albrecht is at no time judgemental about the personality of James, believing instead in Shakespeare’s analogous intent to flatter his monarch.

³⁶ Macaulay, *History of England*, 11th edn (1856), vol. 1, p. 73.

³⁷ Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, eds., *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, 12 vols. (New York, 1903–5).

³⁸ Only seventy-five copies were printed of Porter and Clarke’s 1906 *Works* for the British market.

³⁹ P. Hume Brown, *History of Scotland*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1900–9), vol. 2 (1902), p. 186.

⁴⁰ George Bernard Shaw, *Plays: Pleasant and Unpleasant*, 2 vols. (London, 1898), vol. 1, p. xxxi.

⁴¹ Louis Albrecht, *Neue Untersuchungen zu Shakespeares Mass für Mass* (Berlin, 1914), p. 164.

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Albrecht's non-judgemental pre-First World War comment is countered by the post-war remarks of the first Cambridge editors, Quiller-Couch and Wilson, whose 1920s 'historic fact' about Shakespeare's complicity in providing topical socio-political commentary is itself suspiciously dependent on the partisan 'facts' disseminated by earlier Whig historians.⁴² Nonetheless, their commentary confirms the extent that the 'Duke-as-James' theory had become entrenched in twentieth-century British criticism, setting the tone for such theorizing for the next thirty years.

It was not, therefore, until 1953 that Mary Lascelles could express cautious doubt about the 'Duke-as-James' theory's validity.⁴³ Lascelles's caution coincides with a notable shift in historical focus, exemplified by D. Harris Willson's 1956 treatment of James, which suggests that the Scottish king made an unusually favourable impression on observers in 1603, only losing their faith and adulation after perceived failures in his government and foreign policy after 1612.⁴⁴ Willson's modest reappraisal of James's reception was subsequently developed by William McElwee, who, in 1958, embarked on the first of many revisionist historical treatments of the Scottish king.⁴⁵ McElwee notes that, rather than deriding the 'loud applause and *aves* vehement' of the 'mobs of well-wishers' that greeted his journey to London, James actually enjoyed his new-found popularity (111). As example, McElwee cites James's first 'Speech to Parliament', 19 March 1603, where the new king appears to express genuine 'thankfulness' for the 'ioyfull and generall applause' he received on entering Parliament, and from his English subjects:⁴⁶

[S]hall it euer bee blotted out of my minde, how at my first entrie into this Kingdome, the people of all sorts rid and ran, nay rather flew to meet mee? their eyes flaming nothing but sparkles of affection, their mouthes and tongues vttering nothing but sounds of ioy, their hands, feete, and all the rest of their members in their gestures discovering a passionate longing, and earnestnesse to meete and embrace their new Soueraigne.

(King James I, 'Speech to Parliament', 19 March 1603)

According to McElwee, there is little here to suggest that James, at this early stage in his rule, was perceived as reticent or unwilling to receive the adulation of his people; on the contrary, such adulation appeared a welcome change from the relative inattention of James's Scottish subjects and perfectly in accord with a widespread optimism and general English relief that the 'tired, old queen' had finally gone.⁴⁷

Despite the alternative historical interpretation of James's political standing by Willson, and despite McElwee's subsequent historical evidence about his reception by the nation, these factors were systematically ignored by Shakespeare critics. In consequence, by the late 1950s, David Lloyd Stevenson was still rehearsing a negative debate about the 'Jamesian' character of the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, even though a decisive sea-change in historical appreciation of James's skill as a ruling monarch was to be announced by Mark H. Curtis's 1961 reappraisal of the 'Hampton Court Conference and its Aftermath'.⁴⁸ Explicit in Stevenson's analysis is a full expression of the 'King James Version' of *Measure for Measure* according to Chalmers's late-eighteenth-century model and Albrecht's subsequent early-twentieth-century source study. Likewise, Ernest Schanzer (1963) comments that, 'taken

⁴² Quiller-Couch and Wilson, eds., *Measure for Measure*, p. 118n.

⁴³ Mary Lascelles, *Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure'* (London, 1953), pp. 108–9.

