

### LORD SAY, *Sir Thomas More*, AND GOOD FRIDAY

In *Henry VI, Part 2* (IV. 7) the former Treasurer of England, Lord Say, is captured by George Bevis and brought before Jack Cade. The scene is not recounted in detail in its recognized source, Hall's *Chronicle*. Cade accuses Say of a variety of 'crimes', such as the erecting of a grammar school, the building of a paper-mill, and the imprisoning and hanging of poor men for no other reason than their inability to read or write. Thus far, the version in the *First Quarto* (1594) closely resembles that in the *First Folio*. In their Oxford edition of the play (entitled *The First Part of the Contention*), as an improvement on the *Folio*, Montgomery and Taylor incorporate parts of the exchange between Cade, his followers and Lord Say from the 'bad' *Quarto*. A stylometric examination of both the *Quarto* and *Folio* versions, using A.Q. Morton's cumulative sum chart technique, suggests common authorship of both versions.<sup>1</sup>

The *Folio* version of the scene goes on to include Say's pleading for his life. We may reasonably assume this passage is the author's invention, written after the *Quarto* version. With this addition (IV. 7. 56. Arden; 7. 58. Oxford), what looks originally to have been a lightly conceived passage, reflecting the absurd crudity of Jack Cade's populism, enters a realm of profounder allusion.

First, there is a veiled, yet distinct, echo of *Sir Thomas More*. On the merely verbal level, Say uses two Morean expressions which are peculiar in the Shakespeare canon to *Henry VI, Part 2*. 'Large gifts have I bestowed on **learned clerks...**' (IV. 7. 68. Arden, 7. 70. Oxford), and 'Knowledge the wing wherewith we **fly to heaven...**' (IV. 7. 71. Arden, 7. 73. Oxford; also II. 1. 17. Arden and Oxford, 'Were it not good your grace could **fly to heaven**'). The first expression is found in the original (Hand M) of *Sir Thomas More* (III. 1. 29), where Erasmus is described as a learned clerk.<sup>2</sup> The second, found in V. 4. 107 of *STM*, is used by More to describe his destiny, soon to be accomplished by the execu-

tioner's axe ('I shall break from you, and fly up to heaven'). 'Fled to heaven' appears in *King John*. Referring to the dead Arthur, the Bastard describes him thus: 'From forth this morsel of dead royalty / The life, the right, and truth of all this realm is fled to heaven ...' (*KJ*, IV. 3. 144. Oxford). The verbs 'fly' and 'flee' have been interwoven in English since the late medieval period, with the noun 'flight' conveying both senses.

There are other verbal parallels between *Sir Thomas More* and *Henry VI, Part 2*. Notable is the line in *STM* spoken by Surrey (II. 4. 152): 'I here pronounce free pardon for them all' and that in *2H6* (IV. 8. 9. Arden, 7. 162. Oxford) spoken by Buckingham: 'And here pronounce free pardon to them all.' 'Pronounce free pardon', plausibly a commonplace, occurs only once in the Shakespeare canon. In both *Henry VI, Part 2* and *STM*, the crowd fling up their caps (*2H6*, IV. 8. 15. Arden, after 7. 171. Oxford; *STM*, II. 4. 153): 'fling up' occurs once in the *First Folio*. Caps in Shakespeare are otherwise cast, hurled up, put off, tossed up, thrown up, thrown underfoot, or simply thrown.

Say's final speech begins, 'Ah, countrymen, if, when you make your prayers...' (IV. 7. 109. Arden, 7. 112. Oxford). In Addition II (Hand D) of *Sir Thomas More*, Shrewsbury addresses the crowd, 'my masters, countrymen' (II. 3. 32), just prior to More's speech. Say's pleading against Cade's obduracy is paralleled by More's pleading against the 'mountainish inhumanity' of the rebels (II. 3. 151). Both Say and More draw attention to concern for the soul. 'How could it fare with your departed souls?' (*2H6*, IV. 7. 111. Arden, 7. 114. Oxford); '... What do you to your souls / In doing this, O desperate as you are?' (*STM*, II. 3. 114-5.)

Sir Thomas More may spring to mind as a more likely court humanist than the historical Sir James Fiennes. Lord Say was an extortioner and political strongman in southeast England, and there is no foundation for his role as a patron of learning. He was not the English Socrates suggested by Cade's charge that he was an educator and corruptor of youth (*2H6*, IV. 7. 30. Arden and Cairncross's note, 7. 30. Oxford). More has a better claim to the Socratic comparison.

Lord Say's supposed bestowing of large gifts on learned scholars may remind the reader of More's generosity to 'poor needy scholars' (*STM* V. 3. 55). Say speaks of his 'Long sitting, to determine poor men's causes' (IV. 7. 83. Arden, 7. 85. Oxford). This resembles prisoner More's '... the cry of the poor suitor / Fatherless orphan or distressed widow / Shall not disturb me in my quiet sleep' (*STM*, V. 2. 65-7).