⁴⁴ D. Harris Willson, *King James VI & I* (London, 1956), pp. 166–8 and 196.

⁴⁵ William McElwee, *The Wisest Fool in Christendom: The Reign of King James I and VI* (London, 1958).

⁴⁶ Neil Rhodes, Jennifer Richards and Joseph Marshall, eds., *King James VI and I: Selected Writings* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 293–4.

⁴⁷ Keith M. Brown, 'Monarchy and Government in Britain, 1603–1637', in Jenny Wormald, ed., *The Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 13–50 (p. 14).

⁴⁸ David Lloyd Stevenson, 'The Role of James I in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*', *English Literary History*, 26 (1959), 188–208, later included in David Lloyd Stevenson, *The Achievement of Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure'* (Ithaca, 1966), pp. 134–66 (p. 134); Mark H. Curtis, 'The Hampton Court Conference and its Aftermath', *History*, 46 (1961), 1–16.

together', the 'idealized image' in the various character traits of the Duke seem 'too uniquely characteristic of James to be dismissed as mere accidental likenesses'.⁴⁹ In his Arden 2 edition (one yet to be replaced in the Arden canon), J. W. Lever (1965), although cautious not to suggest the Duke was an 'exact replica' of James, agrees that 'a number of [James's] personal traits went to the making' of the Duke.⁵⁰

By the beginning of the 1970s, therefore, Lever's opinion held sway, despite over a decade's revisionist rethinking of James's personality and political legacy.⁵¹ The eventual 'demolition' of the Whig version of Stuart history was completed, however, by Conrad Russell (1976) and Kevin Sharpe (1978).⁵² It is perhaps no coincidence that, at the same time revisionist historians were restoring James's reputation as a skilful king and politician, Levin (1979) could be found wryly coining his phrase 'the "King James Version" of *Measure for Measure*'.⁵³ Levin's argument against the false occasionality of such 'King James Version' criticism is fiercely contested, however, by Goldberg (1983), who brands Levin a 'skeptic' who 'attacks straw men'.⁵⁴ For Goldberg, *Measure for Measure* is undoubtedly a political 're-presentation', whereby the 'power of theater bears a royal stamp'; as such, Shakespeare has written the Duke not as an occasionalist caricature of his king, but as a 'role that represents [Shakespeare's] powers as playwright as coincident with the powers of the sovereign' (232). Likewise, the Duke, according to Goldberg, is representative of Shakespeare's 'coincidence' (his exact agreement) with Stuart divine-right rule as expressed in James's political writings. Goldberg's commentary on *Measure for Measure* appears, however, to rely on traditional negative readings of James's politics and regime. As an early new historicist, Goldberg seems unaware of contemporary developments in revisionist historical thinking, exemplified by the studies of Maurice Lee, Jr and Jenny Wormald, whose respective analyses highlighted the achievement of James's Scottish government, as well as James's energy, informality and accessibility, whilst demonstrating a contemporary belief by the English nation that they were

adopting a new king whose experience far outweighed any negative opinion about their ruler's personal demeanour.⁵⁵ Goldberg does not address these issues, concentrating instead on his single fact: that the 'Duke represents James's Divine Right claims' (236).

Echoes of a 'Whiggish' mistrust of James are likewise evident in Leah Marcus's description (1988) of the Duke's 'mythos of power' as synonymous with that adopted by James.⁵⁶ Although Marcus argues that the 'King James Version' of *Measure for Measure* has often been 'dismissed as impossibly reductive', she still suggests that 'many parallels' exist between the Duke and James (164). This 'Duke-as-James' parallelism is sufficient to introduce a 'remarkably Jacobean style [to] the duke's activities' (177). Implicit in Marcus's description of James's 'Jacobean style' is her unquestioning acceptance of the same 'Whiggish' facts that had created the 'King James Version' of *Measure for Measure* and which she finds so reductive. For Marcus, the argument against a 'King James Version' of

⁴⁹ Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare* (London, 1963), pp. 123–4.

⁵⁰ J. W. Lever, ed., *Measure for Measure*, Arden 2 (London, 1965), pp. l and xlix. Less cautious is Josephine Waters Bennett, *'Measure for Measure' as Royal Entertainment* (New York, 1966), who argues that the likeness to the playwright's patron was because Shakespeare played the part of the Duke himself (p. 137). Goldberg, *James I*, describes this as 'literalistic fantasy' (p. 232).

⁵¹ For the change in historical attitudes towards James that began in the 1960s, see Marc L. Schwarz, 'James I and the Historians: Towards a Reconsideration', *Journal of British Studies*, 13 (1974), 114–34.

⁵² Houlbrooke, 'James's Reputation', p. 185; Conrad Russell, 'Parliamentary History in Perspective, 1604–1629', *History*, 61 (1976), 1–27, and Conrad Russell, *Parliaments and English Politics 1621–1629* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 85–203; Kevin Sharpe, ed., *Faction and Parliament* (Oxford, 1978).

⁵³ Levin, *New Readings*, p. 167.

⁵⁴ Goldberg, *James I*, p. 286n.

⁵⁵ Maurice Lee Jr, *Government by Pen: Scotland under James VI and I* (Urbana, 1980); Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk and Community: Scotland 1470–1625* (London, 1981), pp. 143–59; Jenny Wormald, 'James VI and I: Two Kings or One?', *History*, 68 (1983), 187–209.

⁵⁶ Leah Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), p. 163.

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the play rests solely on her assumption that Shakespeare would have been foolhardy to admonish his king so openly. In a similar vein, Gary Taylor and John D. Jowett (1993) also implicitly agree with the theory when claiming that, '[c]learly, James's distaste for crowds became visible, at least to discerning observers, very early'.⁵⁷ Taylor and Jowett base their conclusion not on James's public speeches to Parliament, nor on D'Ewes's memoir evidence, but on a private letter from Thomas Wilson of 22 June 1603, which refers obliquely to public dismay at James's inaccessibility, and equally private journal entries by Queen Elizabeth's Master of Requests, Sir Roger Wilbraham (written sometime between April and July 1603), which comments on the 'offence' caused to James by those who 'thronge at Court' (172–3).⁵⁸ Taylor and Jowett do not note, however, that these same references also share a common complaint. Wilson's letter claims that the 'people . . . desyre some more of that generous affabilitie w^{ch} ther good old Queen did afford them' (Nichols, 1, 188). Likewise, Wilbraham's journal complains that the queen would 'labour to entertayne strangers and sutors & her people', a 'courtlie courtesie' no longer proffered by the king (Wilbraham, *Journal*, 59).⁵⁹ Both Wilson and Wilbraham recognize a difference in court practice following the death of Queen Elizabeth that apparently accords with the 'Duke-as-James' theory of kingly reserve and distance; they also privately bemoan this new circumstance, in Wilson's case understandably, since in 1601 he had penned a lengthy justification for James's right to accede to the English throne.⁶⁰

The privately expressed grievances of two English courtiers, apparently reacting to a refusal by their king to 'entertayne strangers and sutors' and expressed in the aftermath of James's arrival with his privileged Scottish entourage, might be read not only as biographical observations about their new monarch but also as personal complaint about changes in the distribution of privilege and power.⁶¹ Wilbraham, as Master of the Court of Requests since at least 1600 (the post was transferred in 1603 to Wilbraham's rival Sir Julius Caesar), was in a privileged position to observe

unscrupulous courtiers abusing the non-fee-paying benefit of (what originally had been envisioned as) the nation's tribunal for the poor.⁶² Unwilling to pander to the 'thronge' of wealthy petitioners who appeared at 'every back gate & privie dore', the new king, as Wilbraham declares, showed great 'wisdom' in avoiding suitors whose outlandish requests might have caused 'the damage of the crowne & government' (Wilbraham, *Journal*, 56–7). Wilbraham's comments (ignored by Taylor and Jowett) confirm the opinion of revisionist historians who, arguing against traditional Whig interpretations of James, describe the new king as far less amenable towards those wealthy suitors who sought further to line their pockets at the expense of the nation. As Peter R. Roberts has recently noted, two such suitors, Richard Fiennes (Lord Say and Sele) and the ex-Irish campaigner Francis Clayton, separately pleaded to the king for respective monopolies to tax playgoers and performances at the public playhouses.⁶³ Fiennes's request to impose a poll-tax on playgoing and Clayton's equally audacious tax on individual performances

⁵⁷ Gary Taylor and John D. Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped, 1606–1623* (Oxford, 1993), p. 173.