Say describes himself as an incorruptible judge. 'Prayers and tears have mov'd me, gifts could never' (IV. 7. 65. Arden, 7. 67. Oxford). More's reputation was for judicial integrity. Both More and Say were decapitated and their severed heads displayed in public.

There is another level of allusion which occurs in the *Folio* material and not in the *Quarto*. Lord Say's treatment at the hands of his executioners bears a resemblance to Christ's humiliation on Good Friday. Lord Say is struck in the face. Maintaining his innocence, he asks his persecutors to justify their sentence by reference to specific deeds for which they accuse him as being worthy of death. The sentence of death is totally unjust.

Interestingly, there is an echo, and possibly only that, of the explicit combination of Old Testament and New Testament texts, in the Good Friday liturgical Reproaches or Improperia. The veneration of the cross owes its origin to a custom which obtained in fourth century Jerusalem. A series of Latin chants uses a repeated verse, 'Popule meus, quid feci tibi? aut in quo contristavi te? responde mihi' [My people, what have I done to thee? or in what have I grieved thee? Answer me, taken from Micah 6:3. The special force of the chant stems from the identification of the events of the Passion of Christ with events of the Old Testament. The verse is sung between the three greater reproaches, followed by the nine lesser reproaches, liturgically spoken by Christ.

The seventh lesser reproach uses an explicit Old-New Testament association which is uniquely paralleled in the dialogue of Say and Cade.<sup>3</sup> 'Ego propter te Chananaeorum reges percussi: et tu percussisti arundine caput meum.' ['For thee I struck the kings of the Canaanites: and thou hast struck my head with a reed.'] The Canaanites were par excellence the Gentiles, the foreigners of the Old Testament. Parallels are in bold.

LORD SAY: 'This tongue hath parley'd unto  
foreign kings (Chananaeorum reges)/  
For your behoof (propter te) - '

CADE: 'Tut, when struck'st (percussisti) thou  
one blow in the field?

SAY: 'Great men (Ego) have reaching hands: oft  
have I struck (percussi)  
Those that I never saw, and struck them dead...'

SAY: 'These cheeks are pale for watching for your good.'

CADE: 'Give him a **box o'th'ear (caput meum)**,  
and that will make 'em red again.'  
(2H6, IV. 7. 74. and 80. Arden, 7. 76. and 82. Oxford.)

The repeated use of the verse, 'Popule meus', created a meditative ground which reverberated in the ear of the worshipper. Say's words which follow his condemnation are: '**Tell me: wherein have I offended (responde mihi. in quo contristavi te) most?** / Have I affected wealth or honour? **Speak (responde mihi)**' (2H6, IV. 7. 92. Arden, 7. 94. Oxford). They are similar to the verse. The emphasis and sentence position of the word 'most' is a reflection of the force of 'quid ultra' in the third greater reproach: '**Quid ultra** debui facere tibi, et non feci?' [**What more** ought I to have done for thee, that I have not done?]

The Good Friday theme does not end there. In the Benedictine breviary for the day there was a fifth reading 'Ex Tractatu sancti Augustini Episcopi super Psalmos: In Ps. 63 ad v:3' which contains the following sentence. 'Tanta opera bona, inquit, ostendi vobis: *propter quod horum me vultis occidere?*' ['So many good works, says he, have I shown you: **for which of them do you wish to kill me?**']<sup>4</sup> Say's words are: '**Whom** have I injur'd, **that ye seek my death?**' (IV. 7. 96. Arden, 7. 98. Oxford). Father Marc'hadour points out that I Maccabees 11:10 '**quae-sivit me occidere**' is yet closer to Say's '**seek my death**' than is the "vultis occidere" of St. Augustine, itself echoing the repeated pattern in the Gospels: 'volens illum occidere' (Matthew 14:5), 'volebat occidere' (Mark 6:19), "vult te occidere" (Luke 13:31).

Not only does the character Say speak the words of Christ, Cade accuses him of diabolic possession, thus paralleling the indictment of Christ by some of his listeners (Luke 11: 15; Mark 1: 32). 'Away with him! he has a familiar under his tongue; he speaks not a God's name' (2H6. IV. 7. 102. Arden, 7. 104. Oxford).

The use of the word 'caudle', a 'warm gruel mixed with wine, and sweetened for the sick', an invalid's potion, might remind an audience of the bitter-sweet offer of vinegar (More's translation, 'easel and gall') to Christ on the Cross (IV. 7. 85. Arden, 7. 87. Oxford). The phrase in which 'caudle' appears is 'hempen caudle', a euphemism for a hangman's rope; the association of hanging with the Cross is not beyond interpretative bounds.