⁵⁸ Thomas Wilson's letter appears in John Nichols, ed., *The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First*, 4 vols. (London, 1828), vol. 1, p. 188. For Sir Roger Wilbraham see Harold Spencer Scott, ed., *The Journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham*, *The Camden Miscellany*, 10 (London, 1902), p. 56.

⁵⁹ Also Robert Ashton, ed., *James I by his Contemporaries* (London, 1969), p. 7.

⁶⁰ A. F. Pollard, 'Wilson, Sir Thomas (d. 1629)', rev. Sean Kelsey, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29690, accessed 26 September 2010. See F. J. Fisher, ed., *The State of England, Anno Dom. 1600* by Sir Thomas Wilson, *Camden Society Miscellany*, xvi, 3rd series, 52 (London, 1936).

⁶¹ See Curtis Perry, *The Making of Jacobean Culture: James I and the Renegotiation of Elizabethan Literary Practice* (Cambridge, 1997); W. B. Patterson, *King James VI and I and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge, 1997); Keith M. Brown, 'The Scottish Aristocracy, Anglicization and the Court, 1603–38', *The Historical Journal*, 36 (1993), 543–76 (pp. 548–9).

⁶² Scott, *Journal of Sir Roger Wilbraham*, p. xii.

⁶³ Peter R. Roberts, 'The Business of Playing and the Patronage of Players at the Jacobean Courts', in Houlbrooke, ed., *James VI and I*, pp. 81–105.

were, as Roberts suggests, ‘either abandoned in the face of insuperable obstacles or rejected by the king as unacceptable’ (102). If categorically refused by James, such refusal would no doubt result in equally disgruntled private correspondence and journal entries from the snubbed pair. Whether the result of policy or direct intervention, this refusal implies a less self-serving, disinterested or reclusive stance for James and/or his regime.

Whatever our own response to the theatrical implications of this brash attempt to tax playgoers and performances, this episode provides further proof that the supposedly easily recognizable ‘style’ of James’s rule, as one of unlimited patronage and favouritism, can be countered by revisionist historical study. Likewise, contemporary responses to James’s sixteenth-century writings suggest confused and inconsistent opinions about the king’s perceived personal ‘style’. Available in print prior to and immediately following his arrival in London, political texts like *Basilikon Doron* and *The True Lawe* might have provided a flavour of his technique of power; their diverse and contradictory nature ensured that they could never be read by Shakespeare and his contemporaries as a blueprint for a Jacobean ‘style’ of government.⁶⁴ Similar revisionist considerations should be given to comments about James’s lack of political interest and dedication. On 26 December 1604, the date of *Measure for Measure*’s court performance and the day after Christmas Day, no less than twenty-one documents were signed by James, a workload matching previous and subsequent working days, and one which appears counter to the perceived ‘style’ of a lax and disinterested ruler.⁶⁵ If the ‘style’ of James’s reign could, as early as 1604, not be pinpointed by contemporary complainants, it seems particularly unlikely that a playwright at the Globe should have developed so close a relationship with government and with his royal patron as to parody, satirize or comment on its/his efficacy or direction.⁶⁶

Our continued critical engagement with ‘Duke-as-James’ parallelism, with its belief in the supposed subversion of a Jacobean political ‘style’ as fundamental feature of *Measure for Measure*, effectively relies on, and implicitly upholds, those partisan

falsehoods about James’s government that suited the bias of earlier Whig historians. Literary critics who recognize a ‘Jacobean style’ for *Measure for Measure* thus unwittingly and almost imperceptibly accept this partisan appraisal of James and the inevitable failure of his regime. As Diana Newton has recently argued, however, it is ‘only by taking a holistic view of James’s early years, and considering all the aspects of his first years in England simultaneously, that [we can] get closer to an understanding of his English reign’.⁶⁷ A ‘holistic view’ permits James to emerge as ‘energetic, vigorous, intelligent and flexible’, managing his new kingdom ‘shrewdly, effectively, and even innovatively’ (Newton, 146). Newton’s comments would have been inconceivable to a Whig historian. They likewise appear inconceivable to Shakespeare commentators wishing to detect an anxiety-inducing, ‘divine-right’ patriarchal principle in the Jacobean ‘style’ of *Measure for Measure*’s Duke – a parallelism and subversion in Shakespeare’s message. It is only when the Whig interpretation of James’s rule is finally expunged from critical appraisal of *Measure for Measure* that the Duke’s disguised adventure can and will be appreciated in its true Jacobean context.

Since Whig historiography appears to hold the key to ‘Duke-as-James’ theorizing and its application to *Measure for Measure*, then might Whig historiography also offer an alternative, earlier source for Tyrwhitt’s 1766 observation, calling as it does upon the evidence of ‘some of our Historians’, and generally regarded as the first to liken Shakespeare’s Duke to James? To answer this question we must

⁶⁴ Jenny Wormald, ‘James VI and I (1566–1625)’, *ODNB* (2004) www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14592, accessed 26 September 2010.

⁶⁵ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I, 1603–1610* (1857), pp. 164–82 www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=14995, accessed 21 September 2010.

⁶⁶ Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds., *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I* (Detroit, 2002), stress the ‘contradictions’ in James’s writings that guaranteed the misinterpretation of his political views by contemporary hearers/readers (pp. 22–3).

⁶⁷ Diana Newton, *The Making of the Jacobean Regime* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 141–6 (p. 146).

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return to that early and significant exponent of Whig historiography, John Oldmixon, whose anti-Jamesian interpretation of the Scottish monarch's character, written thirty-six years before Tyrwhitt's discussion of *Measure for Measure*, appears itself to rely on aspects of Shakespeare's language as analogous indicators with which to explore the personality traits of the Stuart king. A likely candidate for being one of Tyrwhitt's praised Whig 'Historians', it is Oldmixon who demonstrates a specific interest in Shakespeare as an accessible reference point for his anti-Stuart, anti-Scottish and pro-Parliament history.

As already noted when discussing the eighteenth-century bias of anti-James propaganda, Oldmixon, in his 1730 *History of England*, is representative of the Whig historiography that took issue with pro-Stuart 'Tory' historiographers like Clarendon and Echard. Repeating the oft-used soubriquet of the new or second 'Solomon' to describe James's learning, knowledge and wisdom, Clarendon and Echard had defended the king's memory.⁶⁸ For Oldmixon, this 'glorious Title of second *Solomon*' represented a falsehood and one that was anathema to his Whig sensibilities (Oldmixon, *History*, 10). Oldmixon's intention, what he describes pointedly and significantly as 'My Design', was 'to show' not James's inherent wisdom and learning, but 'how he and his Posterity . . . made this once flourishing and glorious Kingdom, a Scene of Misery and Disgrace' (11). With his 'Design' firmly established, Oldmixon proceeds to describe James's accession to the English throne with imagery more befitting a fallen angel than a philosopher-king:

Such a Beginning of a Reign promis'd very little Good in the Course of it, but so much Care was taken to gild the Appearance that the Darkness had not its full Effect on the Minds of the people (17).

It is significant that Oldmixon is commenting not on the negative reception of James by his new nation but on the way the king's supposed satanic 'Darkness' was carefully 'gilded', effectively shielding the truth of his evil intent from his adoring subjects' 'Minds'.

Oldmixon's crusading 'Design', to show the devastation James supposedly wreaked on his unfortunate new kingdom, also develops the concept of a suspicious and reclusive monarch, one which better suits those aspects of the Duke's behaviour in *Measure for Measure* that proved of such import to Tyrwhitt in his observations on the play. Having made, as part of his grand character assassination, a particularly scathing condemnation of James's appearance as 'far from being handsome' (10), Oldmixon describes how 'The King had been almost ten Months in *England*, but had not been seen much abroad':

He naturally did not love to be look'd at, for, as has been said, he was not very handsome, and had no Relish of the Formalities of State. Some attribute it not to the Disagreeableness of his Person, but to the Shyness of his Temper, and some to his Timorousness, there being more Danger in a Crowd than in a few attendants (21).