Shakespeare's possible acquaintance with the Good Friday Latin liturgy may be seen as complementary to his suggested knowledge of the Easter Vigil *Exsultet*.<sup>5</sup> 'In such a night as this', 'in such a night', 'in

such a night', repeated in *The Merchant of Venice* (V. 1,6,9,12,14,17,20. Oxford) remind John Casey of 'Haec nox est,' 'Haec igitur nox est,' 'Haec nox est' in the hymn of Holy Saturday. 'This night, methinks, is but the daylight sick. / It looks a little paler...' (MV, V. 124. Oxford) resembles 'Et nox sicut dies illuminabitur.' (And the night shall be as light as the day.)<sup>6</sup>

Peter Milward has found two further echoes of the *Exsultet* in Shakespeare.<sup>7</sup> The first is Romeo's exclamation, 'O blessed, blessed night!' (*Rom*, II. 1. 181. Oxford), echoing 'O vere beata nox' of the hymn. The second is Gonzalo's exclamation in *The Tempest*, 'O rejoice / Beyond a common joy! And set it down / With gold on lasting pillars...' (*Tem*. V. 1. 209. Arden and Oxford). Fr. Milward cited three similarities: first, the note of opening joy ('Exsultet jam angelica turba coelorum' [Let the angelic choirs of heaven now rejoice]); second, the theme of the happy fault ('felix culpa') that inspires Gonzalo's speech in which the quotation occurs; and, third, the possibly precise description of the Paschal candle with its golden letters. ('Sed jam columnae hujus praeconia novimus, quam in honorem Dei rutilans ignis accendit.' [Now also we know the praises of this column, which the shining fire enkindles to the honour of God.]

One conclusion may be acceptable to all: the *Folio* encounter between Lord Say and Jack Cade is far richer in associations than its more cursory treatment in the *First Quarto*.

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#### NOTES

1. See *The Qsum Plot*, Andrew Q. Morton and Sidney Michaelson (Edinburgh, 1990) and *Proper Words in Proper Places*, A.Q. Morton (Glasgow, 1991). The dramatic editions used in this article are: *King Henry VI, Part 2*, edited by Andrew S. Cairncross, The Arden Shakespeare (London and New York, 1962); *The First Part of the Contention in William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells, Gary Taylor, John Jowett, and William Montgomery (Oxford, 1988); *Sir Thomas More*, edited by Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori (Manchester, 1990).

2. Granted that 'learned clerk' was a stock rendering of 'eruditus', not

seldom applied to Erasmus, the collocation is nonetheless unique to *2H6* in the accepted Shakespeare canon.

3. It may be argued that the parallel exists between Matthew 27:30 ('And they spat upon him, and struck him on the head') and Psalm 134 (Vulgate), 135 (Hebrew): 10-11 ('who smote many nations and slew mighty kings, / Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan'). This parallel is *implicit* in Matthew; in the Good Friday Improperia it is both *explicit* and, most importantly, dramatic, and therefore might be judged to convey a greater cultural impact upon a dramatist. The use of the verse as a chorus bears comparison with the chorus of a Greek tragedy, with the chorus and protagonist made one by the closeness of their sharing in the mystery. The reader is, of course, welcome to view a more private, non-liturgical and literally Biblical influence, as the operative one in stimulating Shakespeare's use of the juxtaposed 'striking'.

4. See John 10:32: 'Multa bona opera ostendi vobis...propter quod eorum opus me lapidatis?'

5. John Casey, 'In Such a Night', *The Spectator* (14 April 1990), 21 & 23.

6. See Psalm 138 (Vulgate), vv. 11-12. 'Et dixi: Forsitan tenebrae conculcabit me: et nox illuminatio mea in deliciis meis / Quia tenebrae non obscurantur a te, et nox sicut dies illuminabitur: sicut tenebrae ejus, ita lumen ejus. ['When I said, Surely the darkness will cover me; even the night was light in my delights. / For darkness will not be darkness with thee; but night will be as light as day: as its darkness, so shall its light be to thee.']

7. These were conveyed in an unpublished letter to *The Spectator*, 20 April 1990.

### Précis

The two accounts of Lord Say's being brought before Jack Cade in the *Quarto* and *Folio* versions of *Henry VI, Part 2* differ. The *Folio* presents Say as a humanist scholar, who resembles in several respects Thomas More, with overtones of Christ condemned to death. Verbal echoes link Shakespeare's phrases with *Sir Thomas More* and the Latin words of the Good Friday Reproaches. Other ears have detected echoes of the Easter hymn *Exsultet* in *The Merchant of Venice*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Tempest*.

### Résumé

Les deux récits du procès de Lord Say par Jack Cade dans les versions *Quarto* et *Folio* de *Henry VI* (II) sont différents. Le *Folio* présente Say comme un humaniste qui, à plusieurs égards, ressemble à Thomas More, et présente aussi des analogies avec le Christ condamné à mort. Des expressions de Shakespeare font écho à celles de la pièce *Sir Thomas More* ainsi qu'aux Improperia du Vendredi Saint. D'autres oreilles ont détecté des échos de l'*Exsultet* pascal dans *Le Marchand de Venise*, *Roméo et Juliette*, et *La Tempête*.