Oldmixon's analysis of James's attitude to the 'Formalities of State', based as it appears on his acceptance of the unflattering portrait of James painted by the post-regicide polemics of Weldon and Osborne, is significant because it echoes the Duke's excuse for travelling 'privily away' because he does not 'relish well' the 'loud applause' of his people. Disagreeable to behold, shy, timorous and threatened with danger by the 'Crowd', James bears a demeanour which, according to Oldmixon, accords with a monarch whose outward 'Appearance' has been altered to 'gild' the true 'Darkness' of that which lurks beneath. It also implies Oldmixon's conscious or unconscious reliance on imagery derived from passages in a Shakespeare play.

A similar description of James's timorousness and irascibility occurs a few lines later, when Oldmixon

⁶⁸ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, calls James 'a Prince of . . . Learning and Knowledge' (vol. 1, p. 9). Echard, *History of England*, describes James as 'the *Solomon* of the Age for Knowledge, Learning and Wisdom' (vol. 1, p. 979). For James's iconography as the second 'Solomon', see James Doelman, *King James I and the Religious Culture of England* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 76–9.

discusses the King's procession through the City of London:

Having summon'd a Parliament to meet the 19th of *March* [1604], he went on the 15th with his Queen and the Prince to the *Tower*, riding through the City amidst the continu'd Acclamations of the Multitude, which did not affect him as they affected his Predecessor Queen *Elizabeth*. Whether it was that the Noise disturb'd him, or that he did not think them real, 'tis most certain, when the People have been impatient of Access to him, he has often had them dispers'd with Force, and sometimes with Curses. (21–2)

Oldmixon is describing the first procession of the king and his family through the streets of London following the awful plague that had greeted his arrival a year earlier. This very public pageant, complete with ornate triumphal arches designed and erected by Stephen Harrison and with speeches supplied by Thomas Dekker, Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton, had been delayed until it was deemed safe for the royal family to emerge from self-imposed and wholly understandable plague-induced quarantine within the Tower of London.⁶⁹ Again, following the descriptions of James by Weldon and Osborne and perhaps influenced by recently discovered commentary by D'Ewes (who could not have been an eye-witness to this particular episode since he was at the time a two-year-old toddler), Oldmixon nevertheless adds to an image of James that is uncannily reminiscent of Shakespeare's Duke.

If Oldmixon was making a conscious or subconscious analogy between a Shakespeare character and the real King James, what in this Whig historian's background might account for this particular circumstance? Significant for our understanding of Oldmixon and his appreciation of Shakespeare is his 1728 literary study, *An Essay on Criticism*, published two years before his *History of England*.⁷⁰ In *An Essay on Criticism*, Oldmixon attacks not only Alexander Pope, but also the 'Royal Historiographers' Clarendon and Echard (Oldmixon, *Essay*, 55). His most intense derision, however, is reserved for John Dryden, who, along with the likes of Sir William D'Avenant (whose 1662

version of *Measure for Measure* was staged as *The Law Against Lovers*), Colley Cibber and Nahum Tate, had famously written Shakespeare-based adaptations, 'in Imitation of *Shakespeare's* Stile', in an effort to make them more palatable to contemporary Restoration tastes.⁷¹ Oldmixon claims to be particularly scornful of Dryden's observation 'that *Shakespeare* himself did not distinguish *the blown puffy Stile from true Sublimity*' (Oldmixon, *Essay*, 45), although he does accept Dryden's negative description of France's poetic heritage, agreeing that the 'Latter is incontestable': 'They [the French] have nothing of *Epick* Poetry so good as our King *Arthur*; neither are their *Corneille* and *Racine* a Match for our *Shakespear* and *Otway*' (54).⁷² That Shakespeare was, according to Oldmixon, the nation's supreme dramatist had earlier been confirmed by his description of how:

Our *Shakespear* shone on the Stage, with all the Qualities of a Dramatick Poet, and *Diction* in particular, when the . . . *French* Stage was Barbarous. His Style has its Beauties now, and is newer than many who have since Writ, and for a while with Reputation. (29)

For the Whig historian Oldmixon, Shakespeare's dramatic skill was as commendable as James's personality was despicable. That Oldmixon should have such a knowledge and appreciation of Shakespeare is not surprising. Oldmixon was, at the turn of the century, himself an aspiring though self-confessedly less than successful playwright, with several plays performed professionally on the

⁶⁹ Stephen Harrison, *The Arches of Triumph* (London, 1604); Thomas Dekker, *The Magnificent Entertainment* (London, 1604); Ben Jonson, *Part of the Entertainment, through the Cittie of London, Given to James I. 1604* (London, 1604).

⁷⁰ John Oldmixon, *An Essay On Criticism* (London, 1728).

⁷¹ As stated on the frontispiece to John Dryden's *All for Love; or, The World Well Lost* (London, 1678). Also William D'Avenant and John Dryden, *The Tempest, Or, the Enchanted Island* (London, 1670); D'Avenant, *The Law Against Lovers*, in *The Works of S^r William D'avenant K^t*, 3 vols. (London, 1673), vol. 1.

⁷² Dryden's comments appear in his *Essay of Dramatick Poesie* (London, 1668).

THE SPECTRE OF KING JAMES IN *MEASURE FOR MEASURE*

London stage spanning a variety of formal genres.⁷³ Regardless of how these were received, the plays that Oldmixon presented demonstrate his passion for drama, whilst equally explaining his passion for, and informed opinion about, Shakespeare.

Oldmixon's unfortunate early experiences as a playwright, and the glowing admiration for Shakespeare expressed in his critical studies, represents far more than a passing interest in drama. There seems little reason to doubt, therefore, that Oldmixon, when writing his *History* in 1730, was aware of Shakespeare's plays, especially in their unadapted form. A revival in interest in performing unaltered or relatively complete plays by Shakespeare from the 1720s onwards heralded the birth of the national obsession with the Bard.⁷⁴ That *Measure for Measure* was an important part of this revival is confirmed by its ranking sixth of the nine most-performed Shakespeare plays up to 1730.⁷⁵ When Oldmixon was writing his *History of England*, and describing James's lack of 'Relish of the Formalities of State', he was doing so in the immediate aftermath of this explosion of interest in *Measure for Measure*. Whether from seventeenth-century editions of Shakespeare or from reprinted examples of individual Shakespeare plays offered by London's booksellers (the 1727 catalogue of books printed for and sold by Thomas Astley from his establishment in St Paul's Churchyard lists *Measure for Measure* in a single play-text edition), Oldmixon would undoubtedly have had access to *Measure for Measure* in one form or another.⁷⁶ Obviously in tune with his contemporaries, and with his publicly avowed interest and respect for Shakespeare, Oldmixon appears perfectly situated to respond to aspects of a play that could be adapted to suit his particular 'Whiggish' preconceptions about a discredited Stuart king.

Regardless of whether Oldmixon was consciously employing imagery derived from *Measure for Measure*, or was adopting Shakespeare's language in the belief that his favourite playwright was sending a coded message about the Globe's kingly patron, Oldmixon's description of James bears sufficient similarity to the dialogue isolated by Tyrwhitt over thirty years later to suggest a source for

this specific observation. Tyrwhitt's 'Whig' interpretation of *Measure for Measure*, and his expression of the 'Duke-as-James' theory as an explanation for Shakespeare's dialogue, might represent not only his own response to the play but also his response to an idea first suggested by the equally 'Whiggish', equally partisan commentary of Oldmixon, whose literary opinion about Shakespeare has largely gone unnoticed. More famous as a Whig historiographer than as a failed playwright and literary commentator, Oldmixon nevertheless confirms how Shakespeare was viewed as a playwright who was free from 'Whiggish' suspicion that his plays represented the work of an apologist for the despised patron of the King's Men. Oldmixon also provides a plausible prelude to Tyrwhitt's 'Whig' analysis of *Measure for Measure*; like the later Whig historiography of Macaulay that fuelled Charles Knight's reaffirmation of the opinions of Steevens, Malone and Chalmers, Oldmixon's Whig historiography provides similarly accessible fuel for the partisan criticism of Tyrwhitt.

To conclude, the recognition of an occasionalist portrayal or caricature of James in *Measure for Measure* has, for the most part, relied on interpretation of two passages from the play that, in retrospect, have been read as negative appraisals of King James's personality and style of leadership. These passages form the backbone of subsequent literary studies of *Measure for Measure* in an occasionalist Jacobean context. As successive generations of Whig historiographers destroyed the character of James, these 'Whiggish' factors were seized on and integrated into contemporary critical studies of *Measure for Measure*. Although Tyrwhitt

⁷³ See John Oldmixon, *Amintias. A Pastoral* (London, 1698); *The Grove, or Love's Paradise. An Opera* (London, 1700); *The Governour of Cyprus: A Tragedy* (London, 1703).

⁷⁴ Robert D. Hume, 'Before the Bard: "Shakespeare" in Early Eighteenth-Century London', *English Literary History*, 64 (1997), 41–75 (p. 60). Also Katherine West Scheil, *The Taste of the Town: Shakespearean Comedy and the Early Eighteenth-Century Theater* (Lewisburg, 2003).

⁷⁵ Hume, 'Before the Bard', p. 60.

⁷⁶ Thomas Astley, *Books Printed For and Sold By Thomas Astley* (London, 1727), p. 8.

has long been acknowledged the first overtly to describe the 'Duke-as-James' theory in relation to these two passages, an example of anti-James propaganda by the Whig historiographer, Oldmixon, written over thirty years earlier than Tyrwhitt's, suggests a possible source for this later literary conjecture. As with the 'Whiggish' dismissal of James implicit in subsequent analysis of *Measure for Measure*, Oldmixon's account of the much-maligned Stuart monarch acts as precedent for Tyrwhitt's, and thus Malone's, comparison of a fictional Duke with a real king.

Nineteenth-century studies of *Measure for Measure* continued to follow the prevailing fashion for 'Whiggish' historical discourse, exemplified by Macaulay's 'cruel and vindictive' invective. Indeed, much of the partisan flavour of Macaulay remains evident in historicized studies of *Measure for Measure* to this day. Since the 1960s, however, revisionist historians have systematically reappraised James's skill as a king, so casting serious doubt on traditional readings of his reign. Among historians, 'Whiggish' distaste for James has been replaced by a more tolerant and accepting appreciation of his skill as a statesman and writer. The revision of James's history has also led to a reappraisal of his reception in England following the death of Elizabeth; contrary to the traditional Whig narrative, James's accession appears to have been greeted warmly by many of his English subjects, grateful for the peaceful transition to rule by an experienced and erudite monarch. In consequence, James is no longer viewed as the harbinger of court immorality, or as the vanguard of an inexorable decline in the English monarchy that leads inevitably to

the execution of Charles I. Likewise, contemporary responses to James's sixteenth-century writings have suggested confused and inconsistent opinions about the Scottish king's perceived personal 'style'.

Revisionist history's reappraisal of James's early political career in England appears only now to be entering the critical vocabulary of literary commentators in their studies of *Measure for Measure*.⁷⁷ This somewhat belated acknowledgement of James's political skill is no doubt due to the overriding strength of the parallelism and subversion model that has dominated new historicist criticism from the mid-1980s onwards, and which, although seemingly revisionist in its radical interpretation of *Measure for Measure*, appeared unaware of the old-style conservative historicism that underpinned its arguments. Traceable back to the failed playwright and ardent supporter of Shakespeare, Oldmixon, and predicated on Whig historiography, anti-James attitudes inherent in new historicist studies of anxiety, hegemony and subversion in *Measure for Measure* unwittingly engage in such partisan pursuits. Only by acknowledging the implicit heritage of partisan, anti-James Whig historiography residing undetected in new historicist studies of *Measure for Measure* can the play's complex engagement with the social and theatrical culture of its time truly emerge.

⁷⁷ Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Renaissance Politics* (London, 2004), pp. 182–200, argues that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were less critical of James's rule; also Andrew Hadfield, *Shakespeare and Republicanism* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 205–6